U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture
Washington, DC 20515

TO: The Honorable Darrell Issa, Chairman
House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
The Honorable Daniel E. Lungren, Chairman
Committee on House Administration
FROM: The Honorable Frank D. Lucas, Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
DATE: February 10, 2011
SUBJECT: Oversight Plan for the House Committee on Agriculture for the 112th Congress

Pursuant to Rule X, clause 2(d)(1) of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 112th Congress, I submit the following plan to fulfill the General Oversight Responsibilities reporting requirements. This outline was prepared in consultation with the Ranking Member, was presented to the full committee for its consideration, and is now offered for your consideration relative to your responsibilities under the rules.

The following agenda constitutes the oversight plan of the Committee on Agriculture for the 112th Congress. It includes areas in which the committee and its subcommittees expect to conduct oversight or investigation of additional matters or programs as they arise. The committee will consult, as appropriate, with other committees of the House that may share subject matter interest. If you have any questions regarding this outline, do not hesitate to contact me.

OVERSIGHT PLAN
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
112TH CONGRESS

The committee expects to exercise appropriate oversight activity with regard to the following issues:

2008 FARM BILL AND CURRENT AGRICULTURAL CONDITIONS:

- Review the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) implementation of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (FCEA);
- Conduct an audit or inventory of every farm bill program under the committee's jurisdiction;
- Review programs that may be inefficient, duplicative, outdated or more appropriately administered by State or local governments for possible cuts or elimination;
- Review programs for waste, fraud and abuse;
- Review the current state of health of the U.S. farm economy;

- Review USDA's initial and subsequent implementation of FCEA payment limit and adjusted gross income provisions;
- Review USDA's use of Ad Hoc Disaster Assistance;
- Review the state of credit conditions and availability in rural America;
- Review the impact of weather conditions on crop production;
- Review USDA's activities regarding implementation of the U.S. Warehouse Act;
- Review of market situation, including impact of crop reports and projections;
- Review colony collapse disorder and other long term threats to pollinator health;
- Review USDA's implementation of the U.S. Grain Standards Act;
- Review USDA's implementation of the Fair and Equitable Tobacco Reform Act of 2004;
- Review the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) management controls for Finality Rule and equitable relief decisions;
- Review how Administrative Pay-Go is affecting Department actions; and
- Review discretionary actions by USDA that are not directly authorized by legislation.

ENERGY

- Assess implementation of energy programs authorized by FCEA;
- Review administration of the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP);
- Review activities funded by the Biomass Research and Development Act (BRDA) and input from the external BRDA Advisory Board;
- Review availability of agriculture and forestry feedstocks for renewable energy production;
- Review current status of research on energy crops and feedstocks;
- Review RUS electric loan program;
- Review electricity reliability in rural America;
- Review current provisions in existing law that support agriculture-based energy production and use;
- Review the implementation of the Renewable Fuels Standard (RFA);
- Review programs that may be inefficient, duplicative, outdated or more appropriately administered by State or local governments for possible cuts or elimination;
- Review renewable fuel programs and their impact on agriculture; and
- Review USDA's energy infrastructure initiative.

CONSERVATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT:

- Review the impact of regulatory activities by the EPA and its effect on agriculture productivity;
- Review the impact of regulatory activities carried out pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (ESA), or any proposed legislative changes to such Act, on agricultural producers;
- Review the impact of the Administration's regulatory activity relative to methyl bromide on production of agriculture in the U.S.;
- Review of EPA's resource needs as they pertain to the collection of pesticide user fees;

