



**Animal and Plant
Health Inspection Service**
4700 River Road
Riverdale, MD 20737-1234
Voice: (301) 851-4100
Web: www.aphis.usda.gov

Remarks

**Remarks as Prepared
Administrator Kevin Shea
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
2014 Winter Policy Conference**

RESTON, VA, Feb. 4, 2014—Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for inviting me to be here; it is a great honor.

Let me open by saying that we are indispensable partners. Again, we are indispensable partners. We cannot succeed without each other and we need to always stay in touch. So I thank you for this opportunity.

As always, I want to hear your perspectives, learn what works and what doesn't, and how APHIS can help.

I'm pleased to have other APHIS officials here with me today. They include:

- our two Associate Administrators, Jere Dick and Mike Gregoire;
- Jack Shere, Acting Associate Deputy Administrator of our Veterinary Services (VS) program;
- Osama El-Lissy, Deputy Administrator of our Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program;
- Bill Clay, Deputy Administrator of our Wildlife Services program; and
- Mike Firko, Acting Deputy Administrator of our Biotechnology Regulatory Services program.

We are all available to speak with you and answer any questions you may have.

I'd like to talk with you today specifically about the APHIS funding situation for fiscal year (FY) 2014 and 10 animal and plant health goals we've set for the next few years that we want to achieve with you.

Our Guiding Principles

But before I get into those specifics, I would like to reiterate the two guiding principles behind every action APHIS takes.

The first principle 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 to thrive.

Indeed agricultural exports are growing and vital to our overall American economic recovery.

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.

At a time when we continue to face increasing agricultural threats, and when the stakes are higher than ever, we have to coordinate all of our efforts. And no one of us can do it alone.

Budget

When we met this time last year, we did not know how much money the Congress would give us. I probably told you that I doubted that sequestration would occur.

But it did and the worst case scenario played out for us. We lost over \$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 over \$140 million less than in 2010—over 17 percent.

I am happy to report to you today that things have started to turn around. The recent Appropriation Act gives us about \$825 million in our basic appropriation, plus another \$20 million to use in the citrus greening fight.

This appropriation moves us back to about the 2012 level. It will allow us to generally fill some important vacancies throughout the country, have our folks travel more to meet with you and your folks, and restore some of the cuts to cooperative agreements.

While this is good news and I am very grateful, I must remind you that this funding is still \$80 million less than we had 4 years ago and brings our cumulative losses to well over \$300 million.

Still, I think that the higher funding level shows that the Congress has recognized, as did the President in the budget he proposed, that animal and plant health is crucial and that just maybe the cuts had gone too far.

Feral Swine

About \$20 million of this year's increase is for our national feral swine management program.

We hope to have the program up and fully running within the next 6 months. I am particularly excited about it because this is really the first commitment to a long term program to solve a nationwide problem in many years.

If you have not suffered any damage from feral swine in your State, count your blessings. We've seen them move to over 40 States and cause \$1.5 billion and growing in losses

[and control costs]. It is our duty to respond to this critical problem and we want to work with you to first arrest the spread and then reverse the devastating trend.

We'll keep working with partners like you and the Tribes to identify ways we can do that, and to initiate plans to control feral swine throughout the country and even eliminate them when that is feasible.

We're continuing with our New Mexico pilot program, which has had demonstrable success in removing feral swine from 1.4 million acres of land.

Ultimately, we hope to eliminate feral swine from 2 States every 5 years and after that from 2 States every 3 years; to stabilize feral swine damage within 10 years; and to establish feral swine disease monitoring in all major affected areas.

Citrus Greening

As I mentioned Congress gave us a one-time \$20 million infusion of money to attack citrus greening, to go along with the over \$40 million we have been spending on all aspects of the Citrus Health Response Plan.

Citrus industry representatives came to us last August and stressed just how much they needed more tools and better coordinated, faster responses from us to fight this destructive disease and its vector, the Asian citrus psyllid (ACP).

The iconic citrus industry in Florida is fighting for its very survival and we need to do more.

So we set up a new, multiagency coordinated (MAC) response framework to help us address the industry's immediate and long-term needs in a more direct way.

To jump start this initiative, USDA provided \$1 million to support research projects that can bring practical and short-term solutions to combat the disease. And I am very glad that Congress took the cue and added \$20 million more.

