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WASHINGTON, DC –Congressman Sam Farr (D-Carmel), Ranking Member of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, made the following opening statement at the Department of Agriculture's Marketing and Regulatory Programs budget hearing:

As prepared for delivery –

"I want to begin by thanking:

- Mr. Ed Avalos, Under Secretary, Marketing and Regulatory Programs, Department of Agriculture

- Dr. Gregory L. Parham, Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture

- Mr. Alan Christian, Acting Administrator, Grain Inspection Packers and Stockyards Administration, Department of Agriculture

- Mr. Robert Keeney, Acting Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture

- Mr. Michael Young, Budget Officer, Department of Agriculture.

"Thank you for being here today, and for the work you and your staff do, day in and day out, for the American people.

"As our national economy continues up the path of recovery, it is critical that we support the programs and resources that generate economic activity and job creation.

"The departments you head are playing leading roles in facilitating the movement of agriculture products, opening market opportunities, safeguarding crops against invasive pest, and bridging the gap between economics and animal welfare.

"Your work is helping to assure our agriculture industry not only stays competitive, but that it is ready to meet unexpected challenges that pose a threat to millions of acres of crops.

"As any farmer will tell you: Time lost, is product lost. And product lost, means income and jobs lost.

"In these uncertain economic times, our local economies and workforce cannot afford to lose neither.

"But we cannot deny that we have an obligation to get our fiscal house in order. It is simply not a question of if we do it, but how we do it.

"How we decide to tackle our fiscal problems can have dire consequences on our economy.

"And in this case, on the livelihood of farmers and our agriculture industry.

"Many will have you believe that, conventional wisdom tells us that cutting programs is the only path forward to fiscal solvency.

"But what if the budgets we cut curtail resources to combat pest like the European Grapevine Moth that has the potential to severely damage the wine industry in California and elsewhere.

"What if the budgets we cut slows down inspections on exports from everything from grains to cattle.

"And what if the budgets we cut hinder the ability of our farmers to reach new markets and sell their products abroad.

"In all of these cases, conventional wisdom will also tell you that this will all lead to a decrease in economic activity.

"It will lead to a loss of jobs, loss of revenue, and a loss of the productivity that fuels our economy.

"This is the responsibility that has been placed on these departments. And therefore our responsibility is to ensure they have the resources to fulfill their missions.

"But with a limited amount of resources available, our responsibility is also to ensure that that these departments are efficient and effective.

"This is the other side of the coin. Without dragging politics into this room, I hope we can have an honest debate about how to best serve our nation's farmers and support our economy.

"To those ends, I look forward to your testimony.

"Thank you for being here."

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