

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Representative Faber at 3:30 P.M. on January 11, 2007, in Room 423-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Jerry Williams- excused

Vaughn Flora- excused

Committee staff present:

Raney Gilliland, Kansas Legislative Research Department

Emalene Correll, Kansas Legislative Research Department

Jason Thompson, Revisor of Statutes

Florence Deeter, Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Adrian Polansky, Secretary, Kansas Department of Agriculture

Briefing on activities of the Kansas Department of Agriculture in 2006

Mr. Polansky, Secretary of the Kansas Department of Agriculture, introduced the members of his staff and presented detailed information on the various programs in which the department is currently involved. He gave a brief overview of the high and low points of 2006 (Attachment 1). Among those topics were: the growth of sunflower and cotton production as well as the grape and wine industry; the distribution of monies to livestock producers who experienced great loss because of drought conditions; and the accelerated growth of the renewable fuels industry.

He stated the Department of Agriculture will work with Ventria Bioscience, a company in California, to renovate a facility in Junction City, Kansas, for the purpose of processing pharmaceutical rice crops grown by farmers in northeast Kansas. Pharmaceutical rice is a grass plant from which proteins can be extracted and used in the production of a variety of medicines. When fully operational, the plant is expected to contribute \$40 million to the Kansas economy.

Mr. Polansky responded to questions from members by stating that food safety licensing structure costs have not been fully discussed. Interaction with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment is vital to improvement in the system. A more equitable fee structure is being considered in relation to the time required for inspections of food facilities. He stated that new facilities are in place to efficiently recycle water used in the process of producing ethanol.

In response to economic losses due to the recent winter storm, Mr. Polansky said that Federal Emergency Management Agency is not involved in economic losses, and there has been no communications as yet from the U. S. Department of Administration on the subject of assistance. He noted further that current information regarding damage to buildings and equipment has been difficult to obtain. He stated that funds given to Homeland Security are administered to various regional agencies through the Department of Agriculture. Mr. Polansky advised the committee that the Animal and Health Department and Department of Health and Environment have burial plots close to feeding lots for disposal of dead and diseased cattle when human life is at risk.

Mr. Polansky elaborated on the topic of the growth of rice in Kansas by stating that the grain grows almost like corn, using rotating sprinklers rather than the traditional flooding process. Approximately 45,000 acres in Eastern Kansas, which is a more humid area, will be used to produce the pharmaceutical rice. He explained some of the benefits of pharmaceutical rice, stating that there are two proteins not unlike the protective proteins in breast milk which are added to infant formulas and given to premature babies to help prevent diarrhea and give greater nourishment. Children born in third world countries flourish and grow more normally upon receiving this formula.

Addressing a member's question regarding safety of grain deposited in elevators, Mr. Polansky said there will be significant regulatory safeguards put in place in addition to the inspections conducted by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee at 3:30 P.M. on January 11, 2007, in Room 423-S of the Capitol.

Mr. Polansky commented on the question of insulin crop production by stating that the Department has the opportunity to be involved in innovative technology in this area. He indicated that Kansas is becoming known both nationally and internationally as a place that welcomes new technology.

The Chairman announced the hearing on Tuesday, January 16, 2007, of **HB, 2011, 2013, and 2048**. Interim Committee Reports are available online at the Kansas Legislative Research Department website, and hard copy will be distributed to each office. Water issues will be heard on Wednesday, January 17, 2007 with Kansas Department of Health and Environment, the Division of Water Resources, Kansas Water Office, and Kansas Geological Survey.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.