

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 19, 2023

The Honorable Bruce Summers
Administrator
Agricultural Marketing Service
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Administrator Summers:

We respectfully request that you give strong consideration to the U.S. farm-raised catfish industry's solicitation to purchase surplus catfish products through the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Section 32 Program.

On November 7, 2022, Senator Boozman, along with a number of our House and Senate colleagues, wrote a letter to Secretary Vilsack in support of the industry's request. Since that time, catfish inventories and feed costs have continued to increase. As noted in the November 2022 letter to the Secretary, catfish kept in surplus on farms must also continue to be fed, which drastically lowers the market price. This situation creates cost pressure as the pond bank price drops while feed costs soar. In short, there is more justification today for a sizable USDA Section 32 catfish purchase than when the request was initially delivered to AMS.

U.S. catfish farmers and processors are an important part of rural America, the backbone of our country. They provide thousands of jobs in some of the most rural and underserved areas in the nation, while putting safe, wholesome, and unadulterated protein on our plates. It is important to assist this industry against the multiple economic pressures they face. The catfish industry deserves to be included in the next USDA round of Section 32 purchases.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact us or members of our staff should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



CINDY HYDE-SMITH
United States Senator



KATIE BRITT
United States Senator