



**Animal and Plant
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Remarks

Remarks as Prepared for Administrator Kevin Shea 2014 Agricultural Outlook Forum

ARLINGTON, VA, Feb. 20, 2014—Good afternoon. My name is Kevin Shea, and I'm the Administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

I'm pleased to be here with you this afternoon to moderate this session on "Protecting U.S. Animal and Plant Health From Invasive Pests."

We have a panel of three distinguished guests to provide perspectives from the State of California, the poultry industry, and USDA's Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services.

Before I introduce our guests, though, I'd like to say a few words about what this session means to me.

Of course, it's about combating pest and disease outbreaks, proactively protecting animal and plant health, and negotiating with our agricultural trading partners to maintain and open new markets for our products.

But—more than anything else—it's about the indispensable partnerships among Federal, State, and Tribal governments, industry, and other stakeholders. It's these partnerships that keep America's agriculture safe from destructive pests and diseases and keep agricultural trade moving.

Without you—our partners—we simply could not fulfill our mission. Together, we help keep our country's farm products safe, healthy, and profitable.

You know, what's good for agriculture is what's good for America. And our work, together, has helped make things very good for America. It's helped provide Americans with abundant, healthy food at reasonable prices. And it has supported the extraordinary success story that is U.S. agricultural exports.

Last year, those exports reached a new record of \$140.9 billion. In fact, the period from 2009 to 2013 is the strongest 5-year period for agricultural exports in our Nation's history.

Those exports mean prosperity. They mean jobs. They make all the difference between profitability and loss for American farmers and ranchers.

Our partnerships ensure that we can meet demand for our agricultural products abroad. And they ensure that foreign markets and governments have faith in the quality and health of what we send them.

And at a time when we face a broad range of invasive pest and disease challenges, our partnerships are more crucial than ever to maintain the flow of commerce.

Today's panelists represent three indispensable partners who are here to share their perspectives on how we've worked together to achieve these goals.

It is my honor to introduce them.

Karen Ross has been the Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) since 2011. Before joining CDFA, Karen was Chief of Staff for USDA's Secretary, Tom Vilsack.

She served more than 13 years as President of the California Association of Winegrape Growers (CAWG), based in Sacramento. During that time, she served as the Executive Director of Winegrape Growers of America, a coalition of State winegrower organizations, and as Executive Director of the California Wine Grape Growers Foundation.

Among her many achievements at CAWG was the creation of the nationally recognized Sustainable Winegrowing Program, and she remains focused on leading efforts to protect the environment and support local communities.

Dr. Don Ritter is the chairman of the General Council Committee of the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP). Don is a poultry veterinarian who has worked directly for chicken production companies on the Delmarva Peninsula for the past 28 years.

For the past 18 years, Don has been the Director of Health Services for Mountaire Farms Inc., the sixth largest broiler company in the United States. He has been active in avian influenza emergency disease response planning activities—which rely heavily on the kinds of industry-government partnerships I just talked about.

Suzanne Heinen is Senior Counselor to the Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services (FFAS) at USDA. She assumed this role after serving in an acting capacity for the Deputy Under Secretary of FFAS last year. Prior to that, Sue served 2 years as the Administrator of the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

During that time she oversaw programs and services that contributed to the strongest period for agricultural exports in our history. Sue has also worked on food security issues in the Office of the Secretary and as Minister-Counselor for Agriculture at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture in Rome, Italy.

Please join me in welcoming our distinguished panel. Thank you.

Post-Panel Comments

Thank you, Karen, Don, and Sue, for your valuable perspectives and insights.

I'd like to add a few words from the APHIS perspective.

Since I became APHIS' Administrator last year, I've committed our Agency to following two guiding principles in all the work we do.

The first principle—as we've already discussed at length today—is that healthy and profitable agriculture is good for America. It means feeding and clothing the world and providing a base that allows our economy and international exports to thrive.

The second principle is that it is the Federal Government's job to do the things no one State, Tribe, locality, or industry partner can do alone.

We intend to uphold that role, even in the current climate of reduced Federal spending.

Funding for my agency's activities was cut dramatically over the past several years.

Last year, we lost almost \$60 million from the funding we had in 2012. That brought our cumulative loss over 3 years to over a quarter of a billion dollars and left us with an appropriation that was almost \$150 million less than in 2010—more than 16 percent.

With the passage of the recent Appropriations Act and the 2014 Farm Bill, things turned around a bit. I think this shows that the Congress has recognized, as did the President in the budget he proposed, that animal and plant health is crucial.

