

Sonny Perdue's Upcoming Challenges

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Legislative Activity

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As **President Trump** is reflecting on his first 100 days in office, Sonny Perdue is just getting his feet wet in his new position as Secretary of the **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)**. On April 25, less than 24 hours after the Senate overwhelmingly approved his nomination by a bipartisan vote of 87-11, Sonny Perdue was sworn in as the 31st Secretary of Agriculture.

Although Perdue has been on the job for less than a week, there are undoubtedly near-term challenges he will face as USDA Secretary. One of the first items of great importance to the agricultural community is President Trump's upcoming comprehensive budget request, which is expected later this month. The president's "Skinny Budget" released in March contained the administration's Fiscal Year 2018 funding proposals for discretionary programs. The "Skinny Budget" called for a \$4.7 billion, or 20.7 percent, cut to USDA programs, recommending the elimination of the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education Program, the Water and Wastewater Loan and Grant Program, and the Rural Business and Cooperative Service's discretionary activities. During Perdue's confirmation hearing, Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Ranking Member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, noted her deep concerns with the proposed cuts to USDA programs. Perdue made clear that he had many of the same concerns, and that he had no input in the preparation of the budget blueprint. Perdue also promised the committee he would be a strong advocate for the agricultural community in his role as Agriculture Secretary.

In addition to budget matters, there are several other issues Perdue could soon face as Agriculture Secretary. President Trump has signaled an ambitious agenda on several items of great importance to the agricultural community, namely reforms to trade agreements, immigration, and the federal regulatory system. Also, as the current Farm Bill expires on September 30, 2018, Perdue and his team will be working closely with the leaders of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees to write and enact a Farm Bill. One thing is sure, and that is Perdue's first-hand experience and knowledge of agriculture. He has worn many hats in his lifetime, including that of a farmer, agribusinessman, Air Force Captain, veterinarian, state senator, and governor. However, it is still too early to foresee how President Trump's agenda will affect the agriculture community, or what Perdue's role will be.

This Week's Hearings:

- On Saturday, May 6, the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee has scheduled a field hearing titled "Growing Jobs and Economic Opportunity: Perspectives on the 2018 Farm Bill from Michigan."

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