

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

American Workers Hurt by Phony “Food Safety” Provision

July 8, 2009

Dear Colleague,

This week, the House will consider H.R. 2997, the Agriculture Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2010. Even though it is an appropriations measure, H.R. 2997 inappropriately includes a provision that would prevent under any circumstance the importation of poultry from China.

This chicken provision is pointless and dangerous.

There is no food safety issue. The United States does not currently import, nor has it recently imported, poultry products from China. Furthermore, the United States already has in place a system to ensure the safety of imported poultry products before they can even leave foreign shores.

While doing nothing on the safety front, the provision puts at risk American jobs and millions of dollars of U.S. poultry exports to China. In retaliation for this unnecessary measure, China will reportedly block our exports.

Under current law, before any country can export a poultry product to the United States, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service (“FSIS”) must first determine that the country’s food safety requirements are equivalent to those in the United States. In the case of China, FSIS has not made this determination, except with respect to one narrow category of product – U.S.-origin poultry shipped to China for processing into a fully cooked, shelf stable product for export back to the United States. Although FSIS made this determination in 2006 with respect to this restricted category, such poultry would still not enjoy unfettered access to the U.S. market because any qualifying Chinese processing facility is subject to additional FSIS audits, and any such Chinese exports are subject to FSIS inspection at the U.S. border.

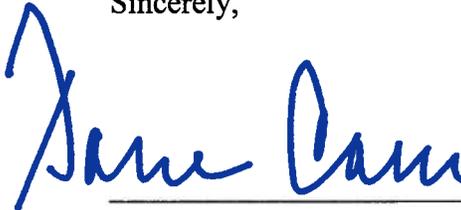
It’s bad enough that the provision is pointless, but more troubling is that it also provokes a trade war. In response to the inclusion of this provision in this year’s Agriculture Appropriations bill, China reportedly plans to block imports of U.S. poultry for the remainder of 2009, with a projected value of \$370 million. Between 2005 and 2008, U.S. exports of poultry to China increased from \$132 million to \$720 million. Today, China is our second largest export market for poultry. This provision, however, will close off that important market for U.S. chicken farmers while leaving unchanged the amount of poultry—zero—we import from China.

That explains why even the domestic poultry industry, which would theoretically have the most to gain from keeping out products from other countries, does not support this provision. Attached is a letter from a wide range of associations opposed to this language. In addition, the Obama Administration has noted its concerns with the provision in its Statement of Administration Policy on the bill.

Mr. Kingston filed an amendment with the Rules Committee to strike this misguided provision, but the majority refused to allow the House to vote.

We support legitimate, science-based oversight of food safety, but this chicken provision hurts American farmers without any impact on food safety.

Sincerely,



Handwritten signature of Kevin Brady

DAVE CAMP
Member of Congress

KEVIN BRADY
Member of Congress



JACK KINGSTON
Member of Congress