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U.S. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.), Ranking Member
Opening Statement
(As Prepared for Delivery)

U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
Subcommittee on Commodities, Risk Management, and Trade

[Hearing on Commodity Programs, Credit, and Crop Insurance](#)
[Part 1: Producer Perspectives on the Farm Safety Net](#)

Good morning, Chairwoman Smith and fellow committee members. Thank you so much to our witnesses for being here today.

As the Ranking Member of the Commodities, Risk Management, and Trade subcommittee, I am pleased we are holding this “Producer Perspectives on the Farm Safety Net” hearing. It is an honor to serve on this subcommittee since its work is critical to America’s hardworking farmers. I am also grateful for Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Boozman’s commitment to these issues.

Today, we have the privilege to hear from general farming organizations and a wide array of producers who will provide insights into the challenges facing producers in Mississippi and across the country. As we discuss the farm safety net, it is critical that we hear from producers directly to better understand their unique perspectives and needs. Their views can help us ensure that our policies and programs are responsive and effective. I look forward to a productive discussion.

As we all know, American agriculture is subject to a wide range of challenges and uncertainties, from unpredictable weather patterns and volatile market conditions, to evolving trade policies and regulations. These challenges can have a significant impact on the viability of American farms, many of which operate on thin profit margins. This is why the farm safety net, authorized in Titles I and XI of the farm bill, is so critical. This committee must get this right in the 2023 Farm Bill.

The farm safety net is the backbone of our nation's agricultural policy. It provides protection for producers who may face unforeseen losses and setbacks that are beyond their control.

The farm safety net helps protect the long-term viability of our rural communities, whose foundation is agriculture. I want young Mississippians to view returning home to take care of the family farm as an attractive option. Congress has the opportunity to help make this a reality by strengthening the farm safety net.

When I visit with Mississippi producers, I always tell them, “Your priorities are my priorities.” Mississippi is home to many large and small family farms. As my friend Ranking Member Boozman says, “This Farm Bill will not neglect the small nor punish the large.”

Time after time I hear from producers that the current safety net is inadequate, especially for seed cotton and rice. Statutory reference prices for the Agricultural Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs were calculated in the 2014 Farm Bill using data from 2012—more than a decade ago.

The existing reference prices don’t reflect recent global events that have disrupted the American agriculture industry—including the China trade wars, the COVID pandemic, and the war in Ukraine. Increasing input costs, many of which are thanks to President Biden’s war on American energy, have also contributed to the inadequacy of our reference prices.

By listening to our producers and understanding their experiences and challenges, we can identify areas where the safety net can be strengthened or improved, and ensure that it remains effective and efficient in supporting our agricultural producers. This approach will help to ensure that our policies and programs are responsive and effective, and ultimately support the long-term sustainability and prosperity of our nation's agricultural industry.

In this hearing, I look forward to having the opportunity to hear directly from Mr. Johnson of Mississippi and our other guests to gain insights into the challenges and opportunities facing producers across the country. We will also explore ways to improve and strengthen the safety net to ensure that it is responsive to the needs of all agricultural producers.

President Eisenhower once said, “Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil and you’re a thousand miles from the corn field.”

That is why this farm bill will be developed for producers, by producers. This hearing is critical as we continue to engage with farmers to understand their unique perspectives and needs, and ensure that the safety net is tailored to meet those needs.

I look forward to this discussion today. Thank you, Chairwoman Smith, and I yield back the remainder of my time.

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