

6/16/2004 Moran Looks for Opportunities to Promote Kansas Wheat

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Iraqi "Oil For Food" Program Reviewed at Committee Hearing

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Jerry Moran today participated in a House Agriculture Committee hearing to review the current state of agriculture production in Iraq and the likelihood of resuming commercial sales of U.S. agricultural products. The hearing also focused on allegations of improprieties by the Saddam Hussein regime, resulting in corruption of the United Nations' "Oil for Food" Program. The United Nations is investigating the alleged corruption.

"Years of financial neglect and an absence of a commercial market in Iraq have damaged the country's agriculture sector," Moran said. "While the agriculture sector is rebuilding, Iraq will have to rely on imports of food and agriculture products. As the combines roll in Kansas, there is potential to sell Kansas wheat to Iraq."

Witnesses today testified that they are confident that commercial sales of U.S. agriculture products will resume in Iraq. They expect that Iraq will need to import 2.6 million tons of wheat and one million tons of rice this year. Earlier this year, the U.S. sold 325,000 tons of wheat to Iraq. Prior to the 1991 Gulf war, the U.S. sold three million tons per year to Iraq.

The U.S. agriculture industry is attempting to foster relations with Iraqi buyers. The Kansas Wheat Commission and others have been working to sponsor a group to visit the United States, but problems associated with obtaining visas and clearances have forced the group to postpone the trip until July.

"It is critical that the U.S. agriculture industry re-establish relations with Iraqi buyers," Moran said. "Iraq is yet another market for Kansas products, and I look forward to having the Iraqi delegation in Kansas to discuss potential wheat sales."

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