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Thursday, July 12, 2007

## FY'08 Agriculture, FDA Appropriations Bill

### Invests in Families & Farmers

*"Bill works toward several key goals: reinvesting in rural America, protecting public health, improving nutrition for more Americans, transforming our energy future, supporting conservation, investing in research, and finally, enhancing oversight. Together, these goals illuminate the federal government's ability, capacity, resources, and moral obligation to meet our nation's great challenges.*

**Washington, D.C.** - Congresswoman Rosa L. DeLauro (Conn.-3), chairman of the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, today marked up the subcommittee's fiscal year 2008 bill. The Chairman's Mark includes 18.8 billion in total discretionary spending - \$1 billion (5.7%) over 2007 and \$987.4 million (5.5%) over the President's request.

Ninety five percent of the increase above the budget request is to restore funding to provide basic services to rural communities, feed those in need, and support conservation efforts. Additionally, the bill takes the critical first steps in a fundamental transformation in the regulation of food safety at the Food and Drug Administration.

- The Department of Agriculture is funded at \$17 billion, \$879.5 million (5.5%) above 2007 and \$945.9 million (5.9%) above the budget request.
- The Food and Drug Administration is funded at \$1.7 billion, \$121.5 million (7.7%) above 2007 and \$55 million (3.4%) above the budget request.

Below is DeLauro's opening statement.

"Thank you. I am delighted to begin this markup in my new capacity as chair of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee. I want to thank Ranking Member Jack Kingston and all of the Subcommittee Members here today

"Congressman Kingston, it has been a very busy seven months and I appreciate all of your patience and dedication. It has been a pleasure to partner with you on this Subcommittee and I know we have achieved a lot of good.

"I look forward to working with all of you today as we move forward with this very important spending bill, in the weeks ahead. While we will no doubt have our differences, I believe we can and will work together to do what is best for the American people.

"I also want to thank the many, many staffers who have worked hour after hour to make this bill and our mark up today possible: Martha Foley, the subcommittee clerk, as well as Leslie Barrack, Diem-Linh Jones, Adrienne Simonson, Kelly Wade, and Brian Ronholm. I also want to thank Martin Delgado, David Gibbons and Jamie Swafford on the minority staff.

"In this committee, we have a tremendous responsibility and great opportunity to confront some of our nation's most pressing challenges. This year we come together with a new agenda and a strong, responsible

appropriations bill which reflects our priorities -- as a committee, as a Congress, and as a nation. The legislation we mark up here today represents a new direction -- it is an investment in our families and our farmers, the new direction the American people are demanding.

"We have an obligation to improve the health and well-being of all communities -- to implement policies here from this Subcommittee which put middle and working-class families center-stage. Today, we can make the important choices and the important changes to put our nation back on the right track.

"As we bring this bill to the floor and eventually to the president for his signature, we will work toward several key goals: reinvesting in rural America, protecting public health, improving nutrition for more Americans, transforming our energy future, supporting conservation, investing in research, and finally, enhancing oversight. Together, these goals illuminate the federal government's ability, capacity, resources, and moral obligation to meet our nation's great challenges.

"The Fiscal Year 2008 Mark includes \$18.817 billion -- a 5 percent increase over the President's request and a 5 percent increase over what was enacted in FY2007.

### **Reinvesting in Rural America**

"Federal investment is critical to facilitate growth in rural areas, and to soften the impact of population loss. Earlier this month, I hosted the Congressional Summit on Rural America with my colleagues and rural leaders from across the country. We explored the idea that not all rural areas are alike culturally or economically and each has its own unique challenges. What is clear, however, is that the challenges are growing. This bill provides a 37 percent increase in grants to rural areas for critical community facilities, such as health care, educational, public safety and day care facilities and also provides increases in the community facility loan programs.

"Rural areas often confront a tremendous gap when it comes to educational and medical resources and this bill helps close that gap, providing \$35 million -- \$10 million more than the administration requested for distance learning and telemedicine grants. It also restores \$17.8 million in funding to the broadband grant program which that the budget request had eliminated -- that's twice the level provided in 2007.

### ***Housing***

"The Committee held a special hearing to discuss economic conditions in rural America with the USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS). A recent ERS report found that 302 of America's non-metro counties are "housing stressed." In these counties, at least 30 percent of households failed to meet widely used standards for minimum basic amenities.

"These findings are shocking. To begin addressing these needs, the bill makes significant investments in rural housing. The bill includes \$212 million to provide \$5.1 billion in affordable direct and guaranteed home loans for low- and moderate-income families in rural areas, with no increase in fees. The President's budget eliminated direct loans and shifted funding to guaranteed loans with a one percent increase in fees, making these loans more expensive and less accessible for low-income families.

"The bill restores the multi-family rental housing program and provides four times the level of funding for mutual and self-help housing grants, which allow low-income families in rural areas to build their own houses. And it substantially increases funding for the farm labor housing programs, supporting \$75 million in affordable loans and grants for farmworker housing.

### ***Clean water***

"Rural communities face tens of billions of dollars in costs for safe drinking water and wastewater treatment systems. USDA funds for water and waste is only available to communities that cannot fund the projects themselves or cannot get commercial financing at reasonable rates. USDA programs also give priority to smaller communities, those with serious health needs and lower incomes. Yet, these programs are already over-subscribed. As of September 30, 2006, 985 applicants seeking \$2.3 billion in assistance could not be funded.

"To begin addressing these needs, the bill provides \$500 million for rural water and waste disposal grants and \$1 billion for water and waste direct loans. Importantly, the bill reverses the administration's proposed cut to the grant program and provides a 14 percent (\$62 million) increase over 2007 levels.

