Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

January 22, 2015

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We are writing to request your assistance to help America's rice farmers improve existing trade relations with the Iraqi Grain Board (IGB).

Historically Iraq has been a major destination for rice produced in the United States, and it continues to present significant export opportunities. In recent years, however, purchases of U.S. rice by Iraq have slowed significantly despite any indication from the Iraqi Grain Board of grade or quality deficiencies. While American exporters have continued to offer competitive bids, the Board has lately chosen higher-priced non-American bids.

We recognize Iraq's prerogative to make these types of decisions, but it serves no purpose to discriminate against competitively-priced U.S. rice in favor of rice produced elsewhere. As an example, on November 6, 2014, the Iraqi Grain Board announced its intent to purchase 170,000 metric tons (mt) of rice. The IGB purchased 80,000 mt from Thailand, 60,000 from Uruguay, and 30,000 from Brazil. No rice was purchased from the United States, despite offers of U.S. rice that were of similar quality but nearly $24 per mt below the prices from competitors from Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. Iraqi authorities have provided no explanation for this type of decision.

U.S. rice generates approximately $34 billion in economic activity annually and provides thousands of jobs in rural and underserved communities. Roughly half of U.S. production is exported making strong export markets critical to the U.S. rice industry's success. On January 25, 2015, Iraq will again be accepting rice bids. We would greatly appreciate your assistance in ensuring that U.S. rice receives fair consideration.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

THAD COCHRAN
United States Senator

MIKE CONAWAY
Member of Congress

DIANNE FEINSTEIN
United States Senator

BARBARA BOXER
United States Senator

JOHNNY ISAKSON
United States Senator

DAVID VITTER
United States Senator

CLAIRE MCCASKILL
United States Senator

ROGER WICKER
United States Senator

ROY BLUNT
United States Senator

JERRY MORAN
United States Senator

JOHN BOOZMAN
United States Senator

BILL CASSIDY
United States Senator

TOM COTTON
United States Senator

DAVID PERDUE
United States Senator

BENNIE THOMPSON
Member of Congress

MAC THORNBERRY
Member of Congress

MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress

RANDY NEUGEBAUER
Member of Congress

CHARLES BOUSTANY
Member of Congress

TED POE
Member of Congress

JOHN FLEMING
Member of Congress

GREG HARPER
Member of Congress

BLAINE LUETKEMEYER
Member of Congress

RICK CRAWFORD
Member of Congress

BLAKE FARENTHOLD
Member of Congress

VICKY HARTZLER
Member of Congress

ALAN NUNNELEE
Member of Congress

STEVEN PALAZZO
Member of Congress

AUSTIN SCOTT
Member of Congress

DOUG LAMALFA
Member of Congress

DAVID VALADAO
Member of Congress

RANDY WEBER
Member of Congress

JASON SMITH
Member of Congress

RALPH ABRAHAM
Member of Congress

BRIAN BABIN
Member of Congress

BRUCE WESTERMAN
Member of Congress