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Testimony Submitted by: Ted McKinney, CEO
Prepared for: Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) commends the subcommittee for its work in support of farmers, ranchers, and rural communities. NASDA represents the Commissioners, Secretaries, and Directors of agriculture in all 50 states and 4 territories. NASDA members are co-regulators with the federal government and strong advocates for American agriculture.

As you begin the fiscal year (FY) 2025 appropriations process, NASDA asks you to prioritize the following programs that enhance farmers, ranchers, and rural communities and ensure a safe, affordable, and abundant food supply.

1. Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)

a. State and Local Food Safety Regulatory Activities - \$170 million

- i. A consistent and predictable funding mechanism for state and local programs is needed. As such, we urge you to include a line item along with the increased budget to detail specific funding for state and local food safety issues for FDA to ensure they have the budgetary certainty needed to carry out their work.
 1. Produce Safety Rule Implementation through the State Cooperative Agreement Program.
 2. Food Safety Outreach & Education Programs led by states.
 - a. Including the Produce Safety Alliance, administered by Cornell University
 3. Preventive Controls for Human Food Rule Implementation
 4. Preventive Controls for Animal Food Rule Implementation

NASDA members are at the forefront of implementing FSMA. In alignment with the FDA's statutory authority, state agencies primarily oversee inspections, enforcement, training, and implementation of various other food safety regulatory activities required under FSMA. Funding these programs will enable NASDA to sustain and strengthen its state regulatory programs while also facilitating ongoing education and training for compliance and prevention within the farm and food sectors. The education, outreach, and training facilitated by state programs and PSA play a critical role in fulfilling FSMA's objectives and upholding our Public Health Mission of ensuring a safe food supply.

2. Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network - \$10 million, full funding

Funding will continue efforts to scale assistance programs and create training and partnerships to serve rural Americans—60% of whom live in areas with mental health professional shortages.

3. Food Safety Inspection Service

a. State Food Safety and Inspection – \$75 million

- i. FSIS cooperates with state agencies in developing and administering the State MPI and Cooperative Interstate Shipment programs for small and very small establishments. Traditionally, FSIS has provided state programs with the full 50%

funding match for inspection activities. However, in recent years, FSIS has been providing state programs with significantly less funding, challenging states' ability to provide inspection services. In recent years, states have seen dramatic increases in the number of fully inspected slaughter establishments, many of which are subject to state meat and poultry inspection. With limited staff, states face further financial constraints, which lessen their ability to support the growth of existing establishments or expansion. Reduced funding limits staff, including veterinarians, and makes response time slower, resulting in disruptions to operations. Without additional resources, states will be forced to turn away facilities for state inspection, resulting in a reduction in the amount of processing capacity available for farmers.

4. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Programs

- a. Animal Health Programs - \$400 million
 - i. State departments of agriculture and state animal health officials work collaboratively with federal partners through numerous cooperative funding agreements administered by USDA-APHIS to safeguard animal health across the United States. These cooperative agreements are driven by risks of foreign animal disease incursions into the United States and include programs related to avian health, particularly in the wake of recurring and new outbreaks of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in multiple species, protections against the threat of African Swine Fever, efforts to protect the livestock sector against Foot and Mouth Disease, as well as many program diseases such as bovine tuberculosis, chronic wasting disease, and scrapie. States are critical partners and often the frontlines for prevention, surveillance, early detection, management, and ultimately eradication of foreign animal disease.
- b. Plant Health Programs – Authorized funding
 - i. State departments of agriculture work in tandem with federal partners through cooperative agreements administered by USDA-APHIS, alongside industry, academia, and other stakeholders, to safeguard our Nation's crops and forests against the entry, establishment, and spread of economically and environmentally significant pests.
- c. National Animal Health Laboratory Network - \$30 million, authorized funding
 - i. NAHLN funding is critical for large-scale animal-disease outbreak response. NASDA members, who regulate and oversee animal health in the states, are the first line of defense against animal disease outbreaks and rely on NALHN labs for tracking disease progression and performing tests on thousands of diagnostic samples. Federal funding for the NAHLN will expand surveillance and surge capacity to diagnose diseases and ramp up during emergencies.
- d. National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program – Authorized funding
 - i. The National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program allows APHIS to collaborate with animal health partners throughout the nation to implement high-value projects that enhance prevention, preparedness, detection, and response to the most damaging emerging and foreign animal diseases that threaten U.S. agriculture.
- e. National Veterinary Stockpile - \$20 million increase
 - i. The National Veterinary Stockpile is a critical component of APHIS emergency response capability.
- f. Foreign Animal Disease (imported canines)

- i. NASDA urges providing \$1 million to APHIS to strengthen the federal oversight of imported canines and other imports that could transfer foreign animal diseases that will devastate the U.S. livestock industry.

