

Remarks by Michael Scuse
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United States Department of Agriculture
World Meat Congress
Paris, France
June 6, 2012

Thank you and good afternoon. It's been an interesting and informative day, and I am honored to help wrap things up by sharing the United States' point of view. I offer you not just the perspective of a U.S. government official, but also the perspective of an American farmer. Along with my brother, I produce corn, soybeans and wheat on our 600-hectare family farm in the state of Delaware.

This afternoon, we've talked in depth about the challenges at hand: A growing world population. An expanding middle class with rising demand for animal protein. A diminishing natural resource base. Changing climate. Mounting demand for energy.

Whether speaking as a policymaker or as a farmer, I have a clear and simple message for you: Embracing innovation and making decisions based on sound science is the **only** way we can confront these challenges.

Make no mistake: the status quo in agriculture is not sustainable. A transformation must take place – a “greener” green revolution, if you will. But for that to happen, all countries must be willing to provide an environment that facilitates sustainable development. This includes progressive, science-based policies that enable the creation and commercialization of innovative products and technologies.

There are no magic bullets. Biotechnology is not a magic bullet. Organic agriculture is not a magic bullet. Agro-ecology is not a magic bullet. What is important is that farmers have a full set of tools to confront the multiple challenges we face.

I know from history – and from my frequent meetings with producers from around the world – that farmers and ranchers are ready and willing to embrace technology and innovation. And with technology and innovation, they are capable of extraordinary accomplishments.

Just look at the United States. Over the last 100 years, we've moved from subsistence farming to an agricultural industry that makes us one of the world's largest food exporters. This evolution was not pre-ordained. American farmers adapted and changed and embraced new ideas and practices to become more productive.

And looking ahead, further increases in agricultural productivity will depend upon further investment in research and openness to new technology. A range of innovations will be needed to meet the growing needs of the global population and to make agriculture more efficient in its use of resources.

I am proud that the U.S. Department of Agriculture is funding and participating in research that is delivering results for people around the globe. We are improving agricultural productivity by creating crops that better tolerate drought, disease, pests and salinity. We are studying pre- and post-harvest technologies to reduce crop losses. And we are looking to understand factors that go into nutrition in order to provide a better, safer, healthier diet for future generations.

This necessary and important agricultural research is going on around the world. In Africa and the Middle East we are combating a devastating fungus, called Ug-99, which has the potential to threaten wheat crops that feed 1 billion people. In partnership with researchers from Kenya, China and other nations, USDA is using genetics to help find wheat strains that are resistant to Ug-99.

Improved understanding of genetics is not just changing what we plant, but is also essential if we are to meet the growing global demand for meat – a demand that is being driven by a growing middle class. Therefore, the United States continues

to encourage the development of new technologies to improve animal genetics, prevent and eliminate animal diseases, improve feed conversion efficiency, and boost meat and milk production in livestock worldwide. Technology will continue to offer us tools for producing more with less.

As farmers and ranchers worldwide strive to produce more and better, we must also confront the uncertainty of global climate change and the constraints of limited water resources. But higher productivity need not come at the expense of our natural resources. America's agricultural producers have proven this. In the last 30 years alone, USDA has worked to help producers reduce soil erosion by more than 40 percent. And agriculture has gone from being the leading cause of wetlands loss to being the nation's leader in wetlands restoration efforts.

The solution to global food security need not – and should not – sacrifice efforts to conserve our natural resources and take care of our environment. That's why scientists are working on technologies and methods to use water more efficiently, to improve soil conservation, and increase productivity of the soil itself.

Whether it's biotechnology, or veterinary drugs that improve feed efficiency, or new generation biofuels, or the use of lactic acid and other pathogen reduction treatments to ensure a safer food supply, we simply cannot turn our backs on science.

Certainly, marketing and consumer preferences are important. And yes, we must ensure that we carefully assess the safety of new technologies. Nevertheless, we have a moral obligation to the millions who are hungry and malnourished worldwide to make our decisions within the context of competing risks: The risk of **not** adopting new technologies also needs to be taken into account.

The United States government is committed to collaborating with other countries on addressing 21st century challenges in agriculture and to making the future a better place for all. We recognize and respect that different countries will take different routes, but the policies of one country or countries should not take away

the choices of another country or its citizens, especially in the developing world, where the impacts of climate and food insecurity are felt most.

The cultural preferences of some consumers in wealthy nations shouldn't impede access to safe and affordable foods by people in poorer nations or limit the ability of their trading partners to export agricultural products.

That is why the United States supports innovation and science as the basis of international trading standards to meet the increasing food needs of people across the planet.

Next month in Rome, more than 100 countries will gather for the 35th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Right now, Codex faces a challenge from countries that seek to insert their narrow national interests and preferences into international standards. An important test at the July meeting will be whether Codex can overcome the efforts of the European Union to block adoption of a maximum residue level for ractopamine.

Ractopamine has been judged safe in four evaluations by the independent body that provides scientific advice to Codex, and it is approved in 26 countries. It's not a question of whether a country wants to use the animal drug, but rather, a question of whether non-science factors will be used to politicize the Codex process.

International standard-setting bodies such as Codex and the OIE are important because countries find it easier to engage in international trade when there is a science-based standard that importing countries can rely on for safety. But if those bodies fail to adopt science-based standards, the de facto result will be that suppliers will negotiate separate agreements with countries. This is likely to lead to more private standards, which may not be science-based, and may come with higher associated costs.

Codex is at a critical point. It can continue to be the premier international science-based food standard setting body, or it could become a mechanism for members to advance their own economic interests and societal values that are not shared globally and are not within the scope and mandate of Codex.

Science-based decision-making allows Codex and the OIE to adopt standards that are technically sound, global in scope, and free from national and political influences. If they cannot do so, they will cease to be relevant.

We know we will need to double food production over the next 50 years to feed the world's population. The use of safe veterinary drugs like ractopamine will enhance our ability to achieve that goal. Countries that embrace new technologies will benefit economically by producing more with lower input and resource costs. On the other hand, the failure to act from a basis of science will discourage development of new technologies in food production, seriously hurting developing countries' ability to meet the increase in demand for food, including affordable, high-quality sources of protein.

The United States is grateful that our major trading partners made risk-based decisions regarding the recent BSE detection and refrained from imposing import restrictions. As most of you are aware, the United States is taking steps to align our beef import regulations with OIE standards with regard to BSE. And our Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service is expanding its recognition of EU member states as disease-free areas.

Those are all advances worth celebrating. But we've got a long way to go to face the challenge of producing sustainably for a world populated by more than 9 billion human beings. No one country can do it alone. It will take **all** of us, working together, and opening our minds and our borders to innovation and science. Our very future depends on it.