



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

JUN 12 2013

The Honorable Vicky Hartzler
U.S. House of Representatives
1023 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Hartzler:

Thank you for your letter of May 1, 2013, cosigned by your colleagues, regarding catfish inspection. I appreciate the opportunity to address your questions, and apologize for the delayed response.

Addressing your inquiry about possibly eliminating the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) catfish inspection program, USDA continues to develop the final catfish inspection rule in accordance with Public Law 110-246, Section 11016. Until a final rule is adopted, jurisdiction of catfish inspection remains with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Regarding U.S. businesses that process catfish and other seafood species in the same facility (i.e., both USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) regulated and FDA regulated product), FSIS has consulted with FDA extensively in the rulemaking process to clarify matters of jurisdiction and will continue to do so. U.S. businesses that process both catfish and other seafood would fall under both FSIS and FDA jurisdiction, as these areas of jurisdiction have been established in law by Congress.

However, dual jurisdiction facilities are not unusual, and FSIS and FDA work cooperatively in other such establishments producing non-seafood products. U.S. businesses that process catfish only would be under FSIS' jurisdiction.

With regard to your inquiry about catfish inspection program expenditures, FSIS has spent \$16 million through fiscal year 2012.

Thank you again for your letter. A similar letter has been sent to your colleagues.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary