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House Agriculture Subcommittee Hearing
“A 2022 Review of the Farm Bill: Rural Development”
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Provided by:



Today, the House Ag Committee Subcommittee on Commodity Exchanges, Energy, and Credit held a [hearing](#) entitled “A 2022 Review of the Farm Bill: Rural Development.” The sole witness was USDA Under Secretary for Rural Development Xochitl Torres Small. Below are several key takeaways from the hearing prepared by Delta Strategy Group.

Subcommittee Chair Angie Craig (D-MN) said that rural communities must be given the resources they need to thrive in their environments, such as proper education, clean water, and high-speed broadband internet access. Committee Ranking Member GT Thompson (R-PA) said that expanding broadband internet services should be a priority to support rural communities and allow them access to the resources they need to succeed. Thompson said that USDA should not favor any particular broadband service and should work with rural electric co-ops to create as many options as possible for rural Americans.

Rep. Ann Kuster (D-NH) said that USDA rural development loans were leading to large growth in renewable energy programs, particularly solar energy. She also praised the usefulness of value-added producer grants to grow rural ag commodity production.

USDA Under Secretary for Rural Development Xochitl Torres Small said:

- USDA needs to be fully staffed so that it can fully pursue its mandate to help rural Americans achieve the results that they need to succeed. Broadband internet access and clean drinking water are some of our highest priorities to fulfill this goal. Broadband has become an economic necessity for all Americans. We are coordinating with the FCC to ensure that funds for both agencies are put to the best use to give rural communities broadband as quickly as possible.
- American Rescue Plan investments in local and regional meat processing supply chains are crucial for farmers who were unable to process their products during the pandemic. USDA will work to expand processing facility options for producers by building out middle market facilities.

- American farmers are eager to be a part of the growing renewable fuels industry both because of its economic opportunities and the impact it has on combatting climate change. USDA will continue to invest in supporting farmers and building up infrastructure to manufacture climate-smart fuel close to home.
- The Stronger Economies Together and the Strategic Economic Community Development programs focus on building out rural communities' production capacity. Rural communities often have to compete for funds, but we are working to ensure that all communities can grow. We hope that the best parts of these two programs will be reflected in the 2023 Farm Bill.
- USDA's rural development programs can help support the wood products industry, which has many potential opportunities for carbon sequestration and other climate-smart ag practices.