

Good Afternoon Chairman Chambliss, Ranking Member Harkin and members of the Committee. Also, a special welcome to our own Senator, Senator Santorum. My name is Dr. Joe Jurgielewicz. I am a poultry producer, specializing in the production of duck, from Hamburg Pennsylvania, in Berks County.

Currently, I am the President & CEO of Joe Jurgielewicz & Son, Ltd. We are a fully integrated Pekin Duck producer, producing more than three million ducks yearly. Our operation includes six company owned farms and 20 contract producers located throughout Pennsylvania.

I am here representing today to represent not only the poultry industry but also the member companies of PennAg Industries Association. PennAg Industries Association represents more than 650 agribusinesses in the state of Pennsylvania, primarily from the support and service sector.

Let me first speak as a Pennsylvania Poultry producer.

As you are well aware, the threat of avian influenza is a high priority in Pennsylvania. The media and the public have focused much attention on the Asian H5N1 strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) or bird flu, and the federal government has expended major resources to prepare for a potential human pandemic. I would like to commend Congress and USDA for their efforts to use sound science to educate the public and calm the fears associated with Avian Flu. Please know that the poultry industry in Pennsylvania is doing its part as well. Pennsylvania has traditionally led the industry in surveillance testing with more than 240,000 Avian Influenza samples being tested every year.

Because of Pennsylvania's diverse industry and contribution to the live bird markets of the Northeast, we have dealt often with low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI). Low-path AI can be present in a flock without clinical signs. This low pathogenic form presents no risk to human health. However, it is very important to control LPAI so it does not have the ability to circulate and mutate into HPAI. We support and encourage a proposed regulation from USDA that would provide indemnities at 100% of the value of any birds that must be destroyed due to LPAI.

For nearly 10 years, Pennsylvania has maintained a closely held database of industry information that has been extremely useful in situations involving the disease of poultry. To maintain the confidentiality of this information, we have kept the information at the University of Pennsylvania's New Bolton. When needed for quick action, relevant portions of the database are accessed and provided to state and federal officials.

With the development of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS), a system similar to the one that has been in place in Pennsylvania poultry industry for a decade, we understand the value of this resource. We would like to encourage the inclusion of privacy protection in the farm bill for information submitted by producers under the NAIS. Confidentiality must be a top priority in the system.

I'd like to offer some comments on behalf of PennAg Industries as well. PennAg's membership is comprised of various sectors of Pennsylvania agriculture. Pennsylvania's agricultural

industry is unique and diverse in its makeup and we appreciate you recognizing that.

Historically, the farm bill support programs, with the exception of dairy programs, are generally favorable to the Midwest. We recognize this history and understand the importance of the Midwest states. We do, however, respectfully request that you keep the needs of the Northeast are proportionally represented in the 2007 Farm Bill.

In the Northeast, we have the unique opportunity and advantage to market to urban and suburban populations that are in close proximity to our production areas. This also presents great challenges. The general public is becoming further and further removed from food production, which creates an education and communication gap between producers and their neighbors, particularly when discussing environmental quality. Because of this, we wish to stress the importance that all components of the Farm Bill be science-based; consistent; and realistic for producers. In saying that, funding that will help producers to implement 'best management practices' will be crucial here in our state.

In my final comments, I want to stress the importance of agricultural research to our state. We ask for your support in maintaining and enhancing agricultural research. These efforts have a profound effect on citizens as it enables us to provide quality products safely and efficiently. In addition, strong research programs will allow us to explore the potential of value added products. Alternative Fuels research is just one example of the potential in the Northeast. We certainly encourage federal support of programs that would allow the Pennsylvania to maximize on various value added products. The continued support of research will help us to maintain the diversity of Northeast agriculture and will help our region to be competitive and profitable.

Chairman Chambliss, I thank you for your time and efforts here in our Commonwealth. We appreciate your recognition and attention to the Northeast.