

**Testimony on SB 191
to
The Senate Natural Resources Committee
By Secretary of Agriculture Dale Rodman
Kansas Department of Agriculture
March 7, 2013**

Good morning, Chairman Powell, and members of the committee. I am Dale Rodman, Kansas Secretary of Agriculture. I am here to express the Kansas Department of Agriculture's support for SB 191, legislation that will set the stage for growth in Kansas agriculture.

My family arrived in Kansas in the 1860s. I was raised on that same farmstead in an old farmhouse that, like most of our neighbors, was not painted. Many years later, I was traveling in Iowa farm country and noted all the pretty, bright white farmhouses across the countryside. While there may have been many reasons for the difference between farm homes in Kansas and Iowa, painted farm houses became a symbol to me of what is possible here in Kansas. I'm not talking about brightly colored homes, but rather, the potential for Kansas agriculture to grow, adapt and successfully meet demands for food, fiber and energy from a global consumer-base. The legislation before you today can move our state in that direction.

Agriculture is the largest economic driver in Kansas, valued at more than \$33 billion in annual economic value to the state. Agriculture in Kansas is not just about growing crops and raising animals. The Kansas agricultural sector includes renewable energy production, food processing, research and education, agribusiness and more. In 2011, Kansas exported nearly \$5.3 billion in agricultural products. The top four exports include wheat, beef and veal, soybeans and corn. But as the world population grows and demand for protein continues increasing, we cannot become complacent with what we have done in the past and what we are doing right now, we need to adapt and grow. The current restrictive corporate farming laws in Kansas have been identified as an impediment of growth and the day has arrived to remove this unnecessary hurdle.

For the past two years, KDA has worked to grow agriculture in Kansas. We work daily to support the farms, ranches and agribusinesses that are already here and to help them grow if that is their desire. We also work to recruit new agricultural entities to Kansas. Kansas has long been recognized as a leader in the beef cattle sector but we are facing the smallest cattle herd in 70 years, so we must continue working to support and grow the beef cattle sector in Kansas. But we cannot stop with just cattle. Meeting protein demands from growing middle classes around the globe will require beef, pork, dairy and poultry.

We have seen some growth in the dairy sector in recent years. We have had interest from pork and poultry farms. Unfortunately, the restrictive corporate farming laws on the books are prohibitive and driving that business to other states. Not only are we losing the agricultural operation itself, we are losing the benefit that farm will have on its community. Passing SB 191 will lead to increased enrollment in schools and growth on main streets across Kansas that, unfortunately, have not seen much expansion in recent years. Passing SB 191 will send a loud and clear message to farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses that Kansas is open for their business.

The need to pass SB 191 does not stop there. After hearing concern about the current laws and after an internal review of them, KDA asked Attorney General Derek Schmidt to review the law. His response on January 2, 2013, indicated that specific pieces of the law are likely unconstitutional.

Finally, I spent nearly 40 years working in the private sector and have only spent two in the public sector. From my experiences on both sides, however, I believe business – whether involved in agriculture or not – thrives when it is allowed to adapt and adopt new technologies and grow without unnecessary involvement by government. Many parts of the economy today are struggling due in part to too much government involvement. I'm not claiming there is no role for regulation, especially when it comes to public health and safety, but the government should not be in the business of restricting economic growth. The Kansas corporate farming laws are restricting growth and sending potential new Kansans and Kansas business away. That is unacceptable.

Members of the committee, passing SB 191 will not change the face of Kansas agriculture. It will ensure Kansas agriculture remains a recognized and trusted leader. It will ensure Kansas farmers and ranchers can continue growing crops and raising animals and passing their operations on to the next generation. It will ensure that agriculture remains the largest economic driver in the state. It will ensure that homes across the state will have a fresh coat of paint on them in the future.

Thank you for your time and I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.