



**Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry  
United States Senate**

**Hearing on  
Agriculture:  
Growing America's Economy**

**Testimony of  
Fred Yoder  
Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association**

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Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Roberts, and distinguished members of the Senate Agriculture Committee of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, it is indeed an honor and privilege to be here today to testify before you at your first full Committee Hearing.

My name is Fred Yoder. I am a 4<sup>th</sup> generation farmer from Plain City, Ohio. I raise corn, wheat, and soybeans, and also operate a farm seed retail dealership with my family, and have been for over 35 years. I have served in many agricultural leadership positions, including serving as president of the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA), as president of the Ohio Corn Growers Association, and I currently serve on the Board of Directors of the newly formed Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association. I have had the privilege to testify before this Committee several times on various issues and topics in previous years. But today, I would like to testify before you as Fred Yoder, a farmer from Ohio, rather than represent a national association and their specific policy positions.

As I reflect over the years as to what agriculture has meant to my state as well as my own family operation, I am reminded of that old commercial that used the phrase, “you’ve come a long way, baby.” Today’s agriculture is not my father’s agriculture. We have come through the years of excess production, using programs to curtail carryovers by limiting acres planted, to Freedom to Farm in 1996, which gave us full utilization of the potential our lands offered. However, we did not develop the demand for all of that volume, and soon had to rely once again on our government to help us dispose of that excess production through deficiency payments and market clearing measures.

Today, we have new technologies, and new markets, especially for corn. While traditionally we have always used corn for livestock feed, today we use roughly a third of our production to produce biofuels, without reducing the total bushels of corn and corn equivalent for the feed and export markets. Biofuels, which now represent almost 10 percent of the transportation fuel our nation uses today, has transformed rural America. In Ohio alone, biofuel production has generated over \$1 billion towards Ohio's economy while adding jobs and keeping small towns alive. The demand for corn, wheat and soybeans has never been stronger and farmers will continue to respond by producing for all markets.

We have learned to produce more corn, wheat and soybeans without increasing the use of fertilizer through better genetics and better management. At the same time, we have reduced our soil losses through conservation techniques, and significantly reduced the carbon footprint of growing our crops.

Instead of worrying about getting rid of excess production, today’s agriculture is one of the few bright spots in the American economy. Demand for commodities is at an all-time high throughout the world as many of our trading nations are feeding their people much better than they were in previous years. Instead of a supply-driven market, we are in a robust demand-driven one, where farmers’ primary source of income is the marketplace.

The current Farm Bill offered a change from previous ones with an option called ACRE, which allowed us to utilize a new tool to help manage our risk in conjunction with crop insurance. Many of you worked hard to make this new tool a reality, and I thank you for it. All new things are sometimes viewed with guarded skepticism until there is a chance to experience and understand it. Unfortunately, when the option of ACRE was offered initially by the local Farm Service Agency offices, it became more complicated and cumbersome than it probably needed to be. However, as we look at how the future Farm Bill may develop, I would encourage us all to build on this new roadmap of managing risk that we started with the last one.

With prices and demand for commodities much higher than in years past, as well as dollars being short, it makes sense to look at ways to strengthen the safety net for when times are bad, keeping farm families strong and able to withstand the tough times, while realizing some reduction in overall costs, to help in doing our part to aid in solving some of our Nation's budget shortfalls.

As a citizen and taxpayer, I think it is important to re-address some of our core principles before we delve into specific policy decisions for a future farm bill. First and foremost, I would suspect the vast majority of people in the United States, including those in agriculture, would agree that the U.S. Government should balance the federal budget by reducing federal spending, resulting in a reduction of the federal debt, and eliminating inefficient federal spending in all sectors of the U.S. economy. If one accepts this initial principle, there is a much different perspective that emerges as we think about how we need to shape and form our discussion.

I also think most would agree that the new Farm Bill should include policy that allows the market to provide for a safe, reliable source of food, feed, fuel and fiber, but at the same time provide a strong safety net for those times when unforeseen revenue losses happen from events beyond our control. This can be done through improving such programs like ACRE in combination with improved and equitable Federal Crop Insurance for all regions of the country.

Again, it would be easy for farmers to have the attitude to cut everyone's budget but ours, and push for business as usual. But what if we could enhance the tools available in managing our risk in growing our crops, while continuing to grow new opportunities in the marketplace, and do it with savings to the overall budget?

These are just a few of my thoughts as we start this process of debate in this upcoming Farm Bill. Agriculture is Ohio's number one industry. The opportunities I have today as a farmer are the best I have seen in my lifetime. I hope that whatever we do we can continue to grow these opportunities for today's farmers, and for my son in the future as he takes my place on the farm. American agriculture not only provides for those needs to feed and fuel the world, but also can offer other ecosystem services that are only now being realized to the rest of society.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to your questions.