

## House Appropriations

Agriculture-FDA on Department of Agriculture Fiscal Year 2026 Budget

7 May 2025

**Witness:** [Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins](#)

**Overview:** Secretary Brooke Rollins was questioned by the committee on various issues including the closures and staffing of FSA county offices, as well as frozen funding for various USDA programs, disaster assistance, and cuts to SNAP. [Committee Chairman Tom Cole \(R-OK\)](#) raised concerns about state inspection programs and Tribal food distribution issues. Rollins promised to follow up on the state inspection funding and provide a full update on Tribal food distribution programs.

**Opening statement:** Secretary Brooke Rollins addressed discussed USDA's activities over the past 83 days and President Trump's vision for agriculture. She emphasized the importance of supporting farmers and rural communities. Rollins highlighted the USDA's budget priorities, focusing on food safety, reducing wasteful spending, and empowering states. She mentioned efforts to address the avian bird flu, reduce egg prices, and tackle trade deficits. Rollins also discussed initiatives to streamline regulations, eliminate fraud, and promote healthier behaviors. She concluded by sharing her commitment to visiting states and engaging with agricultural stakeholders.

Issues Raised:

### Tribal Nutrition Programs

- Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK) expressed concerns about issues with Tribal food distribution programs under the previous administration, highlighting delays and lack of awareness by the former Secretary of Agriculture. He asked Rollins for an update on the status of these programs.
  - Rollins assured she would provide a full update and mentioned that a senior staff member focusing on rural prosperity, would be involved in addressing these concerns.

### FSA Staffing decline and office closures

- [Representative Sanford Bishop \(D-GA\)](#) question FSA closures and lack of staffing, as well as frozen funding.
  - Rep. Bishop asked about the decrease of staffing and closures of FSA county offices. He then asked how Rollins can assure that FSA can continue to serve farmers despite the lack of staffing or offices.

- Rollins answered that the FSA remains one of the top priorities for USDA and that she needs to get a list of the offices that have closed. She stated that no one has been fired, but that they have resigned.
- [Rep. David Valadao \(R-CA\)](#) also mentioned issues with USDA FSA offices and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, to which Rollins promised to follow up.

### **USDA Frozen Funds- \$220 Billion**

- Rep. Bishop questioned the consistency of USDA's statements regarding the release of Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program, and Agriculture Conservation Easement Program.
  - Rollins clarified that most frozen funds have been released, but some delays may still exist and requested specific cases to address them directly.
- [Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz \(D-FL\)](#) criticized the administration for freezing over \$5 billion in USDA funds promised to farmers, food producers, and rural communities, affecting various programs. She questioned the legality of the freeze and demanded an explanation for the delay.
  - Rollins stated that most frozen funds have been reviewed and released, with \$5 billion remaining. She emphasized daily efforts to address the remaining funds and assured compliance with court orders.
  - Rep. Wasserman Schultz stressed that different priorities do not justify freezing legally appropriated funds, while Rollins highlighted the need to realign programs with the administration's goals.
  - [Rep. Ben Cline \(R-VA\)](#) supported Rollins, asserting the administration's authority to freeze fraudulent spending.

### **Tariffs**

- Rep. Valadao raised concerns about the impact of reciprocal tariffs on farmers and exporters in his district, asking if the USDA plans to implement trade assistance programs.
  - Rollins responded that while the goal is to avoid the need for such programs, they will be established if necessary.
- [Rep. Lauren Underwood \(D-IL\)](#) criticized the trade war under President Trump, highlighting its impact on small family farms lacking resources and connections. She urged Secretary Rollins to support all farmers, not just the largest ones.
  - Rollins agreed and announced efforts to focus more on smaller farms, emphasizing her proactive communication with key officials.

- Rep. Underwood pointed out rising costs and lending difficulties for small farmers, criticizing the USDA's \$1 billion cut from programs supporting local economies. She expressed concern that the administration's priorities favor large corporate farms.
  - Rollins responded by affirming her commitment to supporting small family farms and ensuring positive upcoming announcements for all farmers.

### **Disaster Assistance**

- Rep. Valadao discussed disaster assistance for livestock producers affected by flooding in 2023.
  - Rollins assured that funds would be distributed by the end of the month, acknowledging the complexity of block grants and state agreements.
- [Representative Rosa DeLauro \(D-CT\)](#) discussed the loss of 460 farms in Connecticut over five years and emphasized the need for disaster assistance for small and medium-sized farmers. She asked Rollins to ensure that the \$220 million block grant covers intended losses.
  - Rollins assured that disaster relief funds would be distributed by the end of the month. She highlighted the complexity of block grants and the need for state agreements but confirmed that the USDA is working diligently to expedite the process. She praised her team for their swift action in previous relief efforts, contrasting it with slower responses from the previous administration.

### **Cuts to SNAP**

- Rep. DeLauro highlighted a \$200 million cut to the food stamp program and questioned how the effort to feed hungry people would be maintained. Rep. DeLauro stressed the importance of funding the cash value voucher for fruits and vegetables in the WIC program, urging Rollins to commit to maintaining current funding levels
  - Rollins discussed the USDA's commitment to nutrition programs, mentioning the significant daily expenditure on various nutrition initiatives. However, she did not commit to maintaining the current funding levels for the cash value voucher for fruits and vegetables in the WIC program, stating that the USDA is doing everything it can within the broader vision.