

House Natural Resources Republicans Forum
How Joe Biden Stole Christmas: Addressing America's Ongoing Supply Chain Crisis
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mark Kaiser. My family and I farm near the coast of Alabama in Baldwin County. We produce cattle and a variety of row crops including peanuts and grain. I am also one of the owners of a recently constructed, farmer owned, peanut shelling plant located in Atmore, AL.

Like other farmers, small business owners, and families, I have been impacted by the supply chain disruptions that have occurred over the last year. Unfortunately, I only see things getting worse as we look towards the 2022 growing season.

Every year farmers must deal with significant challenges in producing livestock or growing a crop. This year we had a cooler than normal spring and a wetter than normal fall. Like any other year, we also had to deal with insects, disease, and market prices. Input costs are also a concern every year, but I don't recall availability of inputs and parts ever being as bad as this past growing season.

Many of my friends and neighbors experienced later than normal harvests this year when parts shortages coupled with wet weather parked combines and cotton pickers in the field for days or weeks on end. I have heard about farmers from Alabama driving as far as Indiana just to buy one part to get harvest back under way. Not only are parts hard to find, like virtually everything else they are more expensive. Every input from fertilizer to crop protection products were more expensive this past growing season.

Unfortunately, I do not see things getting any better in 2022. In fact, my suppliers are telling me it will likely get much worse.

As an example, fertilizer price quotes from dealers to farmers are only good for a day or two because each shipment of fertilizer is more expensive than the last. At this point, fertilizer will be at least 2 to 3 times more expensive than last year. The same thing is happening with other crop inputs. Farmers do not know the price until the product is delivered. And that is the good news...

There are several crop protection products that may not even be available for the next growing season.

When you look at products that farmers depend on such as Roundup, one of the brand names of glyphosate, many of the local dealers are not receiving any shipments of the product in preparation for next year's crop. Technology plays a huge role in the success of the American farmer, but if we can't get those products from the manufacturers, to the dealers and ultimately to the farmers, we are left dead in the water.

And it's not just Roundup. I am now hearing from my suppliers that other products such as pre-emergent weed control products are in short supply. Fungicides that are critical to my peanut crop will be harder to find as well.

So, why is the run up in cost and lack of product availability happening? I have several thoughts, but they all boil down to one common issue. Our supply chain is broken.

We are facing labor shortages in plants, trucking companies can't find drivers, we have outsourced manufacturing of essential products to countries on the other side of the globe, and ships are not being unloaded in a timely manner. Even packaging materials such as cardboard, plastics, and labels are hard to source and crop protection products can't be shipped out.

While economics are certainly a concern, there are other factors at play as well. These supply chain issues can lead to environmental and natural resource impacts as well. If a cotton crop is harvested too late, cover crops will not be planted in a timely manner and environmental gains of that cover crop are not maximized and erosion can increase. The chemistries used in modern agriculture for crop protection are designed to have the smallest environmental footprint possible, but they may not be available, resulting in more passes over the field, more fuel burned and other issues. Lastly, reduced yields would result in less food and fiber being produced on the same number of acres meaning all of the energy, fuel, crops inputs will result in our nation's food and fiber being produced in a less efficient manner.

As I conclude my remarks, I would like to take this time to remind everyone that a safe, plentiful and affordable food supply is critical to our national defense and way of life. Farmers are here to meet this challenge, but if we can't get seed, fertilizer, fuel, and other crop protection products to the farmer he or she cannot produce a crop. And for the first time in my career in farming, this is a real threat next year unless policies in Washington, D.C. are brought forward to get our supply chain back on track.