



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

May 19, 2020

Ms. Alexis Taylor
Director
Oregon Department of Agriculture
635 Capitol Street Northeast
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Ms. Taylor:

Thank you for your letter of May 6, 2020, requesting an emergency temporary exemption from the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Federal Meat Inspection Act requirements administered by the Food Safety and Inspection Service. I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

On April 28, 2020, President Donald J. Trump signed an Executive Order deeming meat and poultry facilities essential and delegating the powers of the President to USDA. Under this new delegation of authority, the USDA has directed meat and poultry processors follow the guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and continue to operate to the maximum extent possible.

I agree whole-heartedly that the food supply chain must remain strong during this national emergency, and I appreciate the desire for swift action shared by Oregon and other states impacted by some meat and poultry processing plant closures. Suggestions to streamline procedures or overcome bottlenecks are always welcome.

I can confirm that there are no processing plants closed due to a lack of available Federal inspection staff. USDA is ready and able to inspect meat, poultry, and processed egg products provided establishments are open and operating under CDC and OSHA guidelines. USDA does not support altering meat inspection requirements or restrictions, including granting waivers, at this time.

Oregon is not part of the meat and poultry inspection (MPI) program. If a state would like to establish its own MPI program, which operates with oversight from USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), FSIS would work as cooperatively and expeditiously as possible with that state to review and verify that the state program meets the "at least equal to" requirements. However, USDA's mission remains the same with respect to food safety, and we expect the States to adhere to current laws and regulations in order to maintain its "at least equal to" status.

I agree that we need to protect our most vulnerable populations who rely on food banks and feeding programs to keep food on their tables. That is why USDA will continue to work with

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establishments, as well as the CDC, OSHA, and State and Local officials, to ensure that processing plants remain safe and operational, or are able to return to operational status as quickly and as safely as possible.

I take our role in ensuring the safety of the American food supply very seriously and appreciate your shared commitment to the same. For more information, please contact the Office of Congressional Relations at (202)720-7095.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Sonny Perdue". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "S".

Sonny Perdue
Secretary