

Testimony of Deborah L. Moore, Producer; Roseville, IL

Presented to the House Committee on Agriculture

“The Future of U.S. Farm Policy: Formulation of the 2012 Farm Bill”

Carl Sandburg College, Building F, Gymnasium, Galesburg, IL

Friday, March 23, 2012

Good morning. I would like to start by thanking Chairman Lucas, Congressman Peterson, Congressman Schilling and other members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify here today.

My name is Deb Moore. I farm near Roseville in western Illinois with my husband, Ron, and his brother, Larry. We have about 2,000 acres of corn and soybeans and a feeder cattle operation with 200 acres of pasture. I am a member of the Illinois Soybean Association and the Illinois Farm Bureau. Ron and I are also members of the corn and beef associations.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to be here today to talk about the value and importance of farm programs to modern U.S. agriculture operations like ours. For more than 30 years, we have been active family farmers who are concerned about both caring for the land and sharing the farm story with the public. I was actually born and raised in suburban Chicago and moved to the farm after marrying Ron, who is a third generation Warren County farmer. Both of his grandfathers farmed in Warren County. We like to tell our sons' friends that there are more steers per square mile than there are people in Section 5 of Roseville Township.

Farmers like us face many challenges and opportunities in today's global marketplace. As we continue to become more efficient and grow food for the world on the same number of acres, we must be innovative and also manage more risk. As crop prices have increased over the last couple of years, so have expenses. We must find ways collectively to manage such challenges.

Currently our only income is from the farm. With higher commodity prices has come a higher input cost. From 2010 to 2011, our income increased 50 percent, but our expenses increased 58 percent. Our major expenses each crop year include cash rent, followed by fertilizer, seed and crop protectants. Fertilizer expenses have more than doubled in the last four years, crop protectants costs are up 30 percent, cash rent, seed and fuel have doubled in cost over the last few years. I would also add that we have not increased our production acres during this time either, only the expense per acre of planting the crop. In the fall of 2011, we purchased our seed, fertilizer and crop protectants for the 2012 crop, a full year before that crop will be harvested. We pay for crop expenses a year ahead to guarantee supply and prices.

We do what we can to manage the financial risk as much as possible, but every year is different. Weather, disease and prices play a major role in our profitability. High commodity prices are of absolutely no use to us if we lose a crop to extreme weather conditions. One storm can wipe out

an entire crop and jeopardize a farm in a matter of minutes. We have had several wind storms that have taken down buildings and flattened our crops. In those situations, we had to run the combine in one direction with a reel to harvest most of our crop. We were luckier than many other farmers, we still had a crop to harvest but the expense increased greatly with added fuel and additional wear on the machinery.

Another major challenge we face is in educating consumers about agriculture and the importance of our industry to food production and the economic well-being of our country. I taught school when we were first married and then stayed home to raise our three sons. I did go back to teaching for eight years while the boys were in college to help pay their tuition. My teaching position was eliminated two years ago, but I still have a passion for teaching others about farming. I am involved with the Ag in the Classroom program and have hosted multiple school field trips, participated in classroom visits, and hosted urban teachers to our farm.

I also have become involved with Illinois Farm Families, a group that focuses on a different way of communicating with consumers than in the past. Illinois Farm Families are actively seeking a dialogue with urban consumers about food and farming concerns.

In this last year, Illinois Farm Families invited Chicago-area moms to see a variety of farms and get their questions answered. More than 70 interested moms applied for the program and nine were chosen to spend the year touring Illinois farms. I am one of the farm mom hostesses spending time with these field moms while they tour our farms. Each tour allows the moms to dig into food and farming topics and make their own judgments about our methods and performance. After the tours, the moms share their experiences with others using social media.

Last summer, my family was one of five Illinois farm families featured in an online program where consumers watched a video tour of our farm to learn about farming. We know more than 135,000 Illinois consumers viewed the farmer videos, many of whom we still communicate with through e-newsletters. In June, we will host the field moms for a closer look at our family farm.

I share this information with you because it is important for you to know that as we educate consumers about agriculture, they gain a better understanding of why it is important for tax dollars to help support agriculture. When consumers see for themselves how we care for the land, our animals and the environment and gain a better understanding of how agriculture bolsters the national economy and feeds their own families as well as those around the world, we see more support for making sure U.S. agriculture is a wise investment in the federal budget.

