



## **Lincoln leads bipartisan group asking Vilsack & Kirk to confront China on pork ban**

**By Agri-Pulse Staff**

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Washington, Feb. 28 – A bipartisan group of nineteen senators wrote Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk last week urging the administration to press China to “live up to its commitments and allow the importation of American pork.”

Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) pointed out that China pledged five months ago to reopen its market but has not yet honored this commitment. “The pork industry has been hit hard by the downturn in the economy and keeping this market closed would only be an additional burden for pork producers already struggling from more than two years of selling their hogs at a loss.” She said that “I was pleased to see the Chinese government acknowledge that the presence of the H1N1 flu virus in the United States was not a valid scientific reason to bar American pork exports and agree to reopen its market five months ago. It is time for China to follow through on this commitment.”

“Last year, China agreed to re-open its markets to American pork, but so far they have failed to abide by that agreement,” Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) said. “Every day that China fails to honor its commitment, Ohio’s pork producers are shortchanged.”

Despite the lack of any connection between eating pork and H1N1, China banned the direct or indirect imports of swine and swine products from states with confirmed cases of “human swine influenza” in 2009. This decision adversely affected the U.S. pork industry, which supports 515,000 indirect jobs and 35,000 full-time jobs. The U.S. Pork industry contributes \$34.5 billion to the gross nation product.

The letter was signed by fourteen Democrats and five Republicans: Sens. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), George Voinovich (R-OH), Kit Bond (R-MO), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Roland Burris (D-IL), Richard Burr (R-NC), Sam Brownback (R-KS), Ben Nelson (D-NE), Blanche Lincoln (D-AR), John Thune (R-SD), Claire McCaskill (D-MO), Carl Levin (D-MI), Tim Johnson (D-SD), Al Franken (D-MN), Mike Johanns (D-NE), Tom Harkin (D-IA), and Kay Hagan (D-NC).

The full text of the letter:

February 25, 2010

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture  
Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington DC 20250

The Honorable Ron Kirk  
United States Trade Representative  
600 17th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Ambassador Kirk:

Five months ago, the People's Republic of China pledged to reopen its markets to American pork exports. We are writing today to inquire about the status of China's pledge and to support the Administration in ensuring this commitment to reopen China's market is honored.

Beginning on April 26, 2009, the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) of China banned the direct or indirect imports of swine and swine products from states with confirmed cases of "human swine influenza." This ban included many major pork exporting states. At the conclusion of the US-China Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade (JCCT), we were very pleased to hear from you and from U.S. Trade Representative Kirk that China would re-open its market to the United States and follow consistent, scientifically based standards for accepting imported meat.

The U.S. Pork industry supports 35,000 full-time equivalent jobs, 515,000 indirect jobs and generates \$34.5 billion of gross national product to the U.S. economy. During these challenging economic times, these jobs are vital. However, following last year's H1N1 outbreak, the vitality of the pork industry was hurt by unfounded export disruptions in places like China. Dealing with complex and intertwined trade issues is a difficult task. However, we believe it is important that China honor the agreement to open its export market to U.S. pork and we urge you to do everything within your means to ensure this market is reopened as promised.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue and we look forward to working with you to restore and grow our agricultural export capacity.

Sincerely,

Amy Klobuchar, John Thune, Kit Bond, Claire McCaskill, Debbie Stabenow, Carl Levin, Dick Durbin, George Voinovich, Roland Burris, Tim Johnson, Richard Burr, Al Franken, Sam Brownback, Mike Johanns, Ben Nelson, Tom Harkin, Sherrod Brown, Kay Hagan, Blanche Lincoln

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