



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE

CINDY HYDE-SMITH  
COMMISSIONER

June 14, 2016

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan  
Speaker  
House of Representatives  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
House of Representatives  
H-204, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Minority Leader Pelosi,

As Commissioners, Secretaries and Directors of State Departments of Agriculture, we have the job of representing the agricultural interests of our respective state, along with the unique responsibility of working to ensure a safe, affordable food supply for the citizens we serve. The USDA Catfish Inspection Program is an example of an issue that brings both of these fundamental responsibilities to the forefront.

In recent weeks, the Senate passed S.J. Res. 28 which overturns the USDA Catfish Inspection Program mandated by the 2008 and 2014 Farm Bills. Passage of this resolution by the House will return inspection of imported catfish and catfish-like products back to FDA. We respectfully request that the House not take up this resolution.

We strongly believe the USDA Catfish Inspection Program is working and will continue to work at a fair price to the American taxpayer. For example, after operating for only days, USDA found two shipments of imported pangasius, a catfish-like product, that were contaminated with dangerous carcinogens. Those products were denied entry into the United States. Our domestic catfish industry has long met health and environmental regulations imposed on their operations by both state and federal government. Under USDA's Catfish Inspection Program, both domestic catfish and imported catfish, including catfish-like products, will be produced on a level playing field.

Many of our State Agriculture Departments have tested imported catfish and catfish-like products for years because the FDA has historically inspected less than 0.2 percent of these products. Frequently, those products have tested positive for dangerous carcinogens and antibiotics banned from use in food-producing animals in the United States. The states have

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exhausted valuable resources to prevent adulterated, imported foods from reaching our constituents when these food products should have never entered the country.

This rule is about food safety. We believe that the USDA Catfish Inspection Program provides a greater level of protection to consumers than FDA's inspection program. Accordingly, we request that the House not consider S.J. Res. 28.

Respectfully submitted,

**Commissioner Cindy Hyde-Smith**  
Mississippi Department of Agriculture

**Secretary Joe Bartenfelder**  
Maryland Department of Agriculture

**Commissioner Hugh Weathers**  
South Carolina Department of Agriculture

**Commissioner Mike Strain**  
Louisiana Department of Agriculture

**Commissioner Gary Black**  
Georgia Department of Agriculture

**Commissioner Adam H. Putnam**  
Florida Department of Agriculture  
and Consumer Services

**Secretary Jim Reese**  
Oklahoma Department of Agriculture,

**Commissioner Jai Templeton**  
Tennessee Department of Agriculture

**Commissioner John McMillan**  
Alabama Department of Agriculture

**Commissioner Ryan Quarles**  
Kentucky Department of Agriculture

**Secretary Wes Ward**  
Arkansas Department of Agriculture

**Commissioner Walt Helmick**  
West Virginia Department of Agriculture

**Commissioner Sid Miller**  
Texas Department of Agriculture

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cc:

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Majority Leader  
House of Representatives  
H-107, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steve Scalise  
Majority Whip  
House of Representatives  
H-329, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer  
Minority Whip  
House of Representatives  
H-148, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Conaway  
Chairman  
House Committee on Agriculture  
2430 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Trent Kelly  
House Committee on Agriculture  
House of Representatives  
1427 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Pete Sessions  
Chairman  
House Committee on Rules  
H-312, U.S. Capitol  
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The Honorable Louise Slaughter  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Rules  
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The Honorable Bradley Byrne  
House Committee on Rules  
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The Honorable Collin Peterson  
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