My family believes that farm programs play an important role in underpinning the strength of the farm economy which supports the overall U.S. economy. The importance of an effective safety net for farm income has grown as the rising cost of farm inputs has increasingly pressured farm profitability. We recognize that, in the current budget environment, farm programs are a target for interests that either oppose them in principle or want to fund other priorities. I am willing to accept our fair share of budget costs, but in proportion with other programs that may be explored for budget cuts. Our family supports ways to make farm programs more efficient, effective and defensible.

Let me review five of the farm bill titles and my position:

- **Commodity Title.** We support Risk Management proposals and other programs that enable us to better manage risk, maintain planting flexibility, avoid restructuring of the existing crop insurance program, and are in compliance with current U.S. World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments.

We use Federal Crop Insurance (Revenue Assurance), hail insurance, market loans, futures and options and Hedge-to-Arrive contracts to protect our financial investment in times of extreme volatility of commodity prices and input costs.

Our farm usually takes loans out every year for corn and soybean production to help with cash flow. We get our loans through our local Farm Service Agency office and the Commodity Credit Corporation.

Let me also add that credit for new farmers is important to the future of agriculture. With the expenses we face, it would be very difficult for a new farmer to secure enough credit to take over an operation from an established farmer. Farmers borrow more money each year than most Americans will borrow in a lifetime.

- **Conservation Title.** We support programs for conservation practices on working lands. We would like to reduce the acreage cap on the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in order to achieve budget savings and allow U.S. producers to respond to growing demand.

Conservation projects are extremely important to farmers. We emphasize conservation projects that protect the environment. Our farm is 30 percent no-till and 70 percent minimum till. But there are not enough resources to do all of the necessary work.

We have relied on the cost share programs available through USDA and the Illinois Department of Agriculture. We have done stream bank restoration to reduce erosion on pasture land and have CRP waterways to reduce field level erosion on 200 acres. We also installed seven dry dams on 140 acres to reduce erosion and improve productivity.

- **Energy Title.** We support reauthorization and funding for the Biodiesel Fuel Education Program and Biobased Market Program and would like to see reauthorization of the Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels.
- **Research Title.** We would like to see the Agriculture & Food Research Initiative (AFRI) reauthorized for competitive research grants and funding maintained for research at land-grant universities. I believe that we need to continue investing in research with Illinois universities to advance research that can help us better manage production challenges. We need public funding and researcher support to maintain a comprehensive research program.

- Trade Title. We need reauthorization and funding for the Foreign Market Development (FMD) Program at \$34.5 million annually and the Market Access Program (MAP) at \$200 million annually and continue Food for Education and food aid programs.

Again, let me emphasize that I strongly support these and other titles be part of the 2012 Farm Bill, including support for commodity programs, conservation, research, energy, and export promotion and food assistance programs.

That concludes my comments today. I look forward to working with you and other members of the committee as you write the next farm bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your time.

Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Information Required From Nongovernmental Witnesses

Deborah L. Moore

My husband Ron and I farm 2000 acres in western Illinois with his brother. We raise corn, soybeans and beef cattle. Our three sons have worked on the farm before they graduated from college.

After graduating from Western Illinois University with a Bachelor of Science in Education, I taught fifth grade and then elementary gifted education classes. I am currently farming with my husband. I am a member of the Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Soybean Association. Ron and I are also members of the Illinois Corn Growers and Illinois Beef Producers. I have served as a Director on the Warren-Henderson Farm Bureau Board and am currently on the Illinois Farm Bureau Action Team and Ag in the Classroom Advisory Council. I am also working with Illinois Farm Families as the Field Mom Host. I have also served on the Warren County Board of Supervisors. I am involved in our church and several civic groups.

Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Required Witness Disclosure Form

House Rules* require nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of Federal grants received since October 1, 2009.

Name: Deborah L. Moore _____

Organization you represent (if any): _____

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2009, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract. House Rules do NOT require disclosure of federal payments to individuals, such as Social Security or Medicare benefits, farm program payments, or assistance to agricultural producers:

Source: _____ Amount: _____

Source: _____ Amount: _____

2. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) the organization has received since October 1, 2009, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract:

Source: _____ Amount: _____

Source: _____ Amount: _____

Please check here if this form is NOT applicable to you: _____

Signature: Deborah L. Moore

* Rule XI, clause 2(g)(5) of the U.S. House of Representatives provides: *Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof. In the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by any entity represented by the witness.*

PLEASE ATTACH DISCLOSURE FORM TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.