

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1804

January 14, 2010

Dr. Margaret Hamburg  
Commissioner  
Food and Drug Administration  
10903 New Hampshire Ave  
Silver Spring, MD 20993-0002

Dear Commissioner Hamburg,

I am gravely concerned about the safety of imported shrimp, and the deleterious impacts these unsafe imports have had on our domestic shrimp industry. In particular, chloramphenicol contamination in farm-raised shrimp is of significant concern. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has declared that this contaminant is not safe as a component of food and can lead to aplastic anemia, carcinogenicity and reproductive toxicity. Yet, imported shrimp tainted with chloramphenicol and other antibiotics, pesticides and chemicals continue to enter the U.S. food supply. I encourage your agency to find ways to better protect the American public from tainted shrimp imports.

As such, I am asking that the FDA make it a priority to inspect more seafood shipments entering the country. It is reported that the FDA inspects less than 2 percent of seafood imports. There are over 150 countries that import shrimp and many of these countries are known for producing shrimp with chemicals and antibiotics that are banned substances here in the U.S. Nonetheless, these imports are flooding the domestic market, significantly undermining the competitiveness of U.S. shrimpers who operate under a much stricter regime of food safety and quality standards.

For these reasons, I believe that it is incumbent upon the FDA to increase their inspections and sampling of imported shrimp. Once, FDA finds unacceptable shrimp, it must use its authority provided by Congress to prohibit tainted imports from entering the country. I welcome an open dialogue to help address this problem. If there are resources you need from Congress to make this a reality, I encourage you to articulate the resources you would require to adequately meet this critical aspect of your agency's mission.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and I look forward to working with you to provide safe seafood for our country.

With warmest regards, I am

Sincerely,



Mary L. Landrieu  
U.S. Senator

MLL: elc