Our goal is to prevent citrus greening from reaching and damaging California's \$2 billion citrus industry—even as we fight this disease in Florida and other southern States.

We hope to reduce populations of ACP in urban areas in California using environmentally friendly biocontrol strategies. Field trials set up in collaboration with the State and the citrus industry last fiscal year will go on.

In the meantime, we will continue to survey for citrus greening and work with California authorities to monitor movement of citrus from areas quarantined for ACP.

Farm Bill

Another funding source for plant pest and disease response and prevention has been the Farm Bill.

Section 10201 of the last Farm Bill provided \$50 million annually over the past several years and without that money we would probably have seen more pests and diseases and had less success in the fights against the existing ones. Every State has received funds and benefitted from the good work that you have proposed.

And in more good news, if Congress—as expected—approves this Farm Bill today, we will receive \$62.5 million annually in Section 10201 funds until FY 2017. And just for the record, in the new Farm Bill the old Section 10201 is the new Section 10007, so we will all have to get used to the new number.

With regard to this year, we recently sought ideas from you and are reviewing 472 suggestions. We will work through that process as quickly as possible and get the money to you as timely as we can.

Working Better, Smarter, Faster, Cheaper

But as grateful as we are for the better funding situation, we know that it is not business as was usual a decade ago. We are still focused on delivering services more cheaply, quickly, and effectively.

We're continuing to work on technology changes to make it easier and faster for customers to find and get what they need, from digital signatures to our new, easier-to-use, redesigned Web site.

And we're pursuing alternatives to rulemaking that give us more flexibility to address immediate or evolving needs.

Frankly, the opposition of so many Americans to Federal regulation has led to many barriers to new regulations. And the inflexible application of regulations has made even more people distrust us.

So we are looking at new ways to achieve our animal and plant health mission without just putting in place new regulations.

While regulations will always be part of how we achieve our goals, they will not always be the only or even the main ways. In my view, APHIS is not a regulatory agency; it is an animal and plant health agency that sometimes uses regulations.

APHIS' Top Ten Goals

We have many things to do. But I want to take some time today to highlight 10 goals. You may recall that Mike Gregoire discussed the list with you last fall.

This Top Ten list does not cover everything we will do and they are not even necessarily the most important things we will do. APHIS has its continuing responsibilities, and they're all important.

For example, we will always place a high priority on issuing permits for plant and animal exports and imports. U.S. agricultural exports reached a new record of \$140.9 billion last fiscal year. In fact, the period from 2009 to 2013 is the strongest 5-year period for agricultural exports in our Nation's history.

As I met with 15 different Agriculture sectors in the past 6 months, I was struck by how all said that exports were the difference between profitability and loss for American farmers and ranchers. We will strengthen our work in that area.

We will also maintain our ongoing efforts to protect vulnerable animals from predation and those covered by the Animal Welfare and Horse Protection Acts from inhumane treatment.

But I think that specific goals, with clear end points and measures, bring out the best in us.

I remember that President Kennedy didn't say that our national goal was simply to create a better space program. He told Congress in 1961 that America's goal should be to put a man on the moon and return him safely to Earth before the end of the decade. And it happened. So clear goals do work.

By pursuing these 10 specific goals, we can aim for results that help us show the American people where their tax dollars have gone and how they helped the country thrive.

Business Process Improvements

I talked earlier about two of the Top Ten: the feral swine and citrus greening programs.

A third involves keeping our commitments to move new technology to the market faster. One of the ways we're helping do that is by modernizing the way we do business.

For the past few years, APHIS has made business process improvements for our veterinary biologics and biotechnology systems, so that important new technologies can reach the market faster.

Our Center for Veterinary Biologics is focused on increasing its capacity to receive submissions from manufacturers and release serials—that is, approve them for marketing—electronically.

In the meantime, our biotechnology program is improving the speed and predictability of the petition process. Within the past 6 months, we've cut 259 days from the initial petition review process, and the number of petitions under review has declined from 23 to 15.

By 2015, we expect to meet our goals for an improved petition process—which include cutting the time between the receipt of a petition and providing a determination to about 15 months or less.

Boll Weevil Eradication

The next three goals are remarkable success stories that need final chapters.

