

**Opening Statement of Alexis M. Taylor, Nominee for Under Secretary of Agriculture for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs
Before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
September 22, 2022**

Remarks as Prepared

Thank you, Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Boozman and members of this Committee. A special thanks to Senator Grassley for that warm introduction.

It is an honor to be nominated by President Biden for the position of Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs. I am particularly humbled to be considered for this critical role by this committee, which I hold in such high regard.

I also would like to thank Secretary Vilsack for his dedicated leadership of USDA, as well as his support and mentorship over the years.

I would not be here today without the support of my family, including my mother, Karol. There have been no bigger champions throughout my life and my career, and I am grateful for your unconditional support. I also want to thank my sister Amanda, who is here with me today, and brother-in-law Ryan who as farmers help to keep me connected to the opportunities and challenges faced by producers and our agricultural communities every day. I am also thankful for the first and most influential farmer in my life, my father, Joe. Although he has passed, there is not a day that goes by where I do not call upon lessons he taught me on the farm. I know he would be very proud today.

As Senator Grassley mentioned, my career in agriculture began at a very young age, growing up on a farm which has been in my family for over 160 years.

I learned many things growing up on my family's farm in Iowa - from the hard work and long hours our farmers and ranchers put into raising a crop or keeping livestock healthy; to the challenges that unpredictable weather and volatile markets can bring. One of the most important

things that was instilled in me as a child was a desire to serve a greater good and give back to my community.

That desire to serve led me to enlist in the U.S. Army Reserves when I was still a junior in High School, drove me through 8 years of military service, including a deployment to Iraq, and drew me to my career in public service, working to advance the interests of U.S. agriculture.

While working on Capitol Hill for an Iowa Congressman and then a Senator who served on this Committee, at USDA previously or today with the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), some of my most meaningful work has been finding solutions to the complex challenges farmers and ranchers face. Throughout my career, farmers and ranchers have shared those challenges with me from the cab of their pickup on a ranch tour in Montana, while walking a wheat field in northeastern Oregon, or riding in a combine during harvest in Iowa.

One of my favorite quotes is from President Dwight Eisenhower, who said, “Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil and you're a thousand miles from the corn field.”

It is a lesson I have taken to heart, and throughout my career I have made sure to spend time with farmers and ranchers and hear firsthand about the support they need to be successful – including in my current role where I made it a priority to visit every county in Oregon during my first year as director.

Should I have the honor to be confirmed, I will carry their stories with me as I work to advance U.S. agriculture across the globe as I lead the Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs Mission Area and the dedicated staff at the Foreign Agricultural Service.

FAS’ mission to link U.S. agriculture to the world to enhance export opportunities and global food security is as relevant today as when it was created in 1930.

As the diplomatic and humanitarian crisis has unfolded in Ukraine, the capacity building and food security programs at USDA will be even more critical to help the world navigate a growing global food security crisis.

The United States plays a critical role in combatting food insecurity and working to protect the most vulnerable. I am proud of this part of the TFAA and FAS mission and will be committed to this work should I have the privilege to serve.

At the same time, our farmers, ranchers, and forestry professionals here at home are experiencing unprecedented challenges. From supply chain disruptions impacting not only our food and agricultural exports, but also critical imports, to the impacts of inflation, these challenges are being directly felt by every agricultural community across the country. Ensuring strong export markets is critical to building resiliency for our U.S. agriculture community.

My time at ODA, has helped me draw even stronger connections to our farmers and ranchers and the importance that export markets have on their profitability and their success.

Expanding and maintaining diversified market opportunities, rebuilding strong and reliable trading relationships, and holding our trading partners accountable are essential for our agricultural community. And equally as important is removing trade barriers and working to ensure our trading partners have transparent, science-based regulatory requirements which are predictable for our exporters.

As I have seen from my current position at ODA, the Biden-Harris administration, through the efforts of both Secretary Vilsack and Ambassador Tai, have made it clear that the country's trade agenda is focused on growing the economy from the bottom up and the middle out, and creating trade policy where agriculture is at the table. Should I be confirmed, I am eager to join in that effort to work in coordination with the U.S. Trade Representative, and other federal agencies and Congress, to work to expand and maintain that diversified market access for U.S. farmers, producers, and exporters, and help them connect with customers around the world.

Agriculture is not just what I do, but it is very much who I am. Working to support farmers and ranchers across the country is something I have dedicated my career to. And should I have the honor to be confirmed as Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs, I am committed to working to ensure the interests of U.S. agriculture is being represented here at home and around the globe.

Thank you and I look forward to responding to questions that Members of the Committee might have.