

October 4, 2011

Honorable Patty Murray
Co-Chairwoman
Joint Select Committee on
Deficit Reduction
448 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Jeb Hensarling
Co-Chairman
Joint Select Committee on
Deficit Reduction
129 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Murray and Representative Hensarling:

Thank you for your leadership on the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction and for your commitment to formulate a fiscally sound budget plan that ensures appropriate funding for priority government functions, while charting a path towards national deficit and debt reduction.

We believe maintaining the safety of the U.S. food supply is a top national priority. As you draft a plan to finance the federal government into the future, we urge you to ensure federal food safety programs receive the funding necessary to keep America's food supply safe without imposing any new food taxes or user fees on consumers and food makers.

Federal food safety programs and inspections conducted under the auspices of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) benefit all American consumers and, therefore, should be funded by appropriated funds. Imposing new user fees on food makers is the wrong option for supporting food safety programs as businesses can ill afford new cost burdens, which ultimately would represent a new food safety tax on consumers.

The administration's fiscal year 2012 budget proposed raising revenue from new food safety user fees. According to FDA's budget, "The Administration will work with the Congress to enact additional food safety fees to support the full implementation of the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). The Budget reflects the collection of these fees in 2013 and beyond." While the administration's request did not detail the exact nature of these fees, Congress previously rejected such fees during consideration of FSMA. Likewise, the House-passed budget for fiscal year 2012 does not include provisions authorizing new FSMA fees.

As consumers continue to cope with a period of pro-longed economic turbulence and food makers struggle with record high commodity prices, the creation of a new food tax would mean higher costs for food makers and lead to higher food prices for consumers. We urge the committee to reject imposing new fees on food producers and consumers.

We understand the difficult task you face and we stand ready to work with the committee and Congress to develop a deficit reduction plan that provides adequate

funding for the federal government's highest priorities, including maintaining the safest food supply in the world. Thank you for your leadership and consideration of our views. If you have questions, please contact any of the signatory organizations.

Sincerely,

American Bakers Association
American Fruit and Vegetable Processors and Growers Coalition
American Frozen Food Institute
American Meat Institute
Association of Food Industries
California League of Food Processors
Frozen Potato Products Institute
Independent Bakers Association
International Bottled Water Association
Midwest Food Processors Association
National Chicken Council
National Confectioners Association
National Fisheries Institute
National Frozen Pizza Institute
National Grain and Feed Association
National Meat Association
National Turkey Federation
North American Millers' Association
Northwest Food Processors Association
Pet Food Institute
Produce Marketing Association
Snack Food Association
United Egg Producers
United Fresh Produce Association

Cc: Members of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction
The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
The Honorable Michael Enzi, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
The Honorable Fred Upton, Chairman, House Committee on Energy and Commerce
The Honorable Henry Waxman, Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy and Commerce