

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mark Pryor and
The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman and Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Room S 128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt and
The Honorable Sam Farr
Chairman and Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Pryor and Aderholt and Ranking Members Blunt and Farr,

It is because we are deeply concerned about the safety of the food served to the American people, especially our children, that we write to express our serious apprehension about the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) recent decision to allow China to process chicken raised in the United States, as well as Canada and Chile, to then export to the United States. Furthermore, we believe FSIS is likely to eventually allow China to export its own raw poultry to the United States.

We therefore urge you to include language in any final Fiscal Year 2014 Agriculture Appropriations Bill that: (1) ensures that Chinese-processed chicken is not included in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP); and (2) prevents funds from being used to implement any rule that would allow poultry slaughtered in China to be exported to the United States.

Consider the impact of China's weak enforcement of food safety laws and regulations: more than 300,000 Chinese children fell seriously ill, with some dying, from melamine-tainted milk powder; dangerously high levels of mercury found in Chinese baby formula; the sale of more than \$1 million worth of rat and other small mammal meat passed off to consumers as lamb; and more than 16,000 diseased pig carcasses dumped in a river to rot.

Last year China Central Television revealed that a Chinese poultry supplier provided Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants with chicken fattened by large quantities of illegal drugs. In addition, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently announced that, since 2007, pet treats imported from China containing contaminated chicken have killed 600 dogs and cats in the United States, and sickened 3,600 more. According to the World Health Organization, so far 45 of the 136 people who contracted the H7N9 bird flu in China this year have died.

We therefore find it deeply concerning that FSIS would allow chicken processed in China to soon arrive for consumption in the United States. While FSIS determined that such poultry is equivalent to poultry processed in this country, there will be no on-site inspectors in Chinese plants to verify continued equivalency or to prevent the inclusion of Chinese-slaughtered poultry (or any other adulterant) in products imported into the United States. Moreover, because processed chicken products do not require country-of-origin labeling, American consumers will not know if they are consuming chicken processed in China or be able to avoid such products if they so choose.

One deeply troubling ramification of FSIS's decision is that American children may be fed chicken processed in China through a number of federal nutrition programs. Under the NSLP and SBP, for example, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) commodities supplied to school districts must be produced, raised, and processed in the United States. But the majority of food used in the NSLP and SBP comes not from USDA commodities but instead from private vendors. Under USDA regulations, these vendors must use only 51 percent domestic ingredients, meaning that items like chicken burritos or chicken soup may contain Chinese-processed chicken at up to 49 percent of the finished product. Moreover, under the NSLP and SBP, the 51 percent rule may be waived entirely if bids reveal that a domestic product costs significantly more than a foreign product, and there is no 51 percent requirement at all in the CACFP or SFSP.

Children are our most vulnerable population with respect to foodborne illnesses and sensitivity to potentially dangerous chemicals. Given China's demonstrably poor food safety record, we believe it is unacceptable to take unnecessary risks with the health of American school children. We urge you to include language in any final bill affirming that chicken processed in China shall not be used in the NSLP, SBP, CACFP and SFSP, as well as directing USDA to ban private vendors from including Chinese-processed chicken in products offered in these programs.

As noted above, we are also greatly concerned that raw poultry from China will soon be authorized for export to the United States. In its reports to your subcommittee, FSIS made clear that it is continuing to move toward completion of an audit of China's slaughter facilities, which would allow USDA to file a proposed rule to grant equivalence to such facilities. We therefore also urge you to include language in any final bill, similar to that previously carried in the bill, ensuring that none of the funds made available may be used to implement a final rule allowing poultry slaughtered in China to be exported to the United States.

Given China's past lapses in enforcing its food safety laws, Chinese-processed and Chinese-slaughtered poultry present a serious potential threat to public health in the United States, and immediate action by the Congress is critical. Accordingly, we believe including these provisions in any final Fiscal Year 2014 Agriculture Appropriations bill is of the utmost importance.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you on this issue.

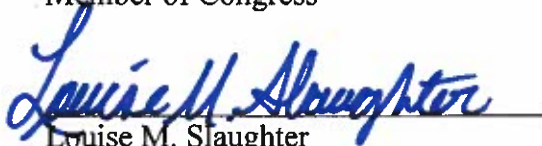
Sincerely,



Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



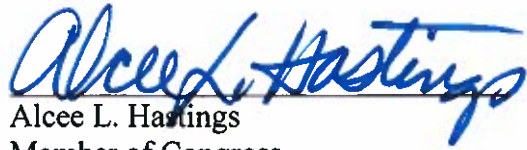
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



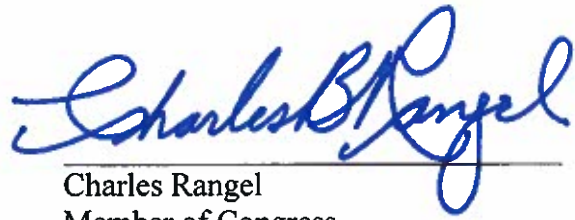
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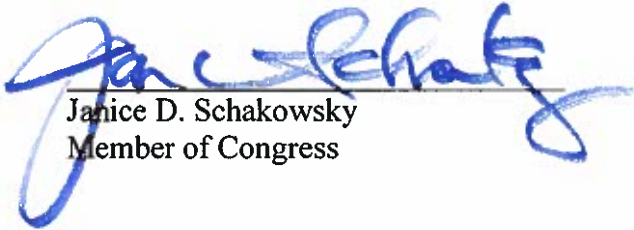
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