

I would like to thank our hosts for their work to put together this conference. It is a tremendous effort and I congratulate you on your success. I am looking forward to discussions on agricultural policy, increasing productivity, and sharing research and technology.

The overarching theme to all discussions now is climate change. I hope these discussions are fruitful and propose solutions to problems facing farmers across Bulgaria, the region, and the world.

The United States has spent this year developing strategies and forming coalitions to encourage all countries and farmers to do their part.

We can't do it alone. Our peers in the EU have also developed their own plans, and even though we have very different approaches, we are glad that we are working toward the same goal. It is reassuring that so many countries are taking the fight against climate change so seriously.

The United States and USDA will do our part by ensuring that we support our farmers' ability to fight climate change. No one knows their farms better than the farmers themselves. We need to supply them the tools and knowledge to produce more sustainably.

We know our farmers face different challenges depending on where and what they produce, so we are working on a menu of options so they can choose what makes them more productive with less environmental impact.

This is so all of us have enough to eat. We all know farmers are key to reducing agriculture's effect on climate change. But to make sure farmers are committed, we need their buy-in.

We think that having farmer involved in strategy and policy development will build trust and help secure a long-term commitment.

Fighting climate change and increasing productivity and farmer incomes are not opposing goals. We think we can develop ways to solve these issues by supporting research and technology and we look forward to working with you on these issues so that sustainable production is the norm even more so that it is today.

Remember, the technology we have now was unthinkable 10 years ago. We can't even imagine the technology we will have a few years from now. We want to leverage technology so that we can have a big impact on productivity and little to no impact on the environment.

Thank you for allowing me to join you today to help kick off this great event. I wish you the best of luck and I hope to be able to join all of you in-person next year.