Statement by
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Thank you, Chairman Connolly, Ranking Member Hice, and the members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to update you today on the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) use of the Technology Modernization Fund (TMF). I would also like to thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to improve information technology (IT) management and funding across the federal government.

USDA touches the lives of every American through its mission to provide leadership on agriculture, food, natural resources, rural infrastructure, nutrition, and related issues through fact-based, data-driven, and customer-focused decisions. It is critical that we have the technology infrastructure to support those efforts. Central to that goal is focusing on enterprise-based approaches to management and decision-making and the cost savings and efficiencies that result.

USDA's annual budget for IT has been $2.5 billion to $2.8 billion over the last three years with a projection of over $3 billion for Fiscal Year 2024. As we continue to meet day-to-day requirements as well as respond to un-funded tasks such as those covered under Executive Order 14028, which includes the implementation of Zero Trust requirements, we rely on other sources such as the TMF to continue with our IT mission requirements and mandates.

USDA has been the recipient of four TMF investments.

The Farmer's.gov project awarded in 2018 for $10 million was intended to update and modernize the conservation financial assistance and payment operations at the Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service to improve the services through the portal. The scope of the project was updated in August 2020 after the agency determined that additional process re-engineering would be required prior to further development of the technology solution

for common enrollment processes for the two agencies, so $6M of the investment money was returned to the TMF.

While the project developed tools to help reduce manual data entry, and developed a proof of concept for the system, the project was closed out prior to implementation in May 2021 because we found the project not ready for further development, as we first needed to harmonize policies and data, and affect process changes prior to applying the technology. The re-payment is in process, and the final two re-payment transfers are on track to be paid to GSA for $1.9M will occur in FY22 and FY23 respectively.

The Infrastructure Optimization/Watershed project awarded in 2018 for $500,000 enabled Farm Production and Conservation to complete the migration of its Enterprise Watershed Program (EWP) application to commercial cloud, complete its Authority to Operate and release the application to production on time. The cloud migration enables more effective response for local communities to respond to natural disaster strikes such as those from flooding and soil erosion. The tools enable a more rapid processing and declaration of a local watershed emergency and thus accelerate government response and reduce the response time of federal government in watershed events driven by floods, fires, and windstorms. Repayment is completed.

The Specialty Crops System Modernization project was awarded in 2019 for $8 million and is intended to accelerate the modernization of Agricultural Marketing Service Specialty Crops Program billing, inspection, and certificate generation and issuance processes that support the inspection and certification of 10.7 billion pounds of processed fruit and vegetable products and 49.9 billion pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables. The agency expects to complete the project in 2022. USDA has made payments in FY20 and FY21 for a total of $1,545,000. We are currently preparing our FY22 repayment of $1,030,000. The total project cost will be paid in full in 2027.

USDA recently was informed that our Supply Chain Risk Response project application was approved for investment. With TMF funding and support, USDA will implement a set of new software tools to improve the Department's cybersecurity posture. These include applications that will enhance automated threat hunting and detection, improve visibility of encrypted

network traffic, and reduce risks. USDA will complete repayment to the TMF by the end of Fiscal Year 2029.

These projects are incredibly impactful—both to USDA employees who can optimize performance with better technology and to farmers, ranchers, and businesses around the country who get better customer service. I am pleased that USDA has been competitive and successful in securing TMF investments, and we support the focus and desire of this Committee to fund and expand TMF as we continue to modernize our systems across the Federal Government. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.