

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

July 30, 2009

Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
212A Whitten Building
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

On June 19, 2009, the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives released a report funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) entitled, "Research on the Economic Impact of Cooperatives." I am writing to request that the USDA provide detailed information regarding the statistics on health care cooperatives mentioned in this report. We need an accurate understanding of how the health care cooperative model has actually worked for consumers. Specifically, I am hopeful that the USDA will be able to provide answers to the following questions:

1. This report examines the economic impact of cooperatives. Has the USDA conducted any comprehensive studies on the consumer impact of cooperatives?
2. How is cooperative defined for purposes of this study? In what sectors of the economy do cooperatives generally operate? Are cooperatives more successful as a model in certain sectors of the economy over others?
3. What is the history of health-related cooperatives in America? What are the different types of health-related cooperatives in existence today?
4. The above-mentioned report states: "...we have data from 192 health-care cooperatives." Please provide the names and geographic locations of each of these cooperatives. What are the data sources for this information? Is there a particular federal survey that was used? Is this an exhaustive list?
5. Of the 192 health-care cooperatives identified in this report, how many are consumer cooperatives, how many are purchasing/shared services cooperatives, and how many are worker cooperatives (based on the National Cooperative Business Association definition of each type)?
6. How many consumers are enrolled in each of the consumer cooperatives identified in this report?

USDA Cooperative Data Request Letter – Page 2
July 30, 2009

I would greatly appreciate your responses to these questions no later than Wednesday, August 5, 2009. Should you or your staff have any further questions, please do not hesitate to be in touch with Ellen Doneski (202-224-0411) or Jocelyn Moore (202-224-6472) on my staff. I appreciate your prompt consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John J. Dwyer" with a stylized flourish at the end.