5. National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)

- a. NASDA supports funding NASS at a level that allows NASS to conduct and publish all necessary reports for the entire agriculture industry.

6. National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Programs

- a. Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program - \$10 million
 - i. Since 2010, USDA has executed 552 VMLRP awards to veterinarians. Meanwhile, 1,632 veterinarians have applied to the program. Of those who completed service, 80% remained in underserved rural communities. NASDA urges Congress to exempt VMLRP awards from the 37% withholding tax currently paid by USDA with appropriated dollars to maximize the federal funding provided to the program.
- b. Veterinary Service Grant Program - \$3.5 million
 - i. VSGP offers competitive grant funding to address gaps in veterinary shortage situations by bolstering national food supply veterinary capacity through education and training activities and practice enhancement or expansion.
- c. Agriculture in the Classroom – \$1 million
 - i. NASDA supports Agriculture in the Classroom, which improves student achievement by applying agricultural-based content as the context to teach core curriculum concepts in science, social studies, language arts and nutrition.

7. Agriculture Research

- a. NASDA supports funding USDA's Research, Education and Economics mission areas to support short-term and long-term research needs. Specifically, NASDA supports funding:
 - i. The Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research, National Institute for Food and Agriculture, and USDA-Agricultural Research Service.
 - ii. Competitive research grant programs, including the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative and other competitive-based funding initiatives.
 - iii. Maintaining and strengthening program funding through the Hatch, Smith-Lever Act, and other formula-based funding authorities.
- b. NASDA supports USDA's Agricultural Research Service in maintaining a focus on agricultural-related legal issues within the National Agricultural Library and encourages ARS and the National Agricultural Library to engage in multi-year cooperative agreements with the Agricultural Law Information Partnership's partner institutions.
- c. Animal Disease Research Funding:
 - i. Provide \$50 million in authorized funding to support the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority, authorized in Section 7132 of the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018.
 - ii. Provide \$11.8 million for the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System. NARMS serves as a source of data for the approval of new animal antibiotics and the post-approval safety monitoring of these compounds.
- d. Minor Crop Pest Management Program (IR-4):

- i. NASDA recommends funding this program at the authorized funding level because developing pest control tools have high regulatory costs. This funding ensures small specialty crop markets have safe and effective agrichemicals and biopesticides.
- e. Food Safety Research
 - i. Provide \$5,000,000 to NIFA for the purpose of funding projects that identify viable human health hazard mitigations for agricultural regions where plant and animal operations coexist, with the goal of improving and assuring maximized and flexible utility of agricultural lands.
 - ii. Provide \$5,000,000 to NIFA for funding projects that identify, validate, and facilitate human-pathogen kill step technologies and systems for the fresh produce industry.

8. Agricultural Trade

NASDA requests at least \$200 million for the Market Access Program and \$34.5 million for the Foreign Market Development Program. NASDA supports maintaining funding for essential export promotion and market development funds provided by the Agricultural Trade Promotion and Facilitation programs. In addition, we ask for discretionary funds to provide \$7 million – less than 3 percent of the program investment - for USDA administrative and operational costs. With administrative funding in place, the full investment of MAP and FMD can be realized for the intended purpose of U.S. agricultural export promotion and long-term market development.

9. Wildlife Services

NASDA supports \$82 million in no-year funding for FY 2025 to implement the complete modernization of the U.S. Geological Survey, National Wildlife Health Center. The NWHC is the nation’s only federal BSL-3 facility exclusively dedicated to scientific investigation and research on wildlife diseases that threaten human, animal, and environmental health.

10. Urban Agriculture

NASDA supports funding the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production at the authorized level of \$25 million and recommends an additional \$14 million for the urban agriculture data collection initiative.

11. Cyber Security

NASDA supports funding of the Comprehensive Food Safety Network Consortium at the full authorized level of \$20 million, which was authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014 (7 U.S. Code § 5925), to prepare the agriculture industry against potential cyber security attacks.

12. Office of Pest Management Policy - \$3.4 million increase

NASDA supports increased funding for the Office of Pest Management Policy at \$3.4 million to provide ongoing technical expertise for various user groups throughout the pesticide regulatory process. This increase will allow OPMP to keep pace with increasing regulatory pressures that require increased coordination with state departments of agriculture, pesticide end-users, and other federal agencies.

Conclusion

NASDA thanks you for your careful consideration of these requests as you work to fund the programs that enhance farmers and ranchers and ensure a safe, affordable, and abundant food supply. If you have any questions, please contact RJ Karney, Senior Director Public Policy, rj.karney@nasda.org.