



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

FEB 16 2018

The Honorable Wes Ward
Arkansas Department of Agriculture
1 Natural Resources Drive
Little Rock, Arkansas 72205

Dear Secretary Ward:

Thank you for your letter of January 29, 2018, cosigned by your colleagues, expressing your support for the U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish industry's request for assistance through a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) purchase of surplus catfish products using funds made available by Section 32 of the Act of August 24, 1935. In your letter, you highlighted the challenges that are facing the catfish industry and your commitment to continued assistance for the industry as it works to address those challenges.

I am pleased to report that I have approved a purchase for up to \$10 million, and USDA is moving forward with preparing a solicitation for catfish products. We have worked closely with the catfish industry and the nutrition assistance programs to identify the products eligible for purchase.

Again, thank you for your letter. I recognize the importance of the catfish industry to the economic health of rural America and of the demand for high-quality protein for nutrition assistance programs. A similar letter is being sent to your colleagues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sonny Perdue". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Sonny Perdue
Secretary