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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6000

202-224-2035

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March 22, 2017

Michael Young
Acting Deputy Secretary of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Acting Deputy Secretary Young,

I am concerned about the March 17th announcement from Brazilian authorities that opened an investigation within the country's meat sector. Allegations were made that industry representatives were bribing food safety inspectors to approve tainted meat for sale and export. The allegations indicate that Brazilian meat exporters sold rotten meat products for human consumption after treating the meat with acid to hide the smell and knowingly exported meat contaminated with Salmonella to Europe. Allegedly, multiple meat companies were involved with influencing the Brazilian government on where to assign private meat inspectors, then bribing the inspectors to ignore adulterated meat.

In light of such reports, several countries, including China, South Korea, Chile and the European Union, have already taken steps to halt some imports or tighten inspections of shipments from Brazil. I write today to inquire about what immediate actions the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) is taking to ensure the integrity and safety of our imported U.S. food supply.

As you know, the U.S. recently revisited its equivalency standards with Brazil to allow for fresh beef imports, with the first shipment of fresh beef entering the U.S. in October 2016. Due to the recent events, I am concerned about the safety of food products entering this country from Brazil and potentially putting American citizens at risk.

Given the urgency of addressing these food safety concerns, I ask that you provide a written response to the following questions and issues no later than March 28, 2017:

1. Have any adulterated meat products from Brazil entered the U.S.? If so, please list the quantity and type of products from the companies implicated in the scandal in Brazil that have entered the U.S. since equivalency was granted.
2. How has FSIS adapted its import procedures in response to potentially adulterated meat products entering from Brazil? Are more personnel necessary at ports of entry to respond to this issue? What other actions has FSIS made in response? Can you explain the border inspection process? What does finished product inspection entail?

3. In light of these allegations, will FSIS be conducting a larger review of its equivalency finding for Brazil's food safety system? What is the FSIS protocol when international food safety systems that have been granted equivalency are alleged to have conducted fraudulent inspections? What are the agency's next steps if such fraud is confirmed?
4. In order to meet equivalency standards, an exporter must use food safety inspectors organized and administered by a foreign government. Does this equivalency standard also include salary and payment made on behalf of such government or can a company pay for food safety inspection services? Please explain.

Thank you for your attention on this important issue. If you have questions regarding this letter, please have them contact Katie Naessens on the minority staff of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry at (202) 224-2035.

Sincerely,



Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member