United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 4, 2014

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Michael Froman
United States Trade Representative
Office of the United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Ambassador Froman:

We write today to urge your continued fight against geographical indication (GI) restrictions promoted by the European Union (EU). This trade barrier is of great concern to meat and other food manufacturers in our states. Currently, the EU is attempting to directly impair United States competition by imposing GI restrictions through the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

We urge you to continue to push back against the EU's efforts to restrict our meat exports, particularly to nations with which we already have free trade agreements (FTAs). We urge you to make clear to your EU counterparts that the United States will reject any proposal in TTIP negotiations that would in any way restrict the ability of U.S. producers to use common meat names, such as bologna or black forest ham.

In country after country, the EU has been using its FTAs to persuade trading partners to impose barriers to U.S. exports under the guise of protecting GIs. This trade-damaging practice is concerning anywhere, but it is most troubling where the U.S. has an established FTA or is actively negotiating a new agreement. For example, as part of their recently implemented FTA with the EU, countries in Central America agreed to impose new restrictions on the use of "bologna", effectively closing an export opportunity that the U.S.-Central America FTA opened for U.S. companies. Similar trade barriers are being imposed in other parts of Latin America and are also under discussion in many Asian countries involved in negotiations with the EU.

In the states that we represent, businesses – many small to medium-sized and family owned – could have their businesses unfairly restricted by the EU's push to use GIs as a barrier to trade and competition. We are concerned that these restrictions would particularly impact smaller businesses who specialize in artisan and other specialty meat products such as bratwurst, kielbasa, wiener schnitzel and various sausages. TTIP is ultimately intended to improve the economic climate on both sides of the Atlantic by lowering barriers to trade. With that in mind, we strongly oppose the EU's gratuitous use of GIs as a protectionist measure.

We ask that USTR and USDA continue to work aggressively to ensure the EU's GI efforts on commonly used meat product names do not impair the ability of U.S. businesses to compete both domestically and internationally. We ask you to make this a top priority through official TTIP, Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) and bilateral negotiations.

Sincerely,

Senator Pat Roberts

Senator Tammy Baldwin

Senator Charles E. Schumer

Senator Pat Toomey

Senator Kelly Ayotte

Senator Lamar Alexander

Senator John Barrasso

Senator Roy Blunt

Senator John Boozman

Senator Sherrod Brown

Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.

Senator Saxby Chambliss

Senator Daniel Coats

Senator John Cornyn

Senator Ted Cruz

Senator Joe Donnelly

Senator Richard J. Durbin

Senator Deb Fischer

Senator Al Franken

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand

Senator Chuck Grassley

Senator Lindsey Graham

Senator Orrin Hatch

Senator John Hoeven

Senator James M. Inhofe

Senator Johnny Isakson

Senator Mike Johanns

Senator Ron Johnson

Senator Tim Johnson

Senator Tim Kaine

Senator Mark Kirk

Senator Amy Klobuchar

Senator John McCain

Senator Claire McCaskill

Senator Mitch McConnell

Senator Jerry Moran

Senator Rob Portman

Senator Tim Scott

Senator Jeff Sessions

Senator Jeanne Shaheen

Senator Richard Shelby

Senator John Thune

Senator Mark Warner

Senator Elizabeth Warren

Senator Roger F. Wicker