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Statement of
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Air and Water Pollution Subcommittee of the
Senate Committee on Public Works

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I am pleased that this Subcommittee has chosen to hold agricultural pollution hearings in Kansas City. Kansas City is an agriculture community. It lies at the heart of the Midwest agribusiness region, and the prosperity and health of American agriculture are vital to this city's and this area's futures.

We are here today to hear what the people of Mid-America have to say about pollution, particularly that related to and affecting agriculture. Much has been said in recent years about the deterioration of our environment and about the concern of the American people for the preservation and protection of our great natural resources. Agriculture, as no other segment of our economy, is dependent upon and responsible for the natural resources of the earth. The soil and water of our nation are the raw materials of agriculture. They are a precious inventory that the farmer, the stockman and the rancher know must be guarded, and must continually be renewed and reused. By this hearing today, we hope to learn what those who are involved in day to day operation of agribusiness enterprises think about the problems of pollution and about the steps that are needed to protect the environment.

FEEDLOT POLLUTION

Environmental protection is a significant matter to agribusiness, especially in the growing feedlot industry. Melville W. Gray, Chief Engineer and Director of the Division of Environmental Health for the Kansas State Department of Health, recently estimated that the domesticated animals raised in Kansas produce the same volume of wastes as measured in biochemical

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oxygen demands as a human population of approximately 100 million persons.

This Subcommittee must learn more about the extent and impact of agricultural pollution, particularly as it relates to feedlot runoff. We need to learn more about the extent and effectiveness of current pollution control methods, as well as what opportunity exists for implementing further controls that would be practical and economical for the farmer. We need to study the impact of agricultural wastes on groundwaters. In this regard, I believe it is significant to note that President Nixon has wisely called for an extension of water quality standards to groundwaters.

I would call attention at this point to the fact that the state of Kansas has been active in the field of protecting water resources. Kansas has regulated feedlot pollution for several years. The state requires feedlots to register and to install water pollution control facilities when they are considered necessary to prevent runoff into streams and rivers. I am hopeful that the experience of Kansans in this area will be valuable to this Subcommittee. I remember some of the difficulties and discussions in Pratt, Kansas, when the feedlots first started there. Adjustments have been made there and all over the state in the control of feedlot pollution. If we can get some of these experiences and adjustments into the record, it will greatly assist us later in our deliberations on regulations to insure a healthy and secure environment.

CHEMICAL POLLUTION

Another critical area of interest is the use and control of chemicals in the agricultural environment. Recently, concern has arisen over the long-term effects of pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and fertilizers used in agriculture. This concern is proper and should not be taken lightly. At the same time, however, it should be remembered that all these chemicals are tools for the

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farmer. They are important tools that have been developed to increase both the productivity and efficiency of agriculture. They are in large measure responsible for the greatness of American agriculture today. Without these chemicals, American farmers could not offset the tremendous drain of manpower away from rural areas of our country. They would not be able to meet the ever-increasing demand for food generated by our rising population.

Farmers have come to depend on chemicals and I believe they have generally been prudent and wise in their use. But some of these chemicals are persistent and have effects and characteristics that are not yet fully understood. The presence of persistent chemicals and their residues in the environment poses a potential hazard of substantial proportions. If such substances should enter the food chains of domestic and wild animals, the ultimate consequences could be catastrophic to man.

The citizens of the nation are entitled to protection against such prospects, and we in the Congress must work to increase our knowledge and understanding of the many issues and technical questions in this area.

For these reasons, I hope the testimony we hear today will tell of the steps Mid-America has taken to deal with these problems, and of the approaches it has employed to find answers to some of these questions. This testimony will be extremely helpful to the Air and Water Subcommittee in its consideration of establishing standards and regulations --- those that will prevent pollution but will not penalized the agribusiness community that is so important to our nation.