

**Opening Statement of Chairman Rod Blum**  
**Committee on Small Business Subcommittee on Agriculture, Energy, and Trade**  
*Restoring Rural America: How Agritech is Revitalizing the Heartland*  
**February 15, 2018**

**AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY**

Good morning. I call this hearing to order.

I consistently hear from family farmers back home in Iowa about the many challenges America's small farmers are facing, including burdensome and confusing regulations and excessive taxation.

Agricultural innovations and technologies (agritech) have the ability to increase farm productivity, reduce resource use, and boost profits. At last October's Subcommittee hearing, witnesses emphasized the importance of agritech entrepreneurs and farmers working together so that both small businesses and small family farms will benefit from the emerging technology and innovations.

Agritech entrepreneurship activity is also spurring rural revitalization with agritech initiatives in America's Heartland and other regions, attracting talent, dollars, and jobs to those communities. Corporate and angel investors, trade associations, land-grant universities, and state and local governments are partnering, not only to connect entrepreneurs and innovators with start-up capital, but also to mentor these entrepreneurs and set them up for success in the marketplace. These organizations can also facilitate relationships between entrepreneurs and farmers so that the risk of farmers trialing new innovations is minimized or even monetized.

Our witnesses today will discuss how these diverse stakeholders are working together to attract start-up activity to the Heartland and how creating a strong local support system providing talent, infrastructure, and capital is vital. They will also discuss their efforts (including training workers for skilled tech jobs) to keep the start-ups local so that they may bring additional jobs and investment to their local community. I want to thank all of them for being here today. We look forward to hearing your testimony.

I now yield to the Ranking Member, Mr. Schneider, for his opening statement.

