

September 17, 2015

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
Senate Agriculture Committee
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture Committee
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

Thank you for your efforts over the past several months to reauthorize the Grain Standards Act (USGSA), which sets the framework for the functioning of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS). With the impending expiration of the USGSA at the end of September, it's critically important that Congress conclude the reauthorization process. We believe the bill you are considering this morning includes several important provisions that will enable uninterrupted trade in agricultural products and maintain trust in our inspection system.

As you know, throughout this process we have advocated for maintaining FGIS or currently delegated State authorities rather than allowing for the authorization of private inspectors in export facilities. Our international trading partners trust the current system of FGIS and delegated state inspections. We appreciate the approach you have taken in this bill to maintain the current system and to include provisions that would emphasize transparency and accountability. Specifically, we support the inclusion of the provisions requiring that in instances where a delegated state agency decides to discontinue inspection services, that agency must provide 72 hours notice, as well as the requirement that FGIS immediately take such actions as are necessary to maintain inspections. We hope that you will continue to reinforce the necessity of FGIS immediately assuming inspection services if and when a State delegated agency discontinues services.

We also support the establishment of a recertification process for delegated state agencies in order to ensure an open opportunity for public comment and feedback about the operations of these agencies. To that end, we hope that following conclusion of the reauthorization process, you will emphasize to USDA the importance of quickly moving forward with the recertification process to allow customers to share input about current inspection operations in a formal process.

Finally, we appreciate the inclusion of various reporting requirements, including immediate reports to Congress about any future disruptions in official inspection services as well as requiring a report on the factors that led to the situation at the Port of Vancouver last summer. We believe that transparency will enable future disruptions to be resolved in a timely fashion. We also appreciate that you included the requirement that USDA report to Congress on the policy barriers U.S. grain producers face in countries that don't provide U.S. grain with official grades (or only the lowest quality grade), as well as an analysis of possible inconsistencies with trade obligations on the part of those countries.

Again, we sincerely appreciate your work to move forward with the reauthorization process and to come up with a compromise bill that can be supported by both chambers of Congress and Members from both sides of the aisle. We hope that Congress will be able to act quickly on this bill to ensure no lapse in authorization.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation
American Soybean Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Corn Growers Association

CC: Members of the Senate Agriculture Committee