

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 23, 2009

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Congratulations on your confirmation as Secretary of Agriculture. We look forward to working with you on behalf of farmers, rural communities, businesses, and consumers across the country.

We are writing to urge you to address the low supply of sugar available in the U.S. market by increasing sugar tariff rate quotas (TRQs) for raw and refined sugar. A confluence of factors, including production shortfalls, strong demand, and the continued closure of a major domestic refinery following a tragic accident last year, have contributed to a tight U.S. sugar market.

By increasing current sugar TRQs for raw and refined sugar, USDA can help ensure that confectioners, bakers, ice cream makers, and other U.S. food producers have access to an adequate supply of sugar at a reasonable cost.

The Department's projections suggest that Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 stocks will account for less than 10 percent of total demand for sugar. This historically low level falls short of the typical stocks-to-use ratio of roughly 15 percent.

When USDA announced the FY 2009 sugar TRQs in September, the Department acknowledged that the domestic market was likely to require additional supplies of sugar during the year. We hope that the Department will review current market conditions and make appropriate adjustments to ensure an adequate supply of sugar for the domestic market.

Sincerely,

Siz Julia

Sam Brownback

Herb Kohl

Dick Lugar

George V. Kenarich

Lamar Alexander

Allen Jett

Roland W. Burns

John Ensign

Bob Carey, Jr.

Jack Gregg

Phil Bond

Nun Fights