



## Southern Shrimp Alliance

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April 24, 2013

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

The Honorable Rebecca M. Blank  
Acting Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20230

The Honorable Margaret Hamburg, M.D.  
Commissioner  
U.S. Food and Drug Administration  
10903 New Hampshire Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20993

Dear, Secretary Vilsack, Acting Secretary Blank and Commissioner Hamburg:

The Southern Shrimp Alliance membership includes over 2000 individuals, small businesses and other entities engaged in the domestic production of wild shrimp in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic regions. The shrimp fishery is among the most valuable in the US and is the most valuable in the Gulf region. The culture and economy of many coastal communities depend on the health of this fishery and wild shrimp resources.

Our membership is becoming increasingly alarmed by reports of massive mortalities of shrimp raised on farms in various southeast Asian nations due to an infectious disease described as 'early mortality syndrome' (EMS). Recently, we are advised this disease may have been linked to bacteria but perhaps that link is not conclusive.

Our concerns are three-fold. First, what is known about the potential adverse implications for human health from the consumption of raw or cooked shrimp infected with the microbe causing EMS? Antibiotic-resistant superbugs are known to emerge from the persistent and widespread use of veterinary drugs such as has occurred on shrimp farms in these nations. If such implications exist or are as yet unknown, what steps has the US government taken to protect human health?

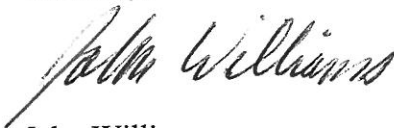
Second, what is known about the potential for microbe causing EMS to be released into the marine or estuarine environments, and what are the potential adverse implications for wild shrimp resources and the ecosystem on which they depend? The spread of diseases associated with aquaculture operations into the wild is certainly not unknown. If such adverse implications exist or are as yet unknown, what steps has the US government taken to protect wild shrimp resources and the marine environment?

Third, what is known about the potential for the microbe causing EMS to spread to US shrimp farms and what are the potential adverse implications for US shrimp farm production? It is clear that this disease is highly communicable among shrimp farms. If such adverse implications exist or are as yet unknown, what steps has the US government taken to protect US shrimp farms?

We note that Ecuador and Mexico have both implemented bold measures to prevent any infected shrimp from entering their countries due to the potential for causing some or all of the concerns we have raised above. We trust the US government will take the appropriate actions to protect our citizens and businesses as well.

Thank you for your kind consideration of our concerns. We look forward to learning more about this potential threat and what steps your agencies have taken or plan to take.

Sincerely,



John Williams  
Executive Director

Cc:

The Honorable Deborah Ann Stabenow, Chairwoman, Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition and Forestry

The Honorable Thad Cochran, Ranking Minority Member, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry

The Honorable Jay Rockefeller IV, Chairman, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation

The Honorable John Thune, Ranking Minority Member, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation

The Honorable Tom Harkins, Chairman, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

The Honorable Lamar Alexander, Ranking Minority Member, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

The Honorable Frank D. Lucas, Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson, Ranking Minority Member, House Committee on Agriculture

The Honorable Fred Upton, Chairman, House Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable Henry Waxman, Ranking Minority Member, House Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable Doc Hastings, Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources

The Honorable Ed Markey, Ranking Minority Member, House Committee on Natural Resources