



March 21, 2022

The Honorable Xochitl Torres Small  
Undersecretary for Rural Development  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Undersecretary Torres Small,

The undersigned organizations write today to request a 30-day extension of the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP) application deadline. Consisting of nearly six million member families from all fifty states and Puerto Rico, the American Farm Bureau Federation is the nation's largest general farm organization, representing the interests of farmers, ranchers and rural communities. The American Sheep Industry Association is a federation of forty-five state sheep associations representing a diverse industry since 1865 and has been the national trade organization representing the interests of nearly 90,000 sheep ranchers located throughout the country who produce America's lamb and wool. The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture is a nonpartisan, nonprofit association which represents the elected and appointed commissioners, secretaries, and directors of the departments of agriculture in all fifty states and four U.S. territories. The National Cattlemen's Beef Association is the oldest and largest national trade association representing the interest of cattle producers, with both direct members and over 250,000 members represented through its forty-four state affiliate associations. The National Pork Producers Council represents 60,000 pork producers and works to ensure that the U.S. pork industry remains a consistent and responsible supplier of high-quality pork to domestic and international markets.

The factors which have disrupted, and are currently impacting, global markets have exacerbated the challenges our members have endured in recent years. Specifically, reductions in processing capacity for all livestock species has weakened the resiliency of our supply chains. We are pleased that the Biden Administration has prioritized investments into small, regional meat and poultry processing, and our organizations are supportive of the initiatives which have been announced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to that end.

Access to sufficient capital continues to be one of the chief barriers for small meat and poultry processors and prospective market entrants, which is why we particularly support the recently announced MPPEP. Some of our members have expressed an interest in participating, and many are in the late stages of planning for facilities designed to meet the program's objectives. Because the regulatory compliance, business development, and workforce components of these business models are highly complex and involved, it will take considerable time to complete the necessary feasibility studies, environmental

checklists, and other requirements outlined in the application. For these reasons, our organizations are requesting a 30-day extension of the MPPEP application deadline.

Additionally, as USDA develops requirements for future programs to implement this initiative, we respectfully ask that the application process be made accessible to existing small processors and provide ample time for applicants to fulfill any requirements which may require obtaining external resources and expertise.

As your Agency continues to implement strategies pursuant to Executive Order 14017, we stand ready to work with Rural Development to ensure stability across our supply chain from the producers to the consumers. Thank you for allowing us to provide input on behalf of our members—the nation's food producers. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Sheep Industry Association  
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture  
National Cattlemen's Beef Association  
National Pork Producers Council

CC: Dr. Karama Neal, Administrator, Rural Business-Cooperative Service