

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

May 18, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

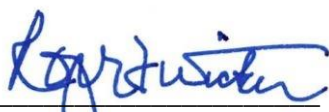
As the Department of Agriculture (USDA) continues to use funding and authorities provided in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, and other existing USDA authorities to purchase and distribute food to those in need, we request that you include Mississippi Gulf seafood products.

Seafood is an important component of America's food supply chain and a major economic driver in coastal communities. This is certainly true of Mississippi's Gulf Coast, which is home to a thriving seafood industry that includes shrimpers, oyster farmers, commercial fishing operations, and seafood processors. Our state's seafood industry employs over 8,500 people and supplies wild-caught American shrimp, farmed Gulf oysters, and other high-quality fish and shellfish to the rest of the country. Unfortunately, like most industries, seafood producers and processors have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 65 percent of the seafood consumed in the United States is purchased at foodservice establishments as opposed to grocery stores. For shrimp and oysters, it is closer to 80 percent and 90 percent, respectively. Restaurant closures across the country have reduced the demand for Mississippi seafood products and placed severe stress on the entire seafood supply chain.

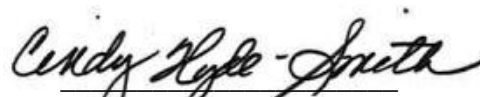
As the Department moves forward with additional food purchases through Section 32 and other programs, we respectfully request that you consider our state's seafood industry to ensure all aspects of the domestic food supply chain remain safe, sustainable, and secure.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,



Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator



Cindy Hyde-Smith
United States Senator



Steven M. Palazzo
Member of Congress