United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 7, 2013

The Honorable Rebecca Blank
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
14th Street and Constitution Ave, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Acting Secretary Blank:

We are writing in reference to the Department's 8th administrative review of the antidumping duty order on Certain Frozen Fish Fillets from Vietnam, in which a final decision is due to be issued in March 2013. That decision will be critical to the U.S. farm-raised catfish industry, which provides thousands of jobs and accounts for significant investment in our states, including in some of our most economically challenged regions. We urge you to vigorously enforce our trade laws.

The Department's decisions in recent reviews in the Vietnamese frozen fillet case have brought about a tremendous surge in the volume of low-priced imports. Since 2008, Vietnamese imports have tripled, and have taken more than 75 percent of the U.S. market. As a result, U.S. producers, who supplied 80 percent of the market when the case was filed, today struggle to maintain a 20 percent market share. This decline in the nation's largest aquaculture industry is well documented in USDA statistics. In 2007, U.S. catfish farming covered almost 164,000 water acres; by January of this year, acreage had been reduced to 83,020. The catfish farming industry has been cut in half. In 2007, catfish processors sold about 104 million pounds of frozen fillets; by 2012 that number was reduced to just above 67 million pounds, a reduction of more than 35 percent. This decline correlates directly with the change in the Commerce Department's approach in the antidumping case and the resulting flood of low-priced Vietnamese imports. Unfortunately, these imports are impacting the most vulnerable members of our society. Many catfish processors, which can be the largest employers in their community, operate in regions suffering from poverty and unemployment rates well above the national average.

U.S. trade laws enjoy the strong support of Congress because they serve the invaluable role of ensuring a level playing field for U.S. producers and workers who must compete in markets that benefit from the most commercially open borders in the world. Without the strong enforcement of these trade laws, American companies would face a significant disadvantage when competing with unfairly subsidized or dumped imports.

We urge you to ensure that the Commerce Department vigorously enforces the antidumping order against frozen fish fillets from Vietnam. In particular, we are very concerned

with the Department's surrogate country and surrogate value choices, which appear to have been made in recent years so as to favor imports to the extreme detriment of our industry.

In this regard, given the importance of this antidumping duty order, we would appreciate being kept closely apprised of the Commerce Department's actions in this case.

Sincerely,

Jeff Sessions

Richard Shelby

Mark Pryor

John Boozman