

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 31, 2023

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20250

Secretary Vilsack:

We request your attention to the Alaska seafood industry's request, submitted by the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI), to increase the supply of nutritious seafood to food-insecure Americans through the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Section 32 program.

In September 2022, ASMI submitted requests to purchase frozen (5 million pounds of fillet portions) and canned (200,000 cases of talls and 500,000 cases of halves) Alaska sockeye salmon products. ASMI also requested the purchase of 50 million pounds of Alaska pollock products. World market and industry conditions combined with record-breaking harvests in 2021-2022 have provided the USDA an opportunity to expand their procurement of highly nutritious and sustainable Alaska sockeye salmon and Alaska pollock. To date, however, the Alaska suppliers have not received any further information regarding these three purchase requests.

Alaska pollock and salmon deliver the kind of high-quality nutrition called for in the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA), which recommend eating seafood twice a week. The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) new "healthy" labeling proposal even calls out salmon independently from other seafood as needing a "healthy" label. Sustainable wild seafood also contributes to the nutrition, health, and anti-hunger efforts discussed in the recent White House Conference on Nutrition, Hunger and Health.

The hardworking men and women of the Alaska pollock and salmon sectors are ready and able to supply large volumes of protein to meet the needs of millions of food insecure individuals. At the same time, coastal communities in Alaska and thousands of Alaskan small businesses and their associated fishing families will benefit.

Currently, the Alaska suppliers are nearly finished with the first portion of their Alaska pollock season and need to market this massive harvest. Additionally, planning for the 2023 salmon season has begun while the record-breaking 2022 harvest is still being marketed. Millions of dollars are being spent and committed while waiting on the USDA to declare their need of Alaska seafood.

We urge USDA to promptly conclude its reviews, expedite solicitation of the referenced purchase requests, and make these significant purchases of Alaska sockeye salmon and Alaska pollock to start distribution as soon as possible. A USDA purchase of canned and frozen sockeye and Alaska pollock would play a key role for the Alaska seafood industry in easing the burden of the high inventory of recent historic sockeye returns and dramatic increases in the Alaska pollock quota.

Consistent with applicable law, policy, and guidance, we respectfully ask that you give due consideration to ASMI's requests. Thank you for your consideration and continued support of the sustainably managed Alaska seafood sector.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



Dan Sullivan
United States Senator



Mary Sattler Peltola
Representative for All Alaska