

July 17, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue Southwest
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

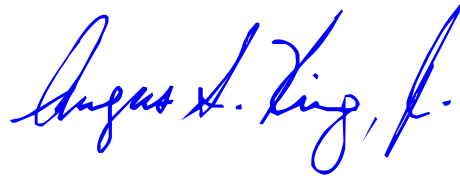
I am writing with respect to President Donald J. Trump's June 24 presidential memorandum to you and the United States Trade Representative regarding the international trade situation the U.S. lobster industry currently faces. Specifically, I'm getting in touch on behalf of Maine's 4,500 state-licensed lobstermen, and the thousands of others who work to buy, sell, and process lobsters, to request an update on what the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) plans to do to support this iconic and valuable industry. As you know, the United States lobster industry continues to be hammered by China's retaliatory tariffs. Like farmers, who have endured similar effects from trade policy, these hard working Americans need help from the federal government to overcome this unforeseen hit to their bottom lines. It is my understanding that the memorandum directs the USDA to consider taking appropriate action to provide assistance to fishermen and producers in the United States lobster industry that continue to be harmed by China's retaliatory tariffs.

To date, the USDA has provided relief to American farmers and ranchers that have been affected by China's retaliatory tariffs, but have not provided such relief to the lobster industry, which is an integral part of my state's economy. Maine lobstermen are small business owners who support both our treasured working waterfronts and the livelihoods of 10,000 additional Mainers. China's retaliatory tariffs, coupled with the ongoing impact of the global pandemic, have left the lobster industry in an extremely fragile economic state. They deserve the same level of support USDA offered to farmers impacted by retaliatory tariffs in 2018 and 2019.

As you are aware, the presidential memorandum gave the USDA until August 24 to take action. While I understand that some folks in Maine have been contacted by the USDA to help guide the

agency's efforts, neither I nor my staff have received an update on USDA's plans to provide direct relief to the lobster industry. So, as the USDA moves forward, and in recognition of the agency's historically light interaction with lobster producers, I urge a robust effort to connect with representatives of all segments of the lobster industry in Maine, as well as state and regional regulators. Only in that way, can we be sure the best possible data and perspectives are guiding this long awaited help from the federal government. I have been working on this issue since the tariffs were first levied, and I would be pleased to help make connections with those who might provide valuable insight. Please have your staff contact Peter Benoit (peter_benoit@king.senate.gov) and Olin Hartkopf (olin_hartkopf@king.senate.gov) in my office, if I may be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Angus S. King, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'A'.

ANGUS S. KING, JR.
United States Senator