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Congressman Gil Gutknecht

*Chairman, House Agriculture Subcommittee
on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry*



Congressman Gutknecht
speaks about renewable
energy at last year's opening
of the Adams Wind Park.

agriculture

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Investing in our *future.*



agriculture

Almost everyone who lives in the First District is affected one way or another by the rural economy.

As a subcommittee chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, I have an opportunity to make a difference for our rural economy. Whether it is sweeping changes as part of a national farm policy or working to ensure Minnesota gets a fair share of conservation land, there has been much to do for Minnesota agriculture.

Minnesota's farmers and rural families are hard-working folks who are leading the country in innovation and production. I'm proud to represent you.

farm prices

The USDA estimate of net farm income for last year was the second highest on record. USDA forecasts the value of U.S. agricultural exports for 2004 at \$59 billion – also the second highest on record. Prices for major commodities, including soybeans and dairy, are expected to remain high. I am pleased that the 2002 Farm Bill seems to be working. At the same time, we need to be vigilant in developing new opportunities for U.S. producers. And, if the Senate follows our lead by passing an energy bill, we'll see expanded markets for ethanol, wind, bio-mass and bio-diesel.

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renewable energy

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In March, I convened a field hearing of the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry in Rochester. The purpose of the hearing was to talk about the renewable energy industry.

Witnesses from USDA and U.S. Department of Energy, along with Minnesota producers and Governor Tim Pawlenty, discussed how we can meet America's demand for clean, affordable renewable energy. We also toured two of Minnesota's renewable energy facilities, the AI-Corn Clean Fuel Ethanol Plant in Claremont and the McNeilus Wind Farm in Dodge Center.

Minnesota is leading the nation in developing and utilizing renewable resources. With continued commitment, we can reduce our dependence on foreign oil and bring investment to rural America. Renewable energy is good for our environment, good for our economy, adds value to our agriculture crops and provides jobs and investment to areas of our country that need it most.



Left: Congressman Gutknecht gets a tour of an ethanol plant as part of his recent field hearing.

Right: Congressman Gutknecht discusses the dairy industry at the Gieseke farm near St. James.



More information:

agriculture.house.gov | www.gil.house.gov



“Our farmers are important to our rural economy and to our heritage. We must do what we can to help them continue to provide the world’s safest and most affordable food supply.”

-Congressman Gil Gutknecht

ation.....

energy
bill.....

The comprehensive energy bill requires a percentage of the nation’s fuel supply come from renewable energy sources. Wind and bio-mass electricity production tax credits enable greater investment in these renewable resources. The bill encourages research into hydrogen and other promising technologies that will ensure we are not just thinking about today but planning for tomorrow. Finally, energy efficiency incentives are included to encourage conservation.

CREP.....

The state of Minnesota and the federal government recently reached a historic agreement to set aside tens of thousands of acres of environmentally sensitive agriculture land to protect our lakes, streams and rivers. The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a voluntary federal-state-local program. Under CREP, USDA works with farmers and ranchers to set aside marginal agricultural land along waterways to enhance wildlife habitats, improve water quality, reduce erosion and sedimentation and reduce the impacts of recurrent flooding. I worked with Governor Pawlenty on a compromise agreement to set aside 120,000 acres.

EQIP.....

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) allocated more than \$5 million to Southern Minnesota producers through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This is a substantial increase in EQIP dollars and is a good example of the emphasis Congress placed on the conservation provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill. I’m working with NRCS to ensure these dollars are used to assist agriculture producers in meeting environmental goals.

Below: Congressman Gutknecht announces the CREP agreement with Governor Tim Pawlenty.

