

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 16, 2020

Secretary Sonny Perdue
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write today to urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to take swift and proactive steps to minimize any disruptions to our nation's food supply chain as we combat the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

We encourage you to use all of your available authorities to maximize flexibility to guarantee USDA inspectors are available for on-site inspections and ensure that our processing facilities maintain current productivity levels. Additionally, we ask that you collaborate with industry partners in developing and releasing information to inform the public about USDA's planned actions.

The animal protein supply chain for beef, pork and poultry functions requires consistency. Producers and markets are looking for any assurances that the USDA is taking proactive steps to mitigate any disruptions. Moreover, as some states take proactive steps to limit the spread of the virus, we strongly urge that all meat processing facilities be deemed "essential" operations.

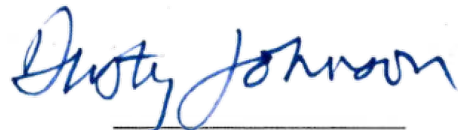
In this time of need, we all must do what we can to maintain Americans access to a safe and abundant supply of protein. We appreciate USDA's efforts to make arrangements to continue to "do right and feed everyone". The protein supply chain is a vital component of food security.

Again, we appreciate your leadership as we work together to address the impacts of COVID-19, and thank you for the many actions USDA and the Administration have already taken to minimize disruptions.

Respectfully,



Thom Tillis
U.S. Senator



Dusty Johnson
Member of Congress