

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 2, 2023

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We are writing to urge you to take immediate action by issuing an extension of the Time-Limited Trial for pork processing plants in the New Swine Inspection System (NSIS), avoiding another unnecessary hit to our nation's hog farmers and the pork processing capacity they rely on.

As you know, on June 30, 2021, an estimated 2.5 percent of the pork industry's slaughter capacity was taken off-line. Plants that had been operating for years under the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Inspection Models Project (HIMP) program were required to reduce production despite compelling data about the safety of NSIS workers.

On March 4, 2022, nearly 9 months after the court-ordered slowdown, the first NSIS plant was allowed to return to its former line speed, through a 12-month Time-Limited Trial. We commend you for your work to ensure these NSIS facilities were able to get back to their full operational capacity, as well as the subsequent extension of the program through November 30, 2023. However, we are rapidly approaching the end of the respective extension period for the plants participating in the trial, and without a permanent program in place, we are again in need of another extension.

Without an extension, producers will again be facing lost market leverage and fewer options for selling their hogs, potential contract cancellations, and greater transportation costs. Our family farmers, the food supply chain, and consumers need the certainty that our pork processing capacity will remain strong and plants will not be forced to reduce production and thereby hog purchasing.

Accordingly, we strongly urge you to issue an extension of the Time-Limited Trial and provide written notice to NSIS plants prior to November 30. As we implored you in our February 28, 2023 letter, we again urge you to establish a permanent solution for these facilities that allows them to function at full operational capacity rather than continued short-term trials. Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Charles Grassley
United States Senator



Brad Finstad
Member of Congress

John Boozman
United States Senator

Glenn "GT" Thompson
Member of Congress

Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator

Ashley Hinson
Member of Congress

Deb Fischer
United States Senator

Tracey Mann
Member of Congress

Pete Ricketts
United States Senator

Sam Graves
Member of Congress

Roger Marshall, M.D.
United States Senator

Adrian Smith
Member of Congress

Don Bacon
Member of Congress

Mariannette Miller Meeks, M.D.
Member of Congress

Mark Alford
Member of Congress

Mary Miller
Member of Congress

Mike Flood
Member of Congress

Dusty Johnson
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mike Bost', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mike Bost
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Randy Feenstra', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Randy Feenstra
Member of Congress