

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 12, 2018

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and
Forestry Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and
Forestry Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow,

We write today to urge you to amend Section 11122 of the committee draft of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 in order to allow the Risk Management Agency (RMA) to treat different growth stages of aquaculture species as separate crops. Proposed legislative language to address this issue is attached. In addition, we ask that you include the language below in the report accompanying the 2018 Farm Bill. These two changes both address the lack of viable insurance options for aquaculture farmers.

Shellfish farming is an important and growing industry in each of our states. In 2015, shellfish farmers produced 45 million pounds of oysters, clams and mussels with an estimated value of \$295 million. Since then, demand for shellfish has continued to skyrocket, creating many opportunities for producers to expand operations and create jobs. Supporting this growth and giving shellfish farmers the tools to expand is vital to the health of coastal economies and communities in our states.

Despite the importance of this industry, current insurance options are inadequate and often hamstring farmers from expanding their operations. Shellfish farmers are at a high risk of losing their crop because of weather events, diseases, and changes in the marine environment. These risks amplify the need for farmers to have workable, affordable insurance options like those available to land farmers.

Thank you for your continued work to reauthorize the Farm Bill and support shellfish farmers. These two changes are vital the growth of the shellfish industry in our states and we believe the 2018 Farm Bill is only strengthened by their inclusion.



Christopher S. Murphy



Sheldon Whitehouse

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand



Benjamin L. Cardin

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