- Review any proposed legislation to implement the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants to the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, and the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade;
- Review the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;
- Review budget and program activities of the NRCS;
- Review implementation of all of USDA's conservation programs;
- Review conservation streamlining initiatives to eliminate duplicative and overlapping programs;
- Review programs that may be inefficient, duplicative, outdated or more appropriately administered by State or local governments for possible cuts or elimination;
- Review EPA's jurisdiction under the Clean Water Act (CWA) and its impact to U.S. agriculture;
- Review of potential impacts of EPA's Clean Air Act (CAA) regulatory program on U.S. agriculture;
- Review ongoing discussions and potential consequences for American agriculture under the United Nations Climate Change Conference;
- Review EPA's implementation of the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA), FIFRA and Pesticide Registration Improvement Renewal Act (PRIA II);
- Review the impact of litigation and rulemaking concerning FIFRA, ESA, CAA, CWA, the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) and the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act (EPCRA) and for impacts agricultural operations;
- Review the EPA's regulatory actions in regard to pesticide evaluations;
- Review of EPA's regulation of Animal Feeding Operations;
- Review of the non-emergency haying and grazing provisions of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP);
- Review of the operation of the Resource, Conservation and Development Program; and
- Review of Total Maximum Daily Load strategies and impacts on production agriculture.

FEDERAL CROP INSURANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT:

- Review USDA's implementation of crop insurance provisions of the FCEA;
- Review the effectiveness of the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments Program (SURE);
- Review the role and effectiveness of the Federal Crop Insurance Program;
- Review USDA's and the Risk Management Agency's (RMA) administration and oversight of the Federal Crop Insurance Program;
- Review the availability of crop insurance as a risk management tool;
- Review programs that may be inefficient, duplicative, outdated or more appropriately administered by State or local governments for possible cuts or elimination;

- Review USDA's activities designed to find and reduce crop insurance program waste, fraud, and abuse;
- Review USDA's handling of the SRA process;
- Review RMA's combination of revenue protection crop insurance programs;
- Review the operations of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC);
- Review the growing consolidation and internationalization of futures exchange trading;
- Review market machinations for exchange traded energy and agricultural future products;
- Review enforcement and oversight capabilities of the CFTC both domestically and internationally; and
- Review the role of the CFTC in light of potential climate change legislation.

IMPLEMENTATION OF TITLE VII OF DODD-FRANK WALL STREET REFORM AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

- Review the process by which the CFTC engages in rulemaking as directed by Title VII of the Dodd-Frank Act to ensure—
  (1) it is a transparent process;
  (2) the sequence, timing and comment deadlines of rule proposals allow for meaningful public comment;
  (3) cost benefit analysis is adequately performed and reflected in rule proposals;
  (4) the CFTC is well coordinated with other federal financial regulators responsible for implementing Title VII;
  (5) regulations do not impose undue or excessive burdens on financial markets and the economy;
  (6) regulations are consistent with the intent and statutory language of the Dodd-Frank Act.
- Examine the CFTC, SEC and Federal Reserve rules as they relate to the exemption for commercial end-users, including the application of margin and capital to end-user OTC transactions;
- Examine the feasibility of timetables established by Dodd-Frank in building the data, technology and connectivity necessary to meet regulatory objectives;
- Review the impact of Title VII on market structure;
- Review the impact of proposed transparency mechanisms on trade pricing and liquidity;
- Review the impact of Title VII on the global competitiveness of US firms;

AGRICULTURE TRADE AND INTERNATIONAL FOOD AID:

- Review ongoing multilateral, regional, and bilateral trade negotiations (including WTO accession agreements) to assess their potential impact on U.S. agriculture;
- Review implementation of existing trade agreements and commitments as well as proposed new trade agreements and commitments to determine—
  (1) whether they are consistent with current U.S. law;
  (2) whether they will promote economic development in rural areas of the U.S.;

(3) their impact or potential impact on current production of import sensitive agricultural commodities, and on exports of U.S. agricultural products; and
(4) their impact or potential impact on the overall competitiveness of the U.S. agricultural sector, including the production, processing and distribution of agricultural products.

