

United States Senate Committee on  
**AGRICULTURE  
NUTRITION  
& FORESTRY**

**Hearing Statement of Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich)**

**Nominations Hearing**

**December 15, 2011**

*As prepared for delivery*

Today, the committee is meeting to consider the nomination of Michael T. Scuse, of Delaware, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services and a Member of the Board of Directors of the Commodity Credit Corporation; as well as two nominees for the Board of Directors of the Federal Agricultural Mortgage Corporation, also known as Farmer Mac: Governor Chet Culver of Iowa and Dr. Bruce Sherrick of Illinois.

Welcome and Congratulations on your nominations. We extend a warm welcome to you and your family and friends. I understand that Mr. Scuse your wife, Patrice, is here with you today, welcome. I would also like to welcome Governor Culver's father, Senator John C. Culver, along with his stepmother, Mary Jane, and stepbrother, John.

These positions are critically important for America's farmers and ranchers.

The Under Secretary of Agriculture for the Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services plays a key role in enforcing accountability within the Farm Service Agency, the Risk Management Agency and the Foreign Agricultural Services Agency. The Under Secretary is responsible for making sure that taxpayers are getting their money's worth, and that we are doing everything possible to make USDA services efficient and effective for farmers, ranchers, and the families they serve.

Mr. Scuse, I would hope that you would use the perspective you have gained as both a farmer and as a long-time public servant to improve the operations of the Agency's you will oversee; assessing how the agencies are measuring performance and efficiency, cutting down on duplication, and how customer service is being administered and improved.

Your nomination comes at a very important time, as this committee continues its work to write the next Farm Bill. The staff at the Department of Agriculture will be an indispensable resource for us as we move forward. They are the boots on the ground, implementing the programs that we have created and will create, so they are able to provide valuable feedback on performance.

Governor Culver and Dr. Sherrick, you have been nominated to serve as members of the Board for Farmer Mac. Of the 15 Board Members, five are elected by the Farm Credit System institutions, five are elected by other financial institutions, and five are nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Those five are particularly important to preserve consumer protections for the American people.

As Board Members, it will be your responsibility to ensure that Farmer Mac is managed in a safe and sound manner and with an appropriate balance between financial performance and fulfillment of its public mission. The availability of credit in rural communities is essential to growth and sustainable economic development. It is the job of Farmer Mac to make sure that credit is available in rural America.

I know I speak for all the members of the committee when we say that we take our obligation to advise and consent very seriously. We look forward to your remarks and the opportunity to exercise our constitutional duties.

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