### **Protecting Public Health**

"Of course, when it comes to protecting the public health, this Subcommittee has already stepped up its oversight, and sought to meet its responsibilities. During the previous six years, this body held just one oversight hearing. That is not right -- especially when it is clear, our food safety system is broken. It was not designed strategically, and it does not function effectively today.

"As many recent recalls have shown -- from spinach and seafood to peanut butter and pet food -- our food safety system is dangerously inadequate today. Consumers have reason to worry that the system they count on to protect them is no longer working, and the food they feed their families is not as safe as it should be. That must change.

"When our pets began to die from contaminated pet food that originated in China, the news forced us to wake up and take a hard look at entire food safety systems abroad. Our renewed attention revealed inadequate protections and an increasingly global food supply system.

"The Chinese and others must be aware that trade cannot trump public health and that their regulations need to be strengthened to be considered an adequate trading partner. Unfortunately, it is clear that many of their actions are as much about public relations than about public safety.

"When our FDA inspects less than 1 percent of imports, it is hard to fathom all that is entering our nation unmonitored. We must transform the way we meet our obligation to protect the public health. We can help with additional resources, but there also needs to be a commitment from management to perform its duties.

"This bill fully funds the request for the Food Safety and Inspection Service at USDA. To maximize the funds' positive impact on safety, the bill shifts additional funds within the account to address vacancies in federal meat inspector positions.

"The Committee also provides an increase of \$28 million over the budget request for food safety at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for what it hopes will be the first step in a fundamental transformation in the regulation of food safety at FDA. The Committee directs the FDA to submit a plan to begin changing its approach to food safety when it submits the fiscal year 2009 budget, giving the Committee time to review the plan before the funds to implement it become available on July 1, 2008.

"The Committee fully funds the request for the FDA and provides targeted increases of \$55 million. It also ensures that funding levels for FDA's field operations are not reduced and provides additional funding for key activities, such as speeding up generic drug application reviews, post-market drug safety reviews and review of direct to consumer drug ads.

"In addition to these funds, the bill provides more than \$131 million for food safety research at USDA.

### **Improving Nutrition for More Americans**

"The bill also provides critical resources to address our nation's obesity crisis, teaching our children better eating habits and helping them avoid diabetes and other dangerous health conditions which afflict more and more children today than ever. The bill provides a nearly eight-percent increase over 2007 funding, including a record level of funding for the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) at \$68.5 million.

"The bill also provides record funding for two fundamental food security programs: the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). These programs serve our country's most vulnerable populations. Nearly 30 percent of the total discretionary funding in this bill goes to the WIC program. To meet increased program costs due to rising food prices, the Committee has provided an increase of \$415 million over the 2007 level and \$233 million over the request. The bill also provides \$150 million for the CSFP program, which the President's budget eliminated. This level will both increase caseloads in current states and allow additional states to participate in the program.

"Working poor households should not have to choose between securing adequate food for their kids and other basics they need just to get by. The bill also includes language that will ease administrative burdens on states that wish to participate in the summer food program, which the Committee believes will allow many more children to be reached by this program.

### **Transforming Our Energy Future**

"Energy independence means investing in our communities and plugging their resources and workforce into vibrant, expanding markets. To promote renewable energy and move us further down the path to energy independence, this bill provides \$455 million -- nearly twice as much funding than was provided last year and more than 20 percent above the \$375 million requested.

"The bill provides assistance to farmers and ranchers, resources for groundbreaking research -- \$10 million through the USDA's Agricultural Research Service and \$27.3 million for its Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) -- while delivering renewable energy loans and grants to businesses. It makes investments across the spectrum in order to grow our economy, create new jobs, lower energy prices, and begin to address global warming.

### **Supporting Conservation**

"The stewardship of our lands affects us all everyday and will affect our children for years to come. But existing conservation programs are under-funded. This bill restores many of the programs slated for elimination in the president's request, including the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, the Wildlife Habitat Program and the Watershed Rehabilitation Programs which were funded \$75 million -- 50 percent above last year's levels.

### **Investing in Research**

"While this bill does not have jurisdiction over commodity programs, it provides critical support to production agriculture through the ARS and CSREES programs. As we all know, research is at the core of maintaining U.S. agriculture's place in the forefront of scientific discovery and development. And these efforts are critical to maintaining our edge in areas such as crop development, competitiveness, international trade, nutrition research, food safety and immediate responsiveness to incoming threats. For research at our nation's universities and other important activities under CSREES, the bill provides an increase of \$131 million over the president's request for CSREES, including \$61.4 million for research and education. For federally funded research, the bill provides an increase of \$54.8 million over the president's budget.

### **Enhanced Oversight**

"Finally, the committee shares concerns about waste, fraud and abuse in key farm programs such as those run by the Farm Service Agency and the Risk Management Agency. The Committee has included language requested by the administration to allow the Risk Management Agency to use up to \$11,166,000 in mandatory crop insurance funds to strengthen its ability to oversee the program by maintaining and upgrading IT systems and other methods of detecting dubious claims. Continuing work on an information management system, will assist RMA and the Farm Service Agency in spotting potential problems in programs under both agencies.

"The Committee has also included an increase of \$2 million for the Office of Inspector General for high priority work on waste, fraud and abuse, as part of a long term effort to rebuild the office's resources.

"The Committee makes note throughout its report of agencies that are delinquent in responding to OIG or Government Accountability Office reports and calls for those agencies to respond with plans for how they will respond promptly.

"Thank you again to all of my colleagues and the staff here today. I am proud of this bill and the priorities it reflects. I look forward to working with you, moving together toward bold important goals as a new Subcommittee in a new Congress: reinvesting in rural America, protecting public health, improving nutrition for more Americans, transforming our energy future, supporting conservation, investing in research, and finally, enhancing oversight. Now let's get to work."