

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 11, 2016

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The Honorable Michael Froman
United States Trade Representative
Executive Office of the President
600 17th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20508

Dear Ambassador Froman:

We write to you today to discuss the state of the molluscan shellfish trade between the United States and the European Union (EU). As representatives from Connecticut where shellfish production is a substantial and growing part of our marine economy, we urge you to continue working toward removing barriers to trade and promoting the expansion of US shellfish exports.

By nature, there are a variety of well-documented food safety concerns involved in the production and transport of shellfish. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA), in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Seafood Inspection Program, is charged with regulating imported shellfish under the Import Seafood Program Compliance Program. The food safety concerns associated with molluscan shellfish cannot be taken lightly. Six years ago the FDA decided to bar imports of EU shellfish following an audit of their shellfish sanitation practices. Unfortunately, these restrictions prompted retaliatory action from EU regulators against shellfish producers in the United States.

Major oyster producing states in the EU have suffered 40-80 percent declines in production due to a viral disease. Meanwhile, U.S. shellfish farming and aquaculture has been on the rise, particularly in Connecticut where the aquaculture industry supports over 700 jobs and has an annual economic impact of \$47.5 million. Nationally, the production value of farmed oysters and clams alone was \$145 million and is growing at a rate of 8% a year, with some areas of the country like the Northeast growing at a much higher rate of 31%¹.


With this surge in production, it is increasingly critical to the long term stability of domestic producers to expand to new markets and there is a clear opportunity for expansion into European markets. For example, in France, domestic production only meets 20% of seafood demand and nearly 1/3 of all seafood consumed is shellfish. U.S. shellfish is positively viewed because of its high quality, culinary desirability, and safety standards. Furthermore, in Spain shellfish also enjoys high seasonally driven demand.² These markets hold immense untapped potential for domestic producers, particularly in the Northeast where traditional capture fishing is on the decline and jobs are moving to the burgeoning shellfish industry.

¹ "U.S. Aquaculture Production Infographic." *National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration*. http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/aquaculture/homepage_stories/18_marine_aquaculture_infographic.html

² "European Seafood Market Profile." *Food Export Northeast*. <https://www.foodexport.org/get-started/country-market-profiles/european-seafood-market-profile>

At a moment in time when the U.S. is importing 90% of its seafood from overseas, we should be working to support seafood industries that have ability and capacity to grow the exportation of American seafood. We urge you to support domestic producers and continue to work to resolve this non-tariff trade dispute so our producers can restore their access to European markets.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate



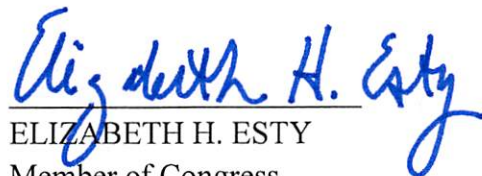
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress



JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress



ELIZABETH H. ESTY
Member of Congress

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