I want to stress, though, that in good budget times and lean, we have always sought and will continue to seek the cooperation and collaboration of our State, Tribal, and industry colleagues.

And increasingly, we want to do it in a way that isn't prescriptive—that is, that doesn't always rely on regulation.

While regulations will always be part of how we achieve our goals, they will not always be the only or even the main ways.

The main ways, in my view, will always be through our indispensable partnerships.

Some of those partnerships have been around for a very long time. Don spoke at length about the NPIP, which represents about 80 years of Federal, State, and industry cooperation.

It's the ideal collaborative program—a tremendously successful effort that deservedly remains the “gold standard” for poultry disease control programs.

Many other countries have developed programs patterned from the NPIP model. It's a program that will remain a priority for APHIS.

Given the sweep and scope of its agriculture, California is a key partner. Our work with CDFA, counties, and industry there—on everything from Medflies to exotic Newcastle disease and much more—is emblematic of the successful partnerships we engage in with States all over this country.

Karen already mentioned our efforts to protect California's citrus industry from citrus greening/*Huanglongbing* (HLB). Preventing citrus greening from causing damage in her State is at the top of a list of 10 specific goals I've set for APHIS to achieve over the next few years.

That list includes such things as implementing a national animal disease traceability system and establishing a national feral swine management program that Congress gave us \$20 million to implement.

Already, we've had tremendous success with a feral swine pilot project in New Mexico that's the result of groundwork laid in 2008 with State offices, the counties, the Mescalero Apache Tribe, and farmers and ranchers.

With the launch of our national feral swine program, we'll be working with our partners to identify ways to control populations of these animals throughout the country and even eliminate them where feasible.

Getting back to citrus greening, Congress also gave us one-time funding of \$20 million to combat this disease in Florida and other southern States as well as in California, to safeguard our domestic and international citrus exports.

The linchpin of that effort is, as Karen mentioned, a Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Group for HLB that brings together several USDA agencies, State departments of agriculture, and the citrus industry.

The MAC gives industry a single contact for all the Federal and State entities that work on citrus issues, and provides producers with better tools to manage the disease while research continues.

Working with our State and industry partners to eradicate European grapevine moth (EGVM) once and for all is another item on the top 10 list of APHIS goals.

Our partnership with CDFA, the counties, the University of California Cooperative Extension Service, and the industry liaisons who have provided expertise to their fellow growers has been a spectacular success. Clear communication, hard field work, and

recognition and acceptance of the risks and costs involved have also played an essential role.

As a result, EGVM detections in California plummeted from more than 100,000 moths in FY 2010 to only 40 in FY 2013—benefiting wine and grape growers and exporters not only in California, but nationwide.

Similarly, as our panelists have mentioned, we saved American beef producers from enormous repercussions in international markets with our quick, measured, and science-based response to the 2012 detection of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in California.

From extensive Federal, State, and industry cooperation on previous outbreaks, we knew what to do and what our roles were. As a result of our rapid, effective response, that outbreak was only a blip on the radar screen of U.S. beef exports.

I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that this partnership has taught the whole world how to handle BSE outbreaks.

And I think it's a perfect illustration of the points Sue made in her presentation: how USDA uses clearly communicated, science-based decision making and international standards to keep the lanes of international trade open, while protecting the health of U.S. agriculture.

APHIS continues to be a powerful advocate for the agricultural exports of our State and industry partners. In FY 2013, with the help of these partners, I'm proud to say we successfully negotiated and resolved 200 trade-related sanitary and phytosanitary issues involving U.S. agricultural exports, with an estimated market value of \$2.7 billion.

That includes expanding the U.S. beef export access to Japan, gaining access to the Australian market for California and Pacific Northwest peaches and nectarines, and after many long years, opening the Chinese market to pears from California, Oregon, and Washington.

We also provided training and workshops to more than 50 countries throughout the world to help them improve the health of their crops and animals—and so reduce possible risks to the health of our own agriculture.

These efforts and many more will continue, in the face of budget constraints or extraordinary events like droughts, floods, fires, and the like. We are in this for the long haul.

In closing, I want to thank our three panelists again for coming to the Ag Outlook Forum today to share their insights.

And I want to thank those of you in the audience for attending this session. I hope it's provided you with new insights into the Federal, State, Tribal, and industry cooperation that keeps America's agriculture, and America's agricultural trade, strong and vital.

I'd like to open the floor for questions now.

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