

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 1, 2016

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We would like to express continued gratitude for your diligence in working to eliminate Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in domestic poultry in 2015 and again this year. We are pleased with the improvements USDA implemented, in collaboration with the poultry industry, in the area of disease prevention and overall response since the first positive test last year. However there are still some issues that must be addressed, and we would like to highlight one in particular.

As a result of last year's outbreak, certain countries are requiring that all poultry exported from the U.S. be hatched and raised in this country. The most significant markets in question are South Africa and the Republic of Korea. As currently included in import requirements for both countries, the phrase "must be hatched and raised in the United States" is causing significant disruption to trade even though there is no scientific evidence for its existence and sets a negative precedent for future trade negotiations with other nations.

Notably, these markets are not extending this requirement to all countries that were affected by HPAI, and there does not appear to be justification for this differentiation. For example, meat from a poult hatched in the U.S. and then raised and processed in Canada can still be exported to both of these markets, but meat from a poult born in Canada and raised in the U.S. is not eligible for export to the same markets. It is important to note that the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) is already recognized as the gold standard around the world for ensuring that no products from diseased poultry enter the marketplace. As a result, customers both in the U.S. and abroad can be confident they are purchasing poultry products from birds free of disease.

We appreciate the work the Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) and the Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) have done in creating an Export Verification (EV) program which allows companies to trace back and validate that poult are hatched and raised in the U.S. so that they are eligible for export to those markets. While this program is helping to re-open the Republic of Korea and South Africa markets to some U.S. turkey exports, we believe this is a short-term solution. The impact of the 2015/2016 HPAI outbreak has left long-lasting, undesirable consequences for the poultry industry, and the "hatched and raised" requirement is one that needs attention. This new restriction appears to represent a non-scientific trade barrier that limits the turkey industry's ability to export abroad. Right now, just two important markets are affected, but we are concerned that this language could be requested by additional countries in the future.

We look forward to hearing from you about this important matter. We specifically ask that you provide an assessment of the effectiveness of the EV program and the Department's perspective on its use in future trade negotiations. Additionally, we ask that you consider raising the problematic "hatched and raised" language in future bilateral discussions with the Republic of Korea and South Africa.

Sincerely,



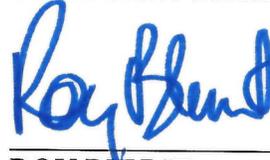
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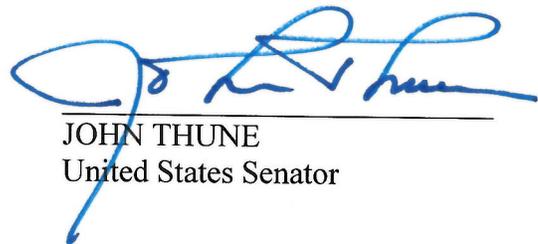
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cc: Ambassador Michael Froman, United States Trade Representative