

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 4, 2021

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-0235

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We are writing to you with regard to the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's proposed rule Onions Grown in South Texas and Imported Onions; Termination of Marketing Order 959 and Change in Import Requirements (Docket No. AMS-SC-21-0003, SC21-959-2 PR). This new rule has the potential to greatly harm rural Oregon onion producers.

Eastern Oregon and Idaho together make up one of the largest onion-producing regions in the United States. The region's producers follow Federal Marketing Order 958 for grade and inspection requirements, but also rely on Marketing Order 959 to ensure those grade and inspection requirements are followed year round. Removing Marketing Order 959 opens the door to imported onions being allowed to flood the US market without the protection of the close monitoring, regulation and inspection that will still be required of US onion producers.

Onion producers in the United States work tirelessly to ensure their products are safe, healthy, and meet necessary federal requirements. Allowing foreign produce to be sold without the same expectation and expense would be a severe detriment to domestic producers and markets.

We request that the USDA ensure that fair competition between domestic and foreign produce continues either by reinstating Marketing Order #959 or extending the standards through a different method, such as extending Marketing Order #958 year-round.

We further request that the comment period for this proposed rule be extended by an additional 30 days so onion producers have sufficient opportunity to weigh in on the proposed rule change and the industry effects. These actions are necessary to protect our domestic producers and rural communities who have already been gravely affected by market changes related to the COVID-19 public health pandemic.

Thank you for your timely consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator