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UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ROSA L. DELAURO
3RD DISTRICT, CONNECTICUT

May 22, 2018

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The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

I write to express my concern regarding alarming reports that suggest the Administration is moving forward with its plan to allow the People's Republic of China (China) to export its own poultry products to the United States.

According to China's General Administration of Customs¹, Under Secretary Ted McKinney met with deputy director Zhang Jiwen last week to discuss issues related to agricultural trade, including poultry products. Given China's longstanding and well documented food safety problems, it is appalling to me that officials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) were not included in this most recent meeting.

The Chinese food system has been plagued by series of scandals for decades. A recent report by China's Food and Drug Administration revealed that the agency found more than 500,000 occurrences of illegal behavior and food safety violations in the first three quarters of 2016². Furthermore, Bi Jingquan, the agency's former top official, described the Chinese food systems as having "deep-seated" problems.

The Chinese food supply is further compromised by other regulatory deficiencies in the country, a fact that has been shown by China's own scientists. Heavy metals such as lead and cadmium have been shown to accumulate in chicken tissue, likely from animal feed and soil contamination as a result of China's coal mining industry³.

¹ See <http://www.customs.gov.cn/customs/302249/302425/1857167/index.html>.

² See <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-food-safety/china-uncovers-500000-food-safety-violations-in-nine-months-idUSKBN14D046>.

³ Zhuang, Ping, et. al. *Heavy Metal Concentrations in Five Tissues of Chickens from a Mining Area*, Polish Journal of Environmental Studies. (July 2014). <http://www.pjoes.com/pdf/23.6/Pol.J.Enviro.n.Stud.Vol.23.No.6.2375-2379.pdf>.

Additionally, the rampant misuse of antibiotics in Chinese agriculture is a risk to both human and animal health. Chinese researchers recently found multiple, antibiotic resistant genes being carried by the country's commercial chicken flock⁴. The research team's lead, Dr. Hongning Wang, offered a grave warning associated with their findings:


"It is time to let the public understand the serious consequences of the abuse of antibiotics. If the last line of antibiotics is breached by bacteria, we will find ourselves in the post-antibiotic era."

Following last year's reorganization of USDA, which included moving the Codex office from FSIS to the newly created Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs mission area, I was joined by several of my Congressional colleagues in voicing concern about how the move seemed to signal the Administration's prioritization of multinational corporate interests over food safety. In light of recent events, it appears that those concerns were valid.

The safety of our nation's food supply should not be compromised by politicized, quid-pro-quo trade negotiations. Allowing China to export Chinese-raised poultry poses serious risks to public health and consumer safety. These current discussions, with respect to poultry products, should cease until a more transparent process can take its place moving forward. That process should include all relevant stakeholders, including food safety experts and consumer advocates.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to working with you on this issue.

Sincerely,



Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress

⁴ See <https://www.poultryworld.net/Health/Articles/2018/5/Multiple-resistance-genes-found-in-chickens-in-China-286813E/>.