

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

November 7, 2022

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write in support of the U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish industry's request for the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service to purchase catfish products under Section 32 of The Act of August 24, 1935 (7 U.S.C. 612c). U.S. catfish inventories have climbed sharply in recent years, and when combined with the rapid increase in feed costs, the profitability of America's catfish producers is at risk.¹ A major Section 32 purchase of catfish products will facilitate the domestic consumption of U.S. farm-raised catfish, assist in stabilizing markets, and provide much-needed income support to catfish farmers.

Due to ongoing processing constraints related to the COVID-19 pandemic, labor shortages, and supply chain disruptions, catfish are being kept on farms longer, resulting in larger and heavier-weighted catfish. Keeping the catfish on farm for extended periods results in additional feed costs and contributes to these heavier weights. According to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, the Arkansas, Mississippi, and Alabama three-state inventory total was up 8% year-over-year at the beginning of July.² The larger fish are sold at a substantial discount, making it impossible to offset the additional input costs.

Catfish producers and processors are predominantly located in rural America. Due to historically high inflation across the economy these communities continue to feel the burden of increased prices. Purchasing catfish will help to strengthen rural America and provide a nutritious, U.S.-grown product to families, children, and our communities.

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent and important request. We look forward to our continued partnership in supporting agriculture and our nation's rural communities.

Sincerely,



John Boozman
United States Senator



Cindy Hyde-Smith
United States Senator

¹ "Catfish processing – September 2022." Hanson, T. Auburn University, Aquaculture and Aquatic Sciences College of Agriculture.

² "Catfish Production." July 2022. USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. Accessed Online October 2022: <https://usda.library.cornell.edu/concern/publications/bg257f046?locale=en>



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United States Senator



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United States Senator



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