

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0609

November 16, 2021

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Senate Agriculture Committee
Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow,

On behalf of American farmers and ranchers, we would like to request that the committee host a hearing to examine the recent supply chain crisis and to probe the administration's plan to address the United States' supply chain failures as it relates to the agricultural industry. Specifically, we recommend the invitation be extended to Secretary Vilsack to testify, as a co-chair of the Supply Chain Disruption Task Force, on the taskforce's findings, outlining agriculture-specific shortages that have arisen and how the administration plans to address such issues.

As you are aware, we are in the midst of a supply chain crisis that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. While some of this crisis can be explained by COVID-19, the unseen over-regulation of industry and labor shortages exacerbated by this administration's policies are as much or more to blame for the crisis. Instead of loosening the reins and providing businesses with more regulatory flexibility to combat this crisis, this administration continues to explore additional regulation on businesses to micromanage free enterprise.

It goes without saying that the supply shortage has caused agricultural input costs to skyrocket across the board. We've heard reports that the price of shipping containers importing and exporting our products have increased from roughly \$4,000 to \$30,000 a container in some instances. The administration's policies have dramatically increased energy costs, in turn increasing the cost of fertilizer and crop protection products. Fertilizer already costs the farmer exponentially more this year, in some cases more than 300% from November 2020. Crop protection products necessary to no-till farm are five times more expensive for next year's 2022 crop than the 2021 crop year. If these products aren't available at a reasonable cost, farmers will opt for traditional tillage as a means of weed and pest control – a measure widely discouraged by the current administration.

Input costs are just the tip of the iceberg. Emission standards for implements of husbandry and motor vehicles require hi-tech sensors and parts. As equipment is used, a sensor may go out or a part fails, yet replacement parts are unavailable, leaving vehicles out of commission for weeks. Even outside of a regulatory mandate, standard parts that are essential for operation are not available. Farmers are creative people and local businesses are servicing their needs, but temporary fixes are not sufficient for extended periods of time.

The federal worker vaccine mandate is going to hit rural farming communities disproportionately harder. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has clarified that vaccines will be required even for the volunteer county committee members of the Farm Service Agency despite the fact that such committee members are not considered federal employees according to USDA's 2019 COC Stakeholder FAQs. This will severely impact USDA's ability to service the farming community already hard hit by supply chain issues.

The implications of a long-term agriculture supply shortage and labor shortage could be detrimental to our food supply and environment, especially as the industry is forced to adapt to the new mandates created by the Biden administration. Furthermore, if thousands of farmers are forced to forego the no-till process and revert back to full tillage methods, the impacts could go far beyond a short term problem.

American farmers and ranchers work through the volatility of weather, market demand, and cost of production every day. They deserve more than to be left in the dark surrounding a man-made issue which permeates every part of their livelihoods and threatens to make or break their operations. We insist that the committee host members of the Administration as soon as possible to bring these problems to light and create solutions together.

Sincerely,



Roger Marshall, M.D.
United States Senator



Joni Ernst
United States Senator



John Thune
United States Senator

cc. The Honorable John Boozman