- Monitor existing trade agreements to ensure trading partners are meeting obligations and enforcing trade commitments;
- Review farm export programs to determine how well they are promoting the interests of U.S. agriculture and examine proposals to improve, modify or expand such programs;
- Assess U.S. food aid programs to determine their impact or potential impact on the reduction of world hunger. In particular, the committee will examine the potential impact of multilateral trade negotiations on the effectiveness of U.S. food aid programs; and
- Address sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) barriers and other technical barriers to U.S. agricultural exports and examine USDA efforts to eliminate such barriers.

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND PROMOTION:

- Review implementation of biosecurity protocols at USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) laboratories;
- Review USDA's implementation of research, education and extension programs authorized in FCEA;
- Review the administration of the ARS research stations and worksites;
- Review USDA's continuing ability to conduct foreign animal disease research, training and diagnostic programs at the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility following the transfer of the center to the Department of Homeland Security;
- Assess federal efforts to facilitate research and development of aquacultural enterprises, specifically focusing on the activities of the Joint Committee on Aquaculture;
- Review implementation of USDA's regulation on organic standards;
- Review implementation of USDA's collection of organic production and market data;
- Review implementation of National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA);
- Review coordination between ARS, Economic Research Service (ERS), NIFA and action agencies in USDA -- such as NRCS and FSA -- in order to prevent duplicative research;
- Review operation of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board;
- Review USDA's efforts to expand research and development of pathogen reduction technologies;
- Evaluate the current mix of research funding mechanisms to ensure maximum benefits from these investments to producers, processors and consumers;
- Review administration of USDA's agricultural marketing and promotion programs;
- Review of coordination between USDA and DOE on energy research programs;
- Review of congressional appropriation process and implications on research funding under ARS, ERS, NASS and NIFA;
- Review of ARS, ERS, NASS and NIFA national program priorities;
- Oversight of research grant process to coordinate and prevent overlapping research; and

- Review the potential for research and technology transfer to address the needs of both the biofuels and livestock industries.

BIOTECHNOLOGY:

- Review current regulations and research regarding animal and plant biotechnology;
- Review the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) findings regarding cloned animal products and regulation of genetically engineered animals;
- Assess USDA's efforts to develop and promote benefits of biotechnology for increasing agricultural productivity and combating hunger globally; and
- Review USDA's management and controls over biotechnology-derived material.

U.S. FOREST SERVICE ADMINISTRATION:

- Review U.S. Forest Service (USFS) budget, with special attention to land acquisition and easement programs;
- Continue to monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of the Forest Service fire management program, including the impact of hazardous fuels management, forest health efforts and fire preparedness;
- Review the impact of fire expenses on other USFS program delivery;
- Assess the USFS strategy for timber harvesting on federal lands; and
- Review USFS efforts to promote utilization of federal forests for renewable energy purposes.

DAIRY:

- Review options to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of dairy programs; and
- Review efficiency of federal market order system.

OUTREACH AND CIVIL RIGHTS

- Review implementation of Section 14012 of the FCEA;
- Review the implementation of the Office of Advocacy and Outreach;
- Monitor USDA's outreach efforts to small and minority farmers/ranchers;
- Review of the operations of the office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights;
- Review USDA process for evaluating discrimination claims under the Pigford settlement;
- Review of the delivery of USDA services and outreach efforts on Indian reservations and tribal lands;
- Review current status of Agricultural Census and efforts to reach undercounted farmers and ranchers; and
- Review participation of minority farmers in FSA County/Local Committees as well as outreach to increase participation in County Committee elections.

USDA GENERAL ADMINISTRATION:

- Review confidentiality of information provided to USDA by agricultural producers;
- Review USDA's field office structure for the purpose of delivering commodity, conservation, energy and rural development programs;
- Review USDA's plan to modernize its Information Technology (IT) systems; and
- Review the administrative structure of USDA for effectiveness and additional efficiencies.

