

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 28, 2013

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write today on behalf of the New England fishing industry to respectfully request the support of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in bringing to life an innovative project that would make U.S. Atlantic Spiny Dogfish (*Squalus acanthias*) (“dogfish”) fillets eligible for Section 32 commodity purchases and expand the domestic market for this product. Such a purchase will help liquidate existing inventories and stimulate consumers’ demand for this plentiful fish, bringing much needed relief to an ailing industry.

As you may be aware, former Acting Secretary of Commerce Rebecca Blank declared an economic fishery disaster for the Northeast Multispecies groundfish fishery in September 2012. Several key fish stocks of groundfish, such as cod, have not rebuilt as anticipated despite our fishermen’s adherence to strict catch limits. This has resulted in dramatic reductions in catch limits effective May 1, 2013, and bipartisan attempts to appropriate disaster relief for the region’s fishing communities have not been successful to date.

While the historic groundfish fishery is in a state of emergency, dogfish stocks are thriving. In 2012, the fishery was certified by the Marine Stewardship Council as sustainable and well-managed. Now, it is our hope that groundfish fishermen affected by this disaster can turn to the abundant dogfish stock using their existing boats, equipment, and expertise. Unfortunately, due the lack of a strong existing domestic market and soft market conditions in Europe, Northeastern fishermen and processors have limited opportunities to sell this good product.

We strongly believe that a USDA Section 32 purchase of dogfish fillets would result in stronger prices at the dock and directly assist New England’s fishing communities. Section 32 funds have been used in the past to fund farm disaster relief activities, as well as for emergency surplus removals in selected fisheries. If successful, this project will directly assist the fishing industry in New England through the expansion of domestic markets for sustainably harvested seafood products.

Already, we have seen partnerships forming between the industry, environmental advocates, and the private sector to foster the utilization of sustainably harvested seafood products across university systems and other large-scale consumers. This initiative would keep fishermen on the water, support shore-side industries, and provide healthy and affordable alternatives to consumers. We have enclosed a letter from thirteen industry organizations to USDA requesting your support for this initiative.

Again, we respectfully ask for your assistance in facilitating the implementation of this program and look forward to working with the Department of Agriculture on behalf of New England's fishing industry. Thank you for your attention to this innovative project.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
U.S. Senator



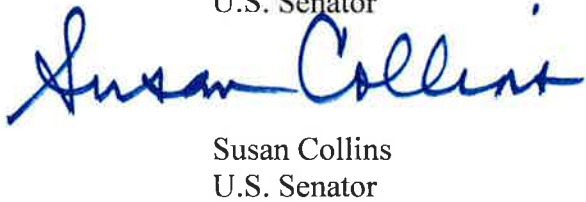
William "Mo" Cowan
U.S. Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
U.S. Senator



Kelly Ayotte
U.S. Senator



Susan Collins
U.S. Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
U.S. Senator



Jack Reed
U.S. Senator



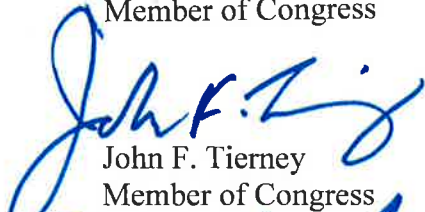
Sheldon Whitehouse
U.S. Senator



William R. Keating
Member of Congress



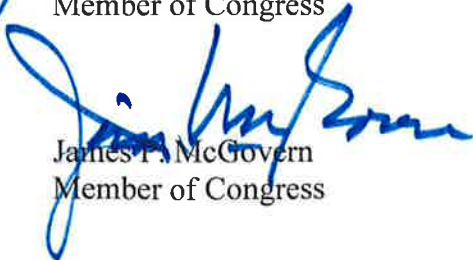
Edward J. Markey
Member of Congress



John F. Tierney
Member of Congress



Stephen E. Lynch
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Michael H. Michaud
Member of Congress

Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress

James Langevin
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Enc: Industry letter to Dr. Craig Morris, Ph.D., Deputy Administrator for Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture