

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 28, 2023

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
United States 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, however, we are rapidly approaching the end of the respective 12-month periods for the plants participating in the trial.

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 the end of their 12-month trial. We also implore USDA to develop 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 Ernst
United States Senator



Michelle Fischbach
Member of Congress



Deb Fischer
Member of Congress



Mike Flood
Member of Congress



Adrian Smith
Member of Congress



Randy Feenstra
Member of Congress



Ashley Hinson
Member of Congress



Mariannette Miller-Meeks, M.D.
Member of Congress



Tracey Mann
Member of Congress