FARM CREDIT, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, AND THE RURAL ECONOMY:

- Review Farm Credit Administration's (FCA) regulatory program and activities regarding the Farm Credit System (FCS) to assure the its safety and soundness;
- Review of Farmer Mac activities and programs;
- Review of FSA's direct and guaranteed loan programs and graduation efforts;
- Review of the Rural Electrification Act (REA);
- Review of the farm economy and access to credit;
- Review implementation of rural development policies and authorities contained in FCEA and the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act;
- Review programs that may be inefficient, duplicative, outdated or more appropriately administered by State or local governments for possible cuts or elimination;
- Conduct oversight of the USDA's Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee Program;
- Conduct oversight of new Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program;
- Conduct oversight of the implementation of the USDA's Telecommunications Programs;
- Review the status of the Rural Telephone Bank;
- Assess state of rural water systems and effectiveness of federal funding to build and upgrade those systems;
- Assess rural infrastructure and business needs and effectiveness of USDA programs targeted to those needs;
- Review of agriculture lending practices;
- Review of definition of "rural" under rural development programs; and
- Review of rural development loan programs and default rates.

USDA FOOD AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS:

- Review food and nutrition programs including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), fruit and vegetable initiatives, the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the Food Distribution on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) and other commodity distribution programs;
- Assess the level of participation by states in SNAP and examine state options for expanding SNAP participation;

- Review buying patterns of SNAP recipients and methods for encouraging balanced lifestyles;
- Review programs that may be inefficient, duplicative, outdated or more appropriately administered by State or local governments for possible cuts or elimination;
- Review efforts by state SNAP administrators to modernize and streamline their programs;
- Review the Community Food Project Program to ensure cooperative grants are working;
- Review of the SNAP retailer approval process; and
- Review of the implementation of changes made to the SNAP Nutrition Education Program.

FOOD SAFETY:

- Review implementation of the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act;
- Review implementation of the recent FDA Egg Safety Rule;
- Review USDA's administration of meat and poultry inspection laws and the FDA's food inspection activities to ensure the development of scientifically sound systems for food safety assurance;
- Review USDA's implementation of the catfish inspection program;
- Review USDA's efforts to educate consumers regarding safe food handling practices and streamline the assessment and approval of food safety technologies;
- Review implementation of new protocols for meat, poultry, eggs, or seafood safety inspection; and
- Review USDA's enforcement of the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act and humane handling regulations.

PLANT AND ANIMAL HEALTH:

- Review enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act;
- Assess federal efforts to reduce threats to human, animal, and plant health due to predatory and invasive species;
- Assess USDA's Animal Disease Traceability Plan; and
- Review implementation of Sec. 10201 - Plant pest and disease management and disaster prevention.

LIVESTOCK MARKETING:

- Assess the effectiveness of the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) in determining market manipulation in the livestock industry;
- Review structural changes in agribusiness and the potential cost and benefits for agricultural producers; and
- Review the USDA's mandatory livestock price reporting system.

HOMELAND AND AGRICULTURAL SECURITY:

- Oversight of USDA's preparedness against terrorist threats to agriculture production; and
- Review of agriculture inspection activities under the Department of Homeland Security.

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Review the implementation and impact of The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) on USDA programs;
- Review implementation of the Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act;
- Review of the impact of transportation infrastructure issues on agriculture and forestry;
- Review USDA's implementation and enforcement of the country of origin labeling rule; and
- Assess operation of the Fruit and Vegetable (FAV) planting prohibition pilot program.

CONSULTATION WITH OTHER COMMITTEES TO REDUCE DUPLICATION:

- With Natural Resources Committee on forestry issues, ESA issues and other public land issues;
- With Science Committee on Research;
- With Ways and Means and Education and the Workforce on nutrition programs;
- With Ways and Means on trade issues;
- With Homeland Security on importation of animal and plant material and on research related to agroterrorism;
- With Judiciary on immigrant agricultural labor;
- With Energy and Commerce on food safety and biomass energy programs both existing and new;
- With Transportation and Infrastructure on CWA compliance issues;
- With Financial Services Committee on Dodd-Frank Act issues; and
- With any other committee as appropriate.