

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 2, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

Thank you for your work in administering important global food security measures such as the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition program. We write to raise our concerns about global food security challenges and highlight the ways in which proteins made using plants, animal cell cultivation, or fermentation that mimic the sensory characteristics of conventional animal proteins (together, “alternative proteins”)¹ may prove to be a powerful tool in combating both hunger and climate change around the world.

According to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), one in nine people today do not have enough to eat.² We regularly hear food security cited as a top priority from U.S. partners around the world. Recently, global food insecurity has been exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine; Russia and Ukraine typically provide for 30 percent of global wheat exports, mostly to countries in the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. However, following the Russian invasion, Ukraine halted its exports of food products and food prices have skyrocketed, reducing the availability and affordability of food for consumers – particularly for low-income consumers. Alternative protein products may present a unique opportunity to supplement USDA’s global food programs, creating diversity in global food systems to prevent crises from disrupting access to food.

Further, if widely implemented, alternative proteins can contribute to the fight against climate change. Widespread use of alternative proteins could greatly reduce the greenhouse emissions around the world, as plant-based meat uses up to 99 percent less land and cultivated meat uses up to 95 percent less land.³ Unused land could be used to reduce deforestation, sequester carbon, protect biodiversity, and generate renewable energy – measures that would help countries contribute to global climate goals.⁴

¹ Defined in the [FY22 House Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill](#)

² <https://www.wfp.org/overview>

³ <https://gfi.org/resource/cultivated-meat-lca-and-tea-policy-recommendations/>;
<https://gfi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/GFI-Plant-Based-Meat-Fact-Sheet-Environmental-Comparison.pdf>

⁴ <https://gfi.org/resource/a-global-protein-transition-is-necessary-to-keep-warming-below-1-5c/>

As you may know, the alternative protein industries are advancing quickly worldwide. Without intervention, in the future developing countries may have to import these alternative protein products from other nations with developed alternative protein sectors. This may be an opportunity for USDA to work with stakeholders to foster the creation of these industries in developing countries so that these companies are locally owned and operated and positioned to compete for market share in the new protein economy.

With this in mind, we request the following information with respect to plant-based, cultivated, and fermented proteins in a written response:

- Please provide a summary of USDA's current use of alternative proteins in food security and economic development programs.
- What obstacles, if any, might there be to including alternative proteins in USDA's food security programs?
- Has USDA or their partners conducted any studies related to including alternative proteins in their food security programs? If so, what were the findings? How, if at all, are the findings informing the agency's planning and implementation of food security programs?
- Does USDA plan to research the feasibility of including alternative proteins in future global food security strategies?

A version of this letter has also been sent to USAID Administrator Samantha Power. Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Maria Elvira Salazar
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Dean Phillips
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
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Susan Wild
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Earl Blumenauer
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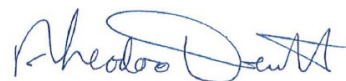
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