

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

February 5, 2016

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Gayle E. Smith
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20523

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Administrator Smith:

Thank you for your work in utilizing the bounty of the U.S. agriculture sector to provide food to the world's hungry and to conflict-stricken areas around the globe, particularly through the use of the Food For Peace program. This partnership between American agriculture and global humanitarian efforts dates back over 60 years and we hope to see it continue to improve nutrition and food security globally.

As you know, in December H.R. 2029, the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2016, was signed into law. This bill directly supports U.S. international food aid efforts by providing additional funding to deliver critically needed food aid to populations in need. The additional food aid funds not only support the continued success of critical programs, such as the McGovern-Dole Food For Education Program and the Food for Progress Program, but also provide the first significant increase in P.L. 480 funding in many years for the Food For Peace program.

The additional \$250 million is to be directed towards supporting emergency response efforts to the ongoing refugee crisis and famine through in-kind food aid assistance. As you know, in-kind food aid contributions leverage the bounty of U.S. agricultural commodities to provide a safe and reliable source of food to populations in need.

It is no secret that rice is the most consumed commodity in the world and is an excellent staple food in addressing hidden hunger. Milled U.S.-grown rice has a long history as an important part of both USDA's and USAID's ongoing food assistance programs. The recent addition of fortified rice to the U.S. government commodity master list will also provide new opportunities to address the devastating impact of acute micronutrient deficiencies.

The U.S. rice industry also has a long and successful partnership with both the U.S. government and private humanitarian agencies and shares the goal of meeting the nutritional needs of vulnerable populations around the world. With a strong crop of rice this past year resulting in significant stocks, we see a clear opportunity to provide greater assistance in an even more economical fashion to help those in need as a result of the refugee crisis.

We ask that during the procurement process for the in-kind commodities used in the emergency response efforts in the Middle East that U.S.-grown rice, including fortified rice, be prioritized for delivery to those in need.

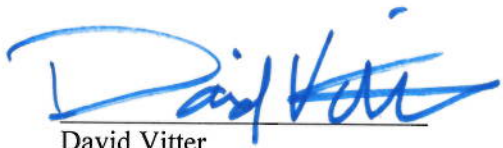
Sincerely,



John Boozman
United States Senator



Rick Crawford
United States Representative



David Vitter
United States Senator



Tom Cotton
United States Senator



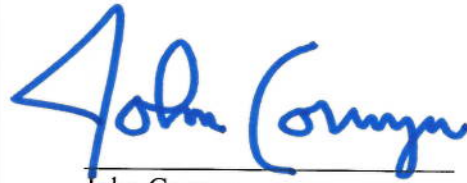
Thad Cochran
United States Senator



Roger Wicker
United States Senator



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator



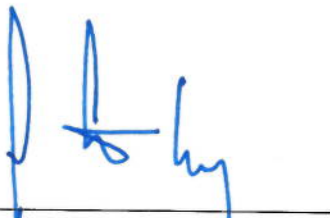
John Cornyn
United States Senator



Ralph Abraham, M.D.
United States Representative



Mike Bost
United States Representative



Trent Kelly
United States Representative



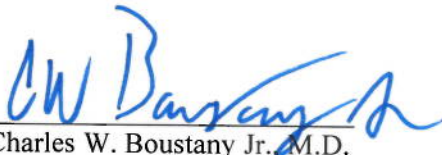
Bruce Westerman
United States Representative



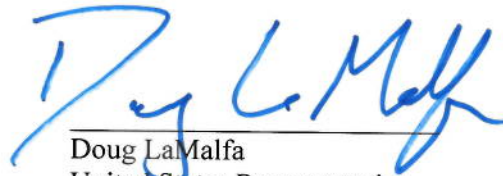
French Hill
United States Representative



Jason Smith
United States Representative



Charles W. Boustany Jr., M.D.
United States Representative



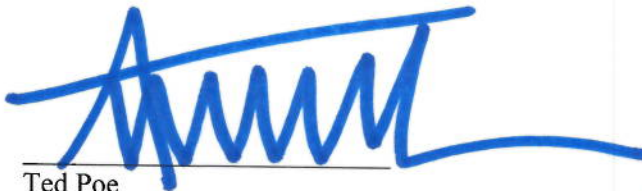
Doug LaMalfa
United States Representative



Steve Womack
United States Representative



John Fleming, M.D.
United States Representative



Ted Poe
United States Representative



John Garamendi
United States Representative