



COMMITTEE ON  
**SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY**  
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Media Contacts: Thea McDonald, Brandon VerVelde  
(202) 225-6371

## **Statement from Chairwoman Barbara Comstock (R-Va.)**

*Putting Food on the Table – A Review of the Importance of Agriculture Research*

**Chairwoman Comstock:** The purpose of today's hearing is to examine federal agriculture research including the scope, importance, value and impact of such research. Agriculture research is a broad term that can include the study of diseases that threaten the nation's animal agriculture industry and public health. It can also refer to research to increase and improve crop and yield production through advancements in science and technology.

In other words, we rely on the research to help protect the nation from disasters, and we rely on it to help prepare us for the future, one in which agriculture research will benefit from developments in precision and automated technologies such robotics and artificial intelligence.

In the Commonwealth of Virginia, agriculture research is an important topic for my constituents and me because agriculture is a critical industry for us. According to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, "Agriculture is Virginia's largest industry by far, with nothing else coming a close second. The industry has an economic impact of \$70 billion annually and provides more than 334,000 jobs in the Commonwealth."

In the 10th Congressional District, agriculture's key role is felt far and wide, from the rows upon rows of apple and peach orchards in the western counties to the ever-growing wine industry, craft breweries and distilleries.

Our distinguished panel today represents a variety of perspectives to explain the value and impacts of agriculture research. We will hear about the food security and economic and national security implications of a natural disaster or terrorist attack on our crops and livestock. We will also hear about industry research efforts and practices, and an academic perspective on innovative efforts to more efficiently increase and improve crop yields.

These are important considerations because agriculture research impacts all of us. As an example, one need only go back to the avian flu outbreak of 2014 and 2015, which resulted in almost \$900 million in expenses to federal and state governments, the

slaughter of more than 50 million birds and an estimated cost to the U.S. economy in excess of \$3 billion.

I look forward to hearing about federal and other stakeholder agriculture research efforts from our witnesses today. I hope to understand how the research is coordinated and complemented to protect Americans' food sources, so that we may all continue to safely and abundantly put food on our tables for the foreseeable future.

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