

Approved: _____
Date

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Derek Schmidt at 8:30 a.m. on January 9, 2001 in Room 423-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Committee staff present: Raney Gilliland, Legislative Research Department
 Jill Wolters, Revisor of Statutes
 Betty Bomar, Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Jamie Clover Adams, Secretary, Kansas Department of Agriculture

Others attending: See Attached List

Chairman Schmidt submitted a letter addressed to John Simons, President, ConAgra Beef Company, to be signed by members of the Committee, supporting and encouraging the reconstruction and return of operation of the ConAgra processing facility in Finney County.

Doug Wareham, Kansas Grain and Feed Association, urged members of the Committee to participate in the Ag Information and Technology Tour January 18, 2001. The Chair advised the Committee arrangements had been made with leadership to be excused for the day.

Jamie Clover Adams, Secretary, Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA), introduced members of her staff, Greg Foley, Assistant Secretary, and Rebecca Reed, an assistant, and submitted a Kansas Department of Agriculture Briefing Book (A copy on file in the office of Legislative Research Department) Ms. Adams further submitted a copy of a letter addressed to the Environmental Protection Agency over the signature of the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Tracy Streeter, Executive Director, State Conservation Commission (Attachment 1) and an Issue paper on the Establishment of Permanent Laboratory Equipment Fee Fund (Attachment 2)

Ms. Adams presented an overview of the Department, stating KDA is primarily a regulatory agency charged with ensuring the safety of the meat, milk and egg supply; ensuring responsible and judicious use of pesticides and nutrients; ensuring the integrity of weighing and measuring devices in commerce; and ensuring that the waters of the state are put to beneficial use.

Ms. Adams reviewed proposed legislative initiatives as follows: 1) update, clarify and streamline the Kansas Dairy law; 2) technical amendments to the Kansas Meat and Poultry Inspection Act; 3) repeal of the Statistics Division requirement to aid county census; and 4) cleanup of the Weights and Measures Law.

The Starlink genetically modified organism and biotechnology in agriculture was discussed. Ms. Adams stated that Kansas farmers planted less than one percent - 21,390 acres - of its corn acres to Starlink, and KDA inspectors surveyed counties where most of the StarLink was grown after which they estimated that as many as 4.6 million bushels of corn in state-licensed elevators could contain traces of StarLink. This did not pose a disposal problem in Kansas as there was a market ready to accept it as animal feed. Biotechnology has led to crop varieties that resist herbicides, saving the agricultural industry about \$200 million a year. Since 1996, the percentage of US crops planted to biotech varieties has grown to about a fourth for corn and more than half for soybeans. Ms. Adams stated that rather than eliminate biotech crops, it is more important to educate the consuming public about biotechnology's benefits. To this end, KDA has accepted an invitation from Kansas, Inc., to help coordinate a two-day biotechnology symposium in an effort to education agricultural producers and to disseminate scientifically valid information about biotechnology.

CONTINUATION SHEET

Ms. Adams reviewed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed water quality standards for the State, and stated the proposal appears to be a blatant attempt to impose the will of federal bureaucrats on Kansas. The proposal would divert scarce resources away from Kansas programs to improve water quality. In each area of the proposed rule, EPA has overstepped its jurisdiction, pushing the envelope of the Clean Water Act to expand the power of the federal government.

The EPA proposed water quality standards are important to Kansas agriculture and the proposals attempt to circumvent the work of Kansas and put nonpoint source pollution efforts under the umbrella of command and control of point source solutions developed by the federal government. Ms. Adams stated she was gratified by the number of people who turned out for the hearings and is of the belief that it may have had an impact on the EPA.

Ms. Adams stated KDA, at the direction of the Governor, has conducted a comprehensive review of the rules and regulations within its jurisdiction, and found that regulations are often affected by rapid changes in technology and the agricultural industry. The review teams highlighted the following changes that need attention soon: 1) formation of a technical workgroup to assess all anhydrous ammonia regulatory policy, regulations and safety equipment requirements; 2) the Kansas Noxious Weed law needs to be reviewed; 3) clarify and streamline the Kansas Dairy Law, 4) the Meat and Poultry Inspection Act will require regulation changes as a result of technical amendments made in 2001; and 5) the Kansas Weights and Measures Law will require adjustments to regulations as a result of technical amendments made in 2001. The team further suggested the Kansas Seed Law, the Kansas Egg Law, the Kansas Feeding Stuffs Law, the Kansas Dairy Law, the Grain Warehouse Program, and the Meat and Poultry Inspection Program be assessed for suitability and compatibility.

The team suggested specific changes to the Environmental Protection Program Regulations and the Water Program Regulations.

Ms. Adams stated 76% of the Department's budget is for personnel and travel, 13% for contractual services and 11% for all other expenditures.

Senator Umbarger moved, seconded by Senator Downey that the three bills proposed by the Secretary be introduced as Committee Bills. The voice vote was in favor of the Motion.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 10, 2001.