

United States Senate

March 3, 2022

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia threatens to cause disruptions in global agricultural production, which in turn is already impacting global food prices and availability. I write to urge you to prioritize using agricultural export assistance and international food aid programs to help supply markets left unfulfilled as a result of Russian aggression.

Ukraine is a major grain producing country, ranking as a top ten global exporter of corn, wheat, sunflower oil, and other commodities. Ukraine serves as the predominant grain supplier for multiple countries, including Kazakhstan, Georgia, Turkey and Egypt. These countries, and many others that are dependent on Ukrainian exports flowing through the Black Sea, face the urgent challenge of finding new suppliers of grain and food products.

As both the immediate and long-term effects on Ukraine's agriculture sector become clearer, the United States should work quickly to provide the necessary commodities through sale or donation to meet countries' unsatisfied food and commodity needs. Doing so will help alleviate a greater humanitarian crisis than has already been caused by the unprovoked invasion and will help foster political stability in food insecure countries.

Between the humanitarian disaster unfolding in Afghanistan and the developing crisis caused by the invasion of Ukraine, it is critical to utilize every tool at your disposal to meet these challenges. Specifically, I reiterate my call for you, in collaboration with the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, to utilize resources currently available in the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust (BEHT) to meet the unanticipated global hunger crisis. It would be an unfortunate and inexplicably missed opportunity to leave the BEHT unused again this year.

With tightening global grain supplies, I am no less concerned about food prices here at home. The average price of food increased 7 percent over the past year, and there are no signs of inflation cooling off soon. It is time for the administration to get serious about addressing food inflation. Multiple factors are contributing to the rising cost of food, including supply chain disruptions, labor shortages and higher input costs. The crisis in Ukraine threatens to exacerbate food inflation by decreasing global grain supplies and further disrupting supply chains. I urge you to work with your colleagues across the administration to address the factors causing higher

food prices that are under your influence, including addressing skyrocketing energy prices and eliminating countervailing duties and tariffs on imports of inputs from key suppliers.

I appreciate your work to meet the challenges we face, both at home and abroad. With your leadership, American farmers and ranchers stand ready help provide food and commodities to help reduce the humanitarian crisis caused by the invasion of Ukraine.

Sincerely,



Jerry Moran
United States Senator