



Statement of the American Farm Bureau Federation

**TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & PUBLIC
WORKS**

**Legislative Hearing on S. 1475, the Livestock Regulatory Protection Act of
2021**

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Presented By:

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Scott VanderWal. I am a third-generation corn and soybean farmer and cattle feeder from Volga, South Dakota. I am the president of the South Dakota Farm Bureau and serve as the Vice President of the American Farm Bureau Federation. I am pleased to offer this testimony in support of S. 1475, the bipartisan Livestock Regulatory Protection Act on behalf of the American Farm Bureau Federation and Farm Bureau members across this country.

America's farmers and ranchers play a leading role in promoting soil health, conserving water, enhancing wildlife, efficiently using nutrients, and caring for their animals. For decades they have embraced innovation thanks to investments in agricultural research and adopted climate-smart practices to improve productivity, enhance [sustainability](#), and provide clean and renewable energy.

Livestock and crop production are the heart of American agriculture, providing the food we enjoy every day. The daily choices we make on our farm and ranches are driven by our commitment to sustainability. Farmers have embraced technologies that reduce emissions and increase efficiency, making U.S. agriculture a leader in sustainability. Building upon the strong foundation of voluntary stewardship investments and practices, including those in the farm bill, we look forward to working with policymakers to further advance successful sustainable practices in U.S. agriculture.

As farm efficiency goes up, emissions are going down in the livestock sector. Although livestock emissions get a lot of attention in discussions around sustainability, they make up less than 4% of overall emissions in the U.S., and those numbers are declining thanks to improvements in feed and production practices. Therefore, our livestock producers should not be subject to onerous regulations and costly permit fees for their animals' emissions, which could ultimately lead to higher food costs for consumers and less innovation in our industry. Voluntary, incentive-based programs, rather than command and control regulation from the EPA, should be the policy of the United States, which is why S. 1475, the Livestock Regulatory Protection Act, is so important.

All told, agriculture accounts for approximately 10% of total U.S. greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, far less than the transportation, electricity generation, and industry sectors. Farmers

continue to produce more with greater efficiency. In fact, U.S. agriculture would have needed nearly 100 million more acres 30 years ago to match today's production levels.

Carbon sequestration, achieved through the management of forestry, grasslands, wetlands, cropland and settlements, contributed to GHG removals equivalent to 12% of total U.S. emissions. With increased investment in agricultural research, we can develop new frontier technologies to reduce emissions and capture even more carbon. With cutting-edge science, we may be able to achieve net zero emissions in some sectors of agriculture.

U.S. farmers and ranchers have long been at the forefront of climate-smart farming, utilizing scientific solutions, technology, and innovations to raise crops and care for livestock. These efforts are designed to protect soil and water, efficiently manage manure, produce clean and renewable energy, capture carbon, and improve sustainability. Over two generations, we've nearly tripled our productivity, without using more resources. To say we're doing more with less is an understatement.

Many of agriculture's carbon sequestration efforts are not directly assigned to the agriculture sector. It is certain that if the carbon sequestration efforts of U.S. farmers and ranchers were assigned to agriculture, our contributions to GHG emissions would be lower. It is worth noting that U.S. farmers have enrolled more than 140 million acres in federal conservation programs--that's equal to the total land area of California and New York combined. Millions more acres are dedicated to nonfederal conservation programs.

More productive livestock operations allow ranchers, pork producers, poultry growers, egg producers, and dairy farmers to maintain their total contribution to GHG emissions at less than 4%. Innovation plays an important role, from methane digesters to advances in nutritional balance that lead to lower per-unit GHG emissions. In fact, we have seen a 26% reduction in per unit emissions of GHGs for our dairy industry while milk production is up 48%, a 20% reduction in swine with an 80% increase in pork production and close to a 10% drop for our cattle producers with an 18% increase in our production of beef.

U.S. farmers and ranchers contribute significantly fewer GHG emissions than their counterparts around the world. EPA data shows agriculture's global contribution to GHG emissions was 24% in 2010, more than double U.S. farmers' and ranchers' contributions to total

U.S. emissions in 2020. This significant difference is largely driven by U.S. farmers' enthusiastic adoption of technology. American farmers and ranchers are pioneers of sustainability, and any policy debate should recognize their contributions, efficiency gains, and the considerable impact of their carbon sequestration efforts.

Farm Bureau will continue to work to ensure that farm families maintain their ability to respond and adapt to climatic events and that public policies do not threaten the long-term resiliency of our rural communities. Congress must protect American agriculture and production practices from undue burden, and respect farmers' and ranchers' ability to innovate and solve problems. And that is why S. 1475, the Livestock Regulatory Protection Act, is so important and should be enacted into law.

American farm families want to leave the land better than when it was first entrusted to our care. That is the story of my family's farm in South Dakota and the story of millions of farms across this country. We want to protect the planet, feed and clothe people, and promote vibrant communities. Working with our partners, land-grant universities, policymakers, and the farmers and ranchers we represent, Farm Bureau intends to continue finding solutions for the challenges of the future.

Mr. Chairman, I commend you for convening this hearing. I will be pleased to respond to questions.