Under Secretary Dunn's Opening Remarks as Moderator
Panel: "Biotechnology Issues for U.S. Agriculture"
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—The success of biotechnology rests firmly upon the ability of many different players to answer many different questions. And it seems, at every turn, the questions become more complicated and debated. Building consensus on these issues is difficult because of the varying interests different parties bring to the table and also because the science itself is highly dynamic and evolving.

—Biotechnology holds great promise to help farmers, fight world hunger, promote human and animal health, and reduce pesticide use. However, we must continue to ensure that the technology is developed and used safely and in a manner that effectively addresses public, environmental, and market considerations. The purpose of this panel discussion is to share—as Government officials—our experiences and perspectives regarding the regulatory oversight of production and marketing of genetically modified crops and some of the scientific issues associated with them.

—Recently, the use of modern biotechnology to produce new varieties of food crops has raised a number of questions about the environmental effects of these crops and about the safety of foods derived from them. It is in the nature of science, and biology in particular, that new questions will keep arising about products used in complex systems—in the environment and as food. In Europe and other parts of the world—as well as to some extent here in the United States—there are concerns about this new technology. These issues will profoundly affect growers' decisions, consumer choices, and future markets for the products of biotechnology. We also anticipate that demands for regulatory, marketing, and certification services will continue to increase commensurate with biotechnology's rapid growth. And so the question arises, "How should the Government respond to these increased demands?" Even though we are forging ahead in our efforts to keep ahead of the knowledge curve and remain proactive and responsive to such needs, we must continue to ensure public and consumer confidence. At the same time, we want to help farmers and consumers benefit from biotechnology. And so government officials and many others ask, "Are our current systems sufficient, and do they provide us with the flexibility we will need to face the challenges of the new millennium?"

—I know we are all looking forward to a lively, informative discussion. Now, I'd like to present to you our distinguished panel of speakers.

—First, we will hear from

—Dr. James White, Senior Operations Officer of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, who will talk about issues pertaining to his Agency's regulation of the development and field testing of genetically engineered organisms—primarily new plants and plant products. Jim will also give the presentation of Dr. Clifford Gabriel, Deputy to the Assistant Director for Science of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Unfortunately, Cliff could not be here. Jim will

provide Cliff's thoughts on the Administration's perspective on the scientific issues associated with these products that have arisen in the past and are in the forefront currently.

—Mr. David Shipman, Deputy Administrator over the Federal Grain Inspection Service of USDA's Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, who will talk about the current status of that Agency's work testing for biotechnology-enhanced grains and oilseeds. Dave has worked for USDA for 23 years, and his expertise centers around analytical testing methodologies and the establishment of U.S. and international grain quality standards.

—Our final speaker, Dr. Phil Hutton, Chief of the Microbial Pesticides Branch of the Biopesticide and Pollution Prevention Division of the Environmental Protection Agency, will provide us with insight regarding that Agency's development of registration requirements for bioengineered crops.

—Before we begin, I want to note that some issues, such as those regarding human health and food safety and labeling, as well as the safety of animal feed, fall under the authority of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Food and Drug Administration. Because FDA is not represented here today, our panelists will do their best to address related questions, but they may not be able to respond in detail about issues under FDA's jurisdiction.

—Now, I'd like to open the floor for our panel discussion.