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Barrow Holds Small Business Hearing to Discuss the Impact of Genetically Modified Crops

Georgia farmer Thomas Dollar testifies before Congress on the economic benefits of agricultural biotechnology; details reductions in pesticide use

Washington, DC – At the invitation of 12th District Congressman John Barrow, Bainbridge farmer and small businessman Thomas Dollar came to Capitol Hill today to testify before Congress on the agricultural and economic benefits of genetically modified crops.

The hearing, entitled “*Different Applications for Genetically Engineered Crops*” was held by the Small Business Subcommittee on Rural Enterprises, Agriculture, and Technology, which Barrow serves on as the Ranking Member.

“As we make our way through the early years of the 21st century, biotechnology and genetic engineering are some of the advances leading the way in agricultural innovations,” Barrow said. “New technology and improved crop yields are extremely important to the U.S. agricultural economy, and to rural America. Managed responsibly, they can help small farmers meet today’s challenges and reduce the risk to crops and the land itself.”

Studies show that genetically modified crops have been responsible for helping cut output costs for farmers, while reducing pesticide use and increasing annual yield. In 2002, the National Center for Food and Agriculture Policy found that the 8 major biotech crops in use by U.S. farmers were developing substantial annual benefits, including \$1.2 billion in reduced crop cost while at the same time producing an increased yield of 4 billion pounds and a 46-million pound reduction in pesticide use.

Thomas Dollar, who is the President of both the Decatur Gin Company and the Miller County Gin Company, offered a first person perspective on how advances in genetically modified cotton seed have helped him stay economically competitive. During his testimony, Dollar detailed how his pesticide applications have been cut by two-thirds since he began using modified cotton seed in 1998. Now, on the 2,500 acres of cotton he farms, the reduction of pesticide use has cut his costs by as much as \$167.25 an acre.

“This reduced cost is helping my bottom line in an ever-competitive cotton market,” Dollar declared. “Globalization, a new Farm Bill, Brazil’s WTO case against the US

cotton programs, and broader WTO negotiations continue to bring enormous uncertainties to my future business planning. But given all of these uncertainties, at least I know that my ability to adopt the latest agricultural technologies such as new biotech traits will help me compete in these changing times.”

“Reduced pesticide applications are also providing a positive environmental impact,” Dollar continued. “As I mentioned, I have switched from a variety of herbicides to using primarily just Roundup on my crops. Unlike many other herbicides that I have used in the past, Roundup is non-residual.”

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