

ALL CATFISH

SHOULD BE TREATED EQUALLY!

WASHINGTON IS ROLLING THE DICE WHEN IT COMES TO FOOD SAFETY.

If the U.S. Trade Representative and the Office of Management and Budget have their way, American consumers will never know whether the imported catfish they buy is safe or not.

Congress passed a law nearly two years ago requiring new safety inspections and regulations for all catfish—domestic and imported—sold in America.

Now USTR and OMB are blocking implementation of the law that would protect American consumers from unsafe and unprotected imported catfish.

At the same time, they want to create a loophole so that only some imported catfish and related species are included. The law needs to be implemented with a priority on food safety.



**WHEN WILL THE
AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
STOP GAMBLING ON
FOOD SAFETY FOR
AMERICAN CONSUMERS?**



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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, a 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

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U.S. Importers Say Vietnamese Catfish "Not Safe"

You know the situation is critical when the companies making money from importing seafood start telling Vietnam to clean up its act on catfish safety.

Read what Tom Mazzetta, CEO of Mazzetta Company, a leading importer and distributor of Asian and other foreign seafood in the United States, said about the Vietnamese catfish-related species, called tra, during a recent visit to Vietnam:

...the rearing and processing of tra fish are not safe and suitable yet. By injecting various substances into the fish to increase their weight, farmers and producers have tarnished their brands.

—The Saigon Times, April 10, 2010

[http://www.thesaigontimes.vn/epaper/SGTW/No.15-10\(967\)/30697/](http://www.thesaigontimes.vn/epaper/SGTW/No.15-10(967)/30697/)



Congress recognized the dangers of imported catfish and related species when it passed a law two years ago protecting American consumers from potentially unsafe fish grown in polluted water using farming practices banned in the United States.

Today, the U.S. Trade Representative and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget are jeopardizing the health of American consumers by thwarting implementation of this important food safeguard. They think protecting foreign farmers is more important than protecting American consumers.

The Administration is sitting on a ticking time bomb with tons of uninspected, unregulated, imported catfish raised in unsanitary and unsafe conditions landing on U.S. grocery shelves and in U.S. restaurants every day.

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WHEN WILL THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT MAKE FOOD SAFETY
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THE MEKONG RIVER. ONE OF THE MOST POLLUTED RIVERS IN THE WORLD.

Home to most of the catfish and related species Vietnam exports to the United States every day.

This is what Vietnam's own Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has said about growing fish in the Mekong River: It is "very hard to monitor and manage" the quality of the fish or detect "disease outbreaks."

Nations across the globe have banned or restricted Vietnamese catfish species in the past year after detecting dangerous levels of pathogens, bacteria, carcinogenic chemicals and drugs banned in the U.S. and other countries.

But not here.

In the United States, those same fish land on grocery shelves and restaurant menus virtually unchecked. The Food and Drug Administration allows 98 percent of all foreign seafood imports—including catfish and related fish—to be sold directly to consumers with no inspection whatsoever.

Today the U.S. government is debating whether Vietnamese and other imported catfish and related species should meet the same tough USDA health and safety standards as meat and poultry imports, or whether to let them continue to arrive on your plate regardless of the dangerous chemicals, additives and pollutants that come with them.

We believe imported catfish and related species should meet the same health and safety requirements as U.S. catfish. All catfish really should be treated equally.

WHEN WILL THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT MAKE FOOD SAFETY FOR AMERICAN CONSUMERS A PRIORITY?



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HOW LONG DO WE WAIT?

Congress passed a law way back in June 2008 guaranteeing tougher safety standards for imported and domestic catfish.

It's now March 2010 and American consumers are still waiting for the law to take effect.

During that time, four other countries have banned or restricted catfish and related fish imports from Vietnam because of health and safety concerns.

During that time, banned antibiotics, pesticides, bacterial residues and dangerous chemicals have been found in catfish and similar species imported into the United States.