More than 30 years ago, you could find boll weevils everywhere from Virginia to Texas. But you, we, and the cotton growers themselves have beaten boll weevil back from 99 percent of U.S. cotton acreage, to a small pocket in Texas.

I want to finish this success story by making sure that no boll weevils reproduce in the United States—and that none reproduce 150 miles south of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Screwworm

To me, the most successful program in APHIS' history been screwworm eradication.

We set out concrete goals for eradication and accomplished them region by region here in the United States—and then country by country in Mexico and throughout Central America. Generations have never seen what was once a billion dollar scourge of American livestock.

To hold onto that success, we must ensure that our sterile screwworm rearing facility in Panama remains capable of producing the sterile pupae we need.

That is crucial not only to maintaining and holding the barrier to screwworm in the southern part of Panama, but also to supporting our domestic emergency preparedness and response to possible screwworm infestations.

European Grapevine Moth

Another success story is our fight against the European grapevine moth (EGVM) in California.

Thanks to State, county, and industry collaboration, EGVM detections in California plummeted from more than 100,000 moths in FY 2010 to only 40 in FY 2013.

Our goal is to continue working with our State and industry partners to eradicate this pest once and for all.

Together, we'll keep trapping, treating vineyards, enforcing commodity movement requirements, and engaging in outreach to stakeholders and the public.

Horse Soring

Another goal involves a program somewhat out of the mainstream of agriculture, but nonetheless is very important. Horse soring is a cruel, inhumane—and illegal—practice that has caused untold suffering to show horses.

Our goal is to cut the rate of soring in half within 2 years—from around 500 cases in FY 2013 to 250 in FY 2015—and to improve the overall health and well-being of these horses.

We're using technology to make our inspections as objective as possible, and continuing with our outreach and education efforts to industry and the public. Our goal is not to hurt or help any particular interest: it is to simply enforce the law.

Animal Disease Traceability

No list of goals is complete without mentioning our effort to establish a functioning animal disease traceability (ADT) program. This program will make traceback efforts more efficient, which in turn will help reduce the cost and impact of disease outbreaks.

One of our immediate priorities is establishing traceability performance measures that document our progress.

Other key activities for the next 6 months to support implementation of the ADT program include:

- Working closely with USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service to ensure identification is collected at slaughter;
- finalizing our traceability monitoring and enforcement plan;
- starting an official ID tag retirement pilot project; and
- conducting traceability training for livestock market inspectors and accredited veterinarians.

Tree Pests

Tree pests threaten our environment and our lumber and paper industries, which employ 1.3 million people.

We have spent hundreds of millions of dollars fighting foreign tree pests that have arrived in America over the past 20 years. So, another goal is to establish an effective, multinational system that reduces the threat of tree pests arriving from other countries.

Right now, we're focused on reducing the number of ships found to be infested with Asian gypsy moth and improving compliance with wood import regulations.

We're doing that by, among other things, partnering with Canada and Customs and Border Protection to increase compliance with requirements, and notifying our trading partners on a regular basis about noncompliances.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

APHIS' final top 10 goal is to eliminate all remaining barriers to export markets related to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

In May last year, the World Organization for Animal Health upgraded the United States' risk classification for BSE to negligible risk.

Within the next 4 years, we will engage every one of the 48 countries that have restrictions on U.S.-origin beef that are inconsistent with our new status.

We'll also work with other Federal agencies to develop strategies for persuading these trading partners to drop their restrictions.

Conclusion

That's the list. I know it's ambitious. I also know it's not all-inclusive, and I want to reiterate that the focus and energies we direct to our other priority programs and issues will remain undiminished.

These are simply 10 goals I think we can realistically accomplish for American agriculture within the next few years, with your help.

In closing, I want to say how much I appreciate everything the States do to make what we do, together, a success.

We value your efforts especially given the unprecedented challenges so many of you have been facing, whether it's budget constraints or extraordinary events like droughts, floods, fires, and now seemingly continuous subzero temperatures.

And we want to continue to be the reliable partner whose support you know you can count on.

Although today's session draws to a close soon, I want our conversation to be ongoing.

Please know that my door remains open, and that I look forward to deepening and strengthening our relationship in the years ahead.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).