



CATFISH FARMERS OF AMERICA  
1100 HIGHWAY 82 E. SUITE 202  
INDIANOLA, MISSISSIPPI 38751  
(662) 887-2699 · (662) 887-6857 FAX

## PRESS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release:**  
March 18, 2010

**Contact:**  
Joey Lowery, President  
Catfish Farmers of America  
1-501-454-1810  
[jlowery@wildblue.net](mailto:jlowery@wildblue.net)  
[www.uscatfish.com](http://www.uscatfish.com)

### **U.S. TRADE INTERESTS MAY BE OBSTACLE TO FOOD SAFETY LAW** *Consumers still waiting on law Congress passed 21 months ago*

JACKSON, Miss – U.S. trade interests are putting trade concerns over the health and safety of American consumers by delaying a seafood inspection law passed by Congress 21 months ago, the Catfish Farmers of America charged today.

“It is our view that trade should never trump the health and safety of the American people,” said Joey Lowery, president of the Catfish Farmers of America.

In an open letter to American Consumers published in the Roll Call newspaper today, Lowery called on the administration to enact a law passed by Congress that would require the U.S. Department of Agriculture to impose the same tough inspections and safety requirements on catfish and related species –both imported and domestic --as it now requires for all meat and poultry products.

“At a time when the President has said food safety is one of his top concerns, government agencies have delayed implementing an important food safety law passed by Congress 21 months ago,” Lowery said. “How much longer will U.S. consumers wait for the administration to live up to its promises and make food safety for consumers a priority?”

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) last year inspected only about two percent of the \$5.2 billion pounds of seafood imported into the United States. Congress took an important first step in trying to protect consumers from potentially contaminated imports by shifting the inspection and regulation of catfish and related fish to the USDA which has a tougher inspection regime than the FDA.

The Congressionally approved law is now stalled in the U.S. Trade Representative's office. When questioned about the delay at a March 3 Senate hearing, U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk told a Senate Finance Committee that his job is "to make sure that whatever we do, we don't unintentionally harm" foreign markets.

"We know it is the job of the U.S. Trade Representative to look out for trade," said Lowery. "But it is absolutely unacceptable to put trade ahead of the safety of American families."

To view the ad running in Thursday's editions of Roll Call please paste the following link into your browser:

<http://www.composedigital.com/US-Catfish-PrintAD/ads/uscatfish-consumerad-print.pdf>

Below is the text of the letter that appears in today's ad in the event you have problems opening the above link.

Dear American Consumer:

Even by Washington standards, 21 months is a long time. That's how long it's been since Congress told the administration to ensure the safety of imported catfish and related species.

And now we are no closer to getting action. The reason is very simple. Federal agencies like the United States Trade Representative and the State Department place a very high premium on trade with foreign countries, even if it means delaying a proposal to ensure that the imports are safe.

Did you know that only two percent of the seafood that is imported into the United States each year is inspected by the FDA to make sure it meets basic health and safety standards? Shocking, isn't it? Last year about 5.2 billion pounds of seafood were imported into the United States. Unbelievably, 98 percent of those imports made it to our grocery shelves and restaurants with absolutely no FDA health or safety inspections.

Catfish and related fish imported from Vietnam and China have been found to be contaminated with dangerous substances such as carcinogens, veterinary drugs, malachite green (a strong industrial dye that can cause liver and kidney damage) and nitrofurans (a chemical that can cause birth defects if ingested by pregnant women). It's no surprise: These fish are raised in some of the filthiest, most polluted waters in the world.

Twenty-one months ago Congress voted to shift responsibility for all catfish and related fish from the FDA to the USDA, which sets tough safety and inspection standards for all meat and poultry products.

The government still has not implemented the law. The administration is ignoring Congress. And meanwhile, all those potentially contaminated catfish and related fish from Vietnam, China, Thailand and other Asian countries continue to enter the U. S. food supply.

Even though the President and members of his administration have indicated that food safety is one of their top concerns, an important health and food safety initiative is stalled. And now you know why.

The question for the American consumer is this: *When will the American government make food safety for American consumers their top priority?*

Sincerely,  
Joey Lowery  
President, U.S. Catfish Farmers of America