

# United States Senate

June 21, 2017

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary of Agriculture  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

I write to express serious concerns about continuing to import meat products from Brazil. It is increasingly clear that these products pose a threat to American consumers while undermining American ranchers. I urge you to use your authority to immediately suspend all meat imports from Brazil until the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) conducts a comprehensive review of Brazil's safety and inspection standards. I have growing concerns that the American taxpayer is footing the bill at the expense of our local producers.

On June 20, the Food Safety and Inspection Service's (FSIS) removed five plants from the Eligible Plants Certified to Export Meat to the United States list. It is my understanding that Brazil self-suspended the plants due to FSIS's regular refusal of entry of the products originating at the five delisted locations. Import statistics suggest that the products produced at these plants are likely raw intact beef and pork and processed beef products. I respectfully request an expeditious response to the following questions regarding the delisting of five Brazilian plants from the Eligible Plants Certified to Export Meat to the United States list and overall reinspection efforts.

- What are the specific reasons that FSIS routinely refused entry to meat products produced at the five plants delisted on June 20? Please quantify to the extent possible how much meat was rejected for each specific reason.
- What are the meat product categories of the products FSIS rejected from the five plants delisted on June 20?

In March, a bribery scandal in the Brazilian meat product industry led to several nations, such as China, Saudi Arabia and Mexico, temporarily halting Brazilian meat imports. The scandal involved bribing Brazilian inspectors to ignore a practice of treating expired meat with an acid wash that allowed it to pass as a fresh product when mixed with acceptable meat. The United States responded by instituting a costly and time consuming increased level of reinspection on all Brazilian meat imports.

I am deeply troubled to learn that since this heightened level of reinspection started on March 18, 2017, FSIS has rejected over 1.7 million pounds of meat products from Brazil. This alarmingly high volume of meat represents roughly 5.5 percent of all the meat products reinspected since March 18. A 5.5 percent refusal rate is a significant level of rejection and warrants questions about the nature of the refusals and risk of continuing to allow any meat products to be imported from Brazil. Simply put, we should not be putting American consumers in harm's way while undercutting American ranchers. It just does not make sense.

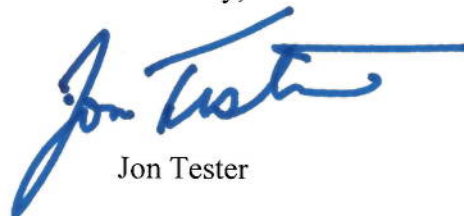
- What are the main reasons for the roughly 5.5 percent rejection rate and what is the breakdown of meat product categories of the rejected products? Please quantify to the extent possible how much meat was rejected for each specific reason and for each meat product category?
- What is the additional cost to taxpayers for conducting this increased reinspection?
- When will the next comprehensive audit of the Brazilian meat inspection system be conducted?
- Is there a timetable to lift the intensified reinspection protocols at our ports-of-entry for meat products from Brazil?

Our ranchers raise the best beef and pork products in the world. They adhere to extremely high safety standards and make extraordinary efforts to provide consumers with desirable and safe meat products. I believe it is unwise to risk the public's trust in domestic meat products by potentially allowing harmful imports to make it into our marketplace. Without Country-Of-Origin-Labeling, consumers cannot differentiate which products are coming from abroad and which products are raised in our pastures. We raise plenty of high-quality beef in the United States to serve our market. We do not need to import millions of pounds of meat products a month from a country that is failing over five percent of its reinspections.

I applaud the efforts of the inspectors at FSIS for identifying and blocking potential hazards. Their good work keeps Americans safe and makes clear that Brazil's inspection process is inadequate and drains valuable taxpayer dollars. Montanans have a hard time understanding why the federal government would do this when we have access to the best domestic meat in the world.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to your expeditious responses to my questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jon Tester". The signature is stylized with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Jon Tester