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March 2, 2006

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The Honorable Mike Johanns  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
200 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington DC 20210

05-012P  
05-012P-38  
Mark E. Souder

[www.house.gov/souder](http://www.house.gov/souder)

Dear Secretary Johanns:

I am writing to express my opposition to a proposed Food Safety and Inspection Service rule (Docket No. 05-012P) that would allow the People's Republic of China to export processed poultry products to the United States. This rule would threaten smaller U.S. poultry industries and producers, as well as undermine consumer confidence in the safety of domestic poultry products by weakening the federal government's ability to protect from avian influenza.

Although it is unlikely that this rule would have a substantial effect on domestic poultry supplies and prices, it could very well jeopardize our country's smaller poultries industry such as duck, goose, and squab. This rule could potentially exact sizable harm on some of the businesses in my northeastern Indiana district—one of the largest duck-producing regions in the country—including Maple Leaf Farms in Milford and Culver Duck in Middlebury. U.S. producers of these poultry products could easily be undercut by low grade Chinese products produced at a fraction of the price due to lower wages and benefits.

I am also concerned that the 25 Chinese establishments that this rule would authorize to export products to the U.S. would export more than the 2,500,000 pounds USDA estimates. Indeed, my understanding of international trade leads me to think this likely. Concerns over bird flu have already resulted in a decline in Chinese domestic poultry consumption of as much as 60 percent, and Chinese poultry producers will certainly be looking to expand their exports to other markets. In addition, it is easy to imagine the U.S. importing more than this amount of processed poultry products should we experience even a minor disease outbreak, which would no doubt lead to other countries banning our own poultry exports as they have done in the past.

Further, USDA's proposed rule would undermine U.S. consumer confidence in poultry products. The many outbreaks of avian flu in China, Vietnam, and other Asian countries have received significant amounts of press coverage in the U.S., and although the rule contains safeguards to ensure the safety of any imported poultry, American consumers are unlikely to be so trustworthy. Such a weakening of consumer confidence could significantly dampen domestic consumption and harm the entire U.S. poultry industry.

Finally, despite the safety measures contained in the proposed rule, I am skeptical that USDA would realistically be able to ensure the safety of Chinese poultry imports. Under the rule, the certified Chinese poultry processors would be required to acquire the raw poultry products from other countries—prohibiting them from using poultry raised in their own country. However, there is no doubt that Chinese producers would be tempted by the low prices and easy accessibility of domestically produced poultry. There are numerous reports of illegal smuggling of poultry products from areas affected by avian flu. There have also been reports of infected poultry products being shipped to other countries. Chinese producers would have obvious incentives to break the rules, imperiling the safety of our own U.S. poultry products in the process.

Again, I ask that you withdraw the proposed Food Safety and Inspection Service rule that would allow China to export processed poultry products to the United States. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

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Sincerely,



Mark E. Souder  
Member of Congress

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U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-1403

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The Honorable Mike Johanns  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
200 Constitution Avenue, NW



