

COMMITTEES:

APPROPRIATIONS  
BANKING  
INDIAN AFFAIRS  
VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

# United States Senate

INTERNET:  
<http://tester.senate.gov/contact>

August 4, 2016

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

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I write regarding the recent decision from the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) that fresh chilled or frozen beef can now be imported from Brazil. Since this announcement, I have heard concerns from Montana producers and consumers about the impact this might have on food safety and our local markets. I share their concerns and urge you to take the necessary steps to ensure this decision protects consumers and our cattle industry.

It is critically important that the Department of Agriculture ensures the importation of Brazilian beef does not increase the risks of a Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak in the United States. A single case would have devastating impacts on our domestic herds and economy as well as threaten the health of consumers. Montana cattle producers have the best beef around, and they are held to the highest food safety standards. We should expect no less from Brazilian producers.

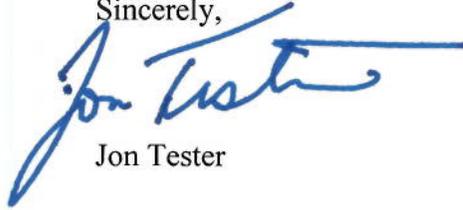
With the introduction of these imports to the domestic market, it is critical for consumers that USDA takes appropriate steps to educate retailers and the general public where their beef originates. I am concerned by the possibility that retailers would have no way of knowing basic information such as where the product originated.

Without further information and assurances, I oppose this decision. In order to increase transparency and consumer confidence in this process, I respectfully request answers to the following questions:

- What steps has USDA taken to implement the recommendations the Government Accountability Office made for improving the emergency response to an animal disease outbreak?
- What steps did the FSIS take to ensure the Brazilian facilities are equivalent in nature to American facilities?
- What process will be in place to verify ongoing compliance?
- Is FSIS considering using third party verification?
- What processes will be implemented to track the movement Brazilian beef imports once they enter the US market?

I appreciate your attention to this matter and stand ready to work with you. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Tester". The signature is stylized with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jon Tester