

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6000
202-224-2035

Secretary Vilsack:

I write to express concerns with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) launch of the new Export Sales Reporting and Maintenance System (ESRMS). Knowing the value of this reporting system to our farmers, ranchers, agricultural industry, and the global community, I am troubled by the handling of such an update that led to the inability to report data as expected. I am also disappointed in the outreach efforts from USDA to inform all appropriate stakeholders, including myself and other Committee members, prior to executing this update. Importantly, it was only after technical issues arose that we received more transparent information about the need to modernize the ESRMS and the plan to return to the legacy system until more thorough outreach and education can be completed with industry stakeholders.

While I appreciate the need to modernize outdated systems, the decision was made to launch a new reporting system before properly training reporting entities and proper testing for technical glitches. As a result of what some suggest was a hurried decision to launch, U.S. and world traders are now limited in price discovery for many commodities for a duration of three weeks, notably at the beginning of the marketing year for corn and soybeans. I am concerned about how this will impact global food price volatility in a time of high inflation and food supply challenges with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and worsening crop conditions in the U.S. and abroad.

From a stakeholder perspective, this misstep suggests USDA's Senior leadership is not attuned to the Department's important, day-to-day functions. I strongly encourage you to ensure that Senior leadership at USDA does not put the Administration's political agenda ahead of the Department's fundamental mission, which is to provide stability to U.S. agriculture and its stakeholders. I also anticipate that you will provide the hardworking personnel at FAS with the resources and support they need to fix this issue and properly vet the new system before an additional attempt to launch.

Please respond within 10 days with a detailed plan for the outreach, education, and training of reporting entities and other key stakeholders as well as a timeframe for the future roll out of the new system.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.



John Boozman
Ranking Member