

--WRITTEN TESTIMONY--

Hearing Before the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asia, the Pacific and International Cybersecurity Policy hearing titled “ARIA in Action, Part 2:”

Carlyle Currier, Vice President, Colorado Farm Bureau

Good morning Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for time to speak with you today. My name is Carlyle Currier and I’m a rancher from Molina, Colorado. Ours is a fourth generation mountain ranch and part of it is officially recognized as a Colorado Centennial Farm, being owned and operated by my family for more than 100 years. We run about 500 cows with summer grazing on Grand Mesa National Forest, and irrigate about 1200 acres where we raise alfalfa, grass hay, and small grains.

I serve on a number of boards and committees with many organizations. I’m currently the Vice President of the Colorado Farm Bureau. I am also a member of the U.S. Meat Export Federation’s Board of Directors, a past member of the Cattlemen’s Beef Board, and numerous water boards including Chair of Colorado Ag Water Alliance.

My testimony today will focus on the role of Indo-Pacific markets and the potential positive outcomes of new policies such as the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act that is in front of us today. The Act will help increase market access in the Indo-Pacific countries and avoid harmful disputes.

Export markets are critical for American agriculture. American farmers and ranchers exported over \$140 billion in products world-wide in 2017. Overall, more than 25 percent of total agricultural production goes to export markets.

In Colorado, as in other states, we rely on trade each day to market the products we work so hard to grow. In fact, about 35 percent of U.S. farm income is derived from selling agricultural products overseas.

Legislation like ARIA is important to building and maintaining long-lasting relationships with our trading partners and helps avoid trade disruptions and disputes.

We are concerned with the blowback from the Administration's decision to place tariffs on our trading partners. While some of those barriers have fallen in the past few days, agriculture is still bearing the brunt of retaliation at a time when farmers are already facing low commodity prices, high input costs and unpredictable weather.

The trade dispute between the U.S. and China is placing tremendous pressure on American agriculture producers. While we support the Administration's goals of pushing China to abandon its unfair trading practices, it is difficult for agriculture to bear this burden.

Net farm income has dropped 52 percent in the last 5 years, making it extremely difficult for farmers and ranchers to continue operating. The addition of a trade war comes at a time they can ill afford it.

But legislation like ARIA can help to ease this burden in the intermediate term.

In 2018 ag exports from Colorado to 16 countries in the Indo-Pacific region were in excess of \$903 million. Several markets in the region have seen significant expansion in the last couple of years, with overall volume, market share and value on the rise.

For instance, total ag exports from Colorado to Indonesia totaled more than \$51 million in 2018. It looks like this trend will continue as exports increased 22 percent between March 2018 and March 2019.

Additionally, Colorado's exports to Thailand increased 53 percent between 2017 and 2018, to more than \$30 million.

These numbers show the massive potential for agriculture exports to the region. As incomes rise and consumer tastes change, legislation like ARIA can provide a solid footing for agriculture to build the necessary relationships and programs to seize the opportunity and grow market share in the region.

Strengthened relationships and increased market access is important to provide needed stability to farm families not only in Colorado, but nationwide. Legislation that can strengthen ties in the Indo-Pacific region, improve trading relationships, expand markets and advance economic diplomacy will be a powerful tool to help offset losses associated with the shrinking market access and tariff related barriers we are currently experiencing in markets like China.

For all these reasons, I would ask for your support of the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act. This is a tremendous opportunity to advance open and fair agricultural trade and for farm and ranch families like mine, now and in the future.