

January 29, 2018

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U. S. Department of Agriculture
Whitten Building,
1400 Independence Avenue, Southwest
Washington, D. C. 20250

Secretary Perdue:

We write to support the U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish industry's request for assistance through USDA bonus buys of surplus catfish products. Surplus purchases will assist catfish farmers and the thousands of jobs dependent upon this industry throughout the Southeast.

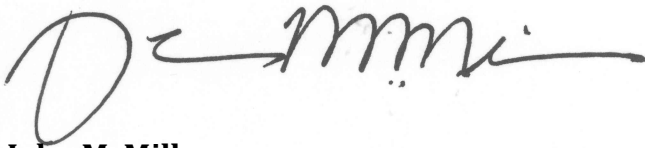
The U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish industry is extremely important to the states we represent. More than 10,000 jobs are directly or indirectly attributable to the production of U.S. farm-raised catfish. Farms and processing facilities are typically among the largest employers in the economically depressed counties where they are located.

The current surplus of large fish is building in industry freezers and is expected to become greater as we move into the first half of 2018. Section 32 purchases of catfish would provide immediate relief and enable 2016 and 2017 fish crops to be harvested and processed.

We have witnessed the work and dedication of the catfish industry in correcting this challenge. Farmers are experimenting with new growing and harvesting methods to curtail future challenges with large fish. In addition, we understand that the industry is working with USDA and other commodity purchasing authorities to introduce expanded markets for large fish products. We will do all we can to assist the industry in these efforts as well.

We genuinely hope that you will consider all of the factors facing the U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish industry and approve this request.

Sincerely,



John McMillan

Alabama Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries



Mike Strain

Louisiana Commissioner of Agriculture and Forestry



Cindy Hyde-Smith

Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce



Sid Miller

Texas Commissioner of Agriculture



Wes Ward

Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture

CC:

Greg Ibach, Undersecretary, Marketing and Regulatory Programs
Townsend Kyser, President, Catfish Farmers of America
Roger Barlow, EVP, Catfish Farmers of America
Alabama Congressional Delegation
Arkansas Congressional Delegation
Louisiana Congressional Delegation
Mississippi Congressional Delegation
Texas Congressional Delegation