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BEFORE THE
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Good morning Chairman Conaway, Ranking Member Peterson and Members of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the EPA and agriculture.

As stewards of the land, the EPA and farmers share a common goal in protecting our environment. Inherent conservationists, farmers' livelihoods depend on healthy land and clean air and water to produce the food, fuel and fiber we rely on. In the 45 years since the EPA's founding, we've cleaned up 70 percent of our nation's air pollution and hundreds of thousands of miles of waterways, and meanwhile our economy has tripled. Agriculture advanced too – achieving better yields with less water, lower risk pesticides, and less fertilizer. I would like to highlight some of the EPA initiatives furthering our common goals.

Nutrient Recycling Challenge

Working with USDA, and partnering with pork and dairy producers and technical experts, we recently launched an initiative promoting recycling nutrients from livestock waste. Annually, livestock producers manage more than one billion tons of manure containing valuable nitrogen

and phosphorus, a resource as a renewable fertilizer, and used properly, can minimize water pollution and build healthy soils. Challenge participants will harness the power of competition, turning innovative concepts into designs, and ultimately working technologies, creating solutions that are a win for farmers, the environment and the economy.

Local Foods, Local Places

The EPA also partners with USDA in the “Local Foods, Local Places” project, promoting walkable, healthy, and economically vibrant neighborhoods through farmers markets, co-ops, community gardens, and other local food enterprises. Focusing development in existing neighborhoods helps support farm economies and protect undeveloped rural lands. Last month we announced 27 new communities, serving 62 communities in 29 states since starting in 2013.

Clean Water Rule

The Clean Water Rule protects the streams and wetlands that one in three Americans rely on for drinking water, and farmers and ranchers need for their crops and livestock. As members of this committee know, recent Supreme Court rulings created uncertainty regarding the application of the Clean Water Act to streams and wetlands. In developing the rule, the EPA and the U.S. Army responded to requests to define the scope of the Clean Water Act more clearly, predictably and fairly. In doing so, the Clean Water Rule not only maintains current statutory exemptions, it expands regulatory exclusions from the definition of “waters of the United States” to make it clear that the rule does not add any additional permitting requirements on farmers and ranchers and promotes their voluntary efforts to protect and enhance clean water. We continue outreach to

the agriculture community, responding to their concerns, answering questions, and ensuring that all existing agriculture exemptions and exclusions continue to apply.

Renewable Fuel Standard

Last year, the EPA finalized volume standards for the RFS program for calendar years 2014, 2015, and 2016 and a volume requirement for biomass-based diesel for 2017. The final requirements boost renewable fuel production and provide for robust, achievable growth of the biofuels industry.

Overall, this final rule requires that total renewable standards grow by more than 1.8 billion gallons from 2014 to 2016, requiring 11 percent more biofuel production than the market produced in 2014. Our 2016 advanced biofuel standard is nearly 1 billion gallons, or 35 percent higher than 2014 actual volumes. The biomass-based diesel standards increases every year to reach 2 billion gallons by 2017, a 23 percent increase over 2014 actual volumes.

The EPA took steps to improve the administration of the RFS program and continues to approve new agricultural feedstocks, increasing the number of pathways that biofuel producers may use to qualify their biofuel under the program. We improved the quality, transparency, and efficiency of our petition review process for new biofuel pathways, clarified qualifying biofuels, and conducted lifecycle analyses on several new feedstocks. The EPA remains committed to the RFS program and meeting Congress's intent to responsibly grow renewable fuels over time.

Agricultural Worker Protection Standards

I recently announced increased protections for the nation's two million agricultural workers and their families. Every year, thousands of preventable pesticide exposure incidents cause sick days, lost wages and medical bills. Changes to the agricultural worker protection standard reduce the risk of injury or illness resulting from contact with pesticides while on the job.

The EPA's updates reflect extensive stakeholder involvement from the agricultural community, industry, and federal and state partners. These provisions help ensure farmworkers nationwide receive annual safety training, prohibit children from handling agricultural pesticides, and provide workers with the tools needed to protect themselves and their families from pesticide exposure.

Conclusion

Thank you and I am happy to answer your questions.