

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

By

**RICHARD B. MYERS
PRESIDENT KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY**

Before the

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

UNITED STATES SENATE

February 23, 2017

Introduction

Chairwoman Roberts, it is indeed my pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of Kansas State University, to the campus of Kansas State University your Alma Mater. We are pleased to have you in Kansas and we thank you, and value your leadership in the work of this important committee. Senator Stabenow, welcome to Kansas and Kansas State University.

Today, I would like to also welcome our valued friends and stakeholders to this hearing today at Kansas State. Without question, this group represents a broad range of interests that are all, in one way or the other, impacted by the health and vitality of Kansas and US agriculture.

The Land-Grant System

There is another way in which it is fitting that testimony on behalf of the 2018 Farm Bill begins in Kansas. Kansas State and Michigan State maintain a friendly banter around which school was the first and which school the second land grant university. The Morrill Act which established of the land grant system was enacted in 1862. The Kansas Legislature on February 16, 1863 accepted the Morrill Act and designated Kansas State University as the Land Grant University in Kansas. At the time that federal legislation was signed by President Lincoln, little could he or the authors of the bill have imagined the implications of the act. The partnership that was developed between the states and the federal government with the enactment of the Morrill Act and the follow on Hatch and Smith-Lever Acts have been the backbone of agriculture, agriculture research and outreach for one hundred and fifty five years in our country.

Kansas State University

K-State Research and Extension serves as the front door to Kansas State University the state's land-grant university. We provide trusted, practical education to help individuals, businesses and communities solve problems, develop skills and build a better future. A few examples of the work performed on behalf of Kansas and American agriculture.

Wheat Breeding

The world's population is expected to reach 9.6 billion by 2050. To feed and sustain a growing population, we develop innovative practices that benefit Kansas, our nation and the world. Through cutting-edge research in areas such as genetics, disease prevention and food security, we help agriculture — Kansas' largest employer — be more profitable, sustainable and efficient.

With a name befitting its place at the summit of Kansas agriculture, the K-State-produced wheat variety called Everest just completed its fourth year as the top variety planted across the state — and the fifth time out of the last six years that a K-State variety has held the top spot. Everest was first released in 2009.

Sorghum interests cooperate to promote growth

As a global leader in sorghum research and promotion, K-State co-founded a unique coalition with industry leaders and producers. In early 2016, the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission, United Sorghum Checkoff Program, Kansas Department of Agriculture and K-State formed the Collaborative Sorghum Investment Program. The program focuses on expanding markets for sorghum and increasing the average national sorghum yield from 62 bushels per acre to 100 bushels per acre by 2025 by funding research in such areas as plant breeding, genetics and field-level management.

In terms of national rankings, Kansas is the No. 1 producer of sorghum, but in terms of statewide acreage and return, it ranks behind wheat, corn and soybeans. K-State coordinates these efforts through the Center for Sorghum Improvement, which aims to achieve major advances because farmers have not seen private technology investments in sorghum for the last couple decades. Those advances will come from work currently being done in labs at K-State and in test fields across Kansas.

Along with seeking improvements on the front end of production, the center is also working on the back end: growing and opening markets for sorghum. This includes building the case for more sorghum use in livestock feed, entering the \$24 billion pet food industry and creating products for people that capitalize on food-grade sorghum as a gluten-free, low-glycemic index product high in antioxidants.

Local food hub benefits farmers, consumers

Five years ago, it seemed like a simple idea: find a way to help smallholder farmers in Kansas sell the food they grow to more people. K-State Research and Extension helps farmers become more efficient, more profitable and more self-sustaining. We also assist consumers and communities. Local food-system development is community vitality.

The food hub is a producer cooperative that goes beyond selling food at local farmers markets. The food hub helps farmers sell their products to larger buyers, such as restaurants, hospitals, schools and food companies.

Today, smallholder farmers in Kansas have numerous options for providing their goods through the food hub. This food hub allows K-State Research and Extension to think critically about how to grow the local food system in a way which invests back into Kansas farmers and also benefits Kansas communities and consumers.

Bio Agro Defense

As you know Senator Roberts thanks to your herculean effort the National Bio and Agro Defense Facility is under construction on the campus of Kansas State.

Kansas State is steadfast in protecting agriculture. Last month the Blue Ribbon Study Panel held a hearing at Kansas State University. Panel member and former U. S. Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle referred to K-State that day as “the Silicon Valley for biodefense” a designation we take seriously and will proudly accept and continue to strive to maintain.

Again Senators Stabenow and Roberts for traveling to Kansas State for this hearing in our nation’s heartland. We are proud you chose our campus to gather important information on the future of agriculture.