WHEN WILL THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT MAKE FOOD SAFETY A PRIORITY FOR AMERICAN CONSUMERS?



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DO YOU KNOW WHERE THE IMPORTED
CATFISH YOU EAT COMES FROM?

"Imported catfish often come from Southeast Asia, where use of chemicals and antibiotics is barely regulated. Because the U.S. Food and Drug Administration inspects less than two percent of imported seafood, imported catfish may be contaminated with antibiotic, pesticide or bacterial residues."

— Food and Water Watch

"There is little government regulation of farming operations... Most Vietnamese catfish are grown in cages suspended under barges in the Mekong River."

— Environmental Defense Fund

"I can't see any regulation of what gets dumped in the river; it's everything from sewage to — everything,"

— Rep. Leonard Boswell, (D-Iowa)

after Congressional inspection tour of Mekong Delta

The U.S. Congress voted in 2008 for more protections for the American consumer by moving inspection of ALL catfish - imported and domestic - from the FDA to the USDA, with its tougher safety and inspections standards that are recognized worldwide. We're still waiting for the government to enact those protections.

Ensuring the safety of imported food supplies is one of the basic requirements of the World Trade Organization



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WE DON'T BELIEVE
TRADING SAFETY
FOR COMMERCE IS
EVER A BARGAIN!

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What's taking so long?

The U.S. Congress passed a law June 18, 2008 requiring that imported catfish and related species should meet the same tough USDA health and safety standards as meat and poultry before it is sold to American consumers.

Nearly one and one-half years later, American consumers are still waiting!

As Alabama state officials discovered, we're sitting on a ticking time bomb.

In recent months, Alabama authorities have intercepted thousands of pounds of contaminated catfish and related fish from Vietnam, China, Cambodia, Indonesia and Thailand that slipped through the current weak safety net of U.S. oversight and nearly landed on Alabama dinner plates.

In fact, only 2 percent of the 5.2 billion pounds of imported seafood – including catfish and catfish-like products – is being inspected for U.S. health and safety standards.

The State of Alabama found illegal and potentially dangerous drugs in Vietnamese and other Asian catfish-like species. Several foreign countries have halted imports of catfish and similar products from Asia in the past year after finding evidence of chemicals that can cause cancer and because of concerns over unsanitary farming conditions.

Our federal government needs to act now to protect American consumers. Imported catfish and related species should be subject to the same tough USDA standards that govern imported beef and poultry.

AMERICAN FAMILIES SHOULDN'T BE AT RISK ONE MORE DAY.



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WHY SHOULD AMERICAN FAMILIES BE AT RISK ONE MORE DAY?

IT'S BEEN NEARLY 18 MONTHS SINCE
CONGRESS PASSED A LAW REQUIRING THAT
IMPORTED CATFISH AND SIMILAR SPECIES
MEET THE SAME TOUGH USDA HEALTH AND
SAFETY STANDARDS AS MEAT AND POULTRY.

**OUR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
NEEDS TO APPLY THE LAW NOW.**

DANGER ! IMPORTED CATFISH DANGER



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That's what Congress promised the American consumer.

U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish meets rigorous health and safety standards.

But not imported catfish and its foreign relatives.

What happens at U.S. ports is shocking. Only 2 percent of all imported seafood is inspected to ensure it meets U.S. health and safety standards.

To protect the safety of American consumers, Congress passed a law authorizing the USDA to hold all catfish sold in America to equally stringent standards.

American consumers deserve the same protections on imported catfish as USDA already ensures on imported meat and poultry.

USDA needs to implement the law now. We know the 2 percent inspection rate turns up seafood contaminated with bacteria, illegal antibiotics and deadly pathogens. What we don't know about the other 98 percent is frightening.

**WHEN IT COMES TO THE SAFETY OF OUR FOOD,
CONSUMERS SHOULDN'T HAVE TO GUESS.**



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