



May 4, 2015

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
320A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
320A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

As you know, agriculture and the rural economy have become increasingly reliant on export markets for their economic wellbeing. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) the U.S. exported \$152.5 billion of agricultural products in fiscal year 2014. Today, 31 percent of U.S. farm income comes directly from exports. Ensuring the integrity of our export products in order to fuel future growth is critical.

Our nation's grain standard framework took significant time to develop. There were setbacks and instances that lead to the questioning of our credibility in the global marketplace. Today's framework, overseen by the Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS), is the world's gold standard and our export partners have faith in that standard. For a penny a bushel we have a cost-effective system that ensures consistency, reliability, and accuracy. As you work towards the reauthorization of the U.S. Grain Standards Act, I would like to draw your attention to the policy of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

The most concerning issue for our members is the continued drive towards the privatization of our grain inspection system. We are firmly against any attempt to privatize the work carried out by FGIS inspectors or delegated state agents. Our members have faith in the current system and as such request a clean reauthorization of the Grain Standards Act for a period of no less than ten years.

Furthermore, we would like to draw your attention to our concerns over the United States Grain Standards Act Reauthorization Act of 2015 (H.R. 2088), which passed out of the House Agriculture Committee on April 31, 2015. We are opposed to removing the Secretary's discretionary waiver authority in emergency situations. We are deeply concerned over the Secretary's failure to act during the 2014 disruption at the Port of Vancouver; however we recognize that the Secretary, in any Administration, needs to maintain discretion during such situations.

NFU is also concerned over the timelines set in which the Secretary must send inspectors into a delegated state that has ceased inspections. Given the limited amount of licensed inspectors in federal service and delegated state agencies, we are concerned that the two timelines provided in this bill are unnecessarily restrictive. Additionally, we are opposed to an export elevator having the ability to request services from any other designated state agency. The differences between delegated and designated are significant enough that we believe this sets a poor precedent. We are even more opposed to proposals that suggest export elevators in instances of disruption should be able to bring in private third party inspectors.

As this process moves forward in your committee, we would urge you to reject any attempts that would undermine our current grain inspection system. This nation's trading partners trust the existing system. Changes to this system that result in inspections being conducted by entities other than the federal government or a delegated state agency would diminish the trust that has taken decades to build.

We appreciate your attention in this matter and stand ready to assist you as you work towards reauthorizing the U.S Grain Standards Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Roger" being more prominent than the last name "Johnson".

Roger Johnson
President