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United States Senate
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June 7, 2018

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Ranking Member Merkley:

As Congress continues its work on the fiscal year 2019 appropriations bills, I invite your attention to an important tool for identifying and eliminating waste and duplication across the government: the Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, *Additional Opportunities to Reduce Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication and Achieve Other Financial Benefits*, GAO-18-371SP, issued in April 2018.

Since 2011, this annual report has introduced more than 700 action items across 275 issue areas for Congress and executive branch agencies to reduce, eliminate, or better manage fragmentation, overlap, or duplication; achieve cost savings; and enhance revenue. Agencies and Congress have completely or partially addressed approximately 76 percent of these actions, which GAO estimates has produced approximately $178 billion in savings and other financial benefits.

But more work remains. This year's report, which was the subject of a recent hearing of the Senate Committee on the Budget, identifies actions that have yet to be addressed – including new actions identified for the first time and those that are only partially addressed. GAO estimates that by fully implementing these open actions, tens of billions of dollars could be saved without adversely affecting services on which many American rely. There are a number of actions

relevant to your subcommittee, which I have provided in the enclosure attached along with a copy of the full report.

By implementing the actions in GAO's report, Congress can improve government performance and stewardship of taxpayer dollars. This is a goal that I believe both parties share, and I ask for your careful consideration of these items as the fiscal year 2019 appropriations process moves forward.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please contact me, or have your staff contact Alison McGuire on my Budget Committee staff at (202) 224-2887.

Sincerely,



Michael B. Enzi
Chairman

Enclosure

Recommendations of the Government Accountability Office on "Additional Opportunities to Reduce Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication and Achieve Other Financial Benefits"
GAO Report Number: GAO-18-371SP

Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

Open GAO Recommendations to Congress:

- Congress should commission a blue ribbon panel to conduct an analysis of alternative food safety organizational structures (2011-01-02-C).

- Congress should consider formalizing the Food Safety Working Group (FSWG) to ensure sustained leadership across food safety agencies over time (2011-01-04-C).

- Congress should consider repealing the 2014 farm bill requirement that any revision to the crop reinsurance agreement not reduce insurance companies' expected underwriting gains; and direct the Risk Management Agency to adjust the participating insurance companies' target rate of return and assess the portion of premiums that participating insurance companies retain (2013-19-02-C).

- Congress should consider taking steps to allow the Secretary of Agriculture to set fee rates to recover the full costs of the Agricultural Quarantine Inspection program (2013-18-05-C).

- Congress should consider either limiting the amount of premium subsidies that an individual farmer can receive each year or reducing premium subsidy rates, or both (2013-19-01-C).

- Congress may wish to consider requiring the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Housing and Urban Development to examine the benefits and costs of merging housing programs that serve similar markets and provide similar products (2012-28-01-C).

- Congress should consider more clearly defining "geographic area" referenced in cargo preference legislation to allow the Department of Agriculture to more fully take advantage of earlier flexibility granted by Congress (2016-36-01-C).

Open GAO Recommendations to Executive Agencies:

- The Food and Drug Administration should coordinate and communicate with the Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service in developing drug residue testing methods and corresponding maximum residue levels for imported seafood that may also be applicable to imported catfish (2018-01-01-E).

- The Secretary of Agriculture should coordinate with other White House Pollinator Health Task Force agencies that have monitoring responsibilities to develop a mechanism, such as a monitoring plan, that would (1) establish roles and responsibilities of lead and support agencies, (2) establish shared outcomes and goals, and (3) obtain input from relevant stakeholders such as states (2017-01-01-E).

- USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service should coordinate and communicate with FDA in developing drug residue testing methods and corresponding maximum residue levels for imported catfish (2018-01-02-E).

- Appropriate entities within the Executive Office of the President should develop a national strategy that states the purpose, leadership, resource requirements, progress, and actions to improve the food safety oversight system (2011-01-05-E).

- OMB should develop a government-wide performance plan for food safety that includes results-oriented goals and performance measures (2011-01-01-E).

- The Secretary of Agriculture should continue developing a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Fraud Framework that helps guide states' efforts to use transaction and replacement card data to better focus investigative efforts on high-risk households (2015-22-01-E).

- The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) director of the Select Agent Program should work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop a joint workforce plan that assesses workforce and training needs for the program as a whole (2018-12-02-E).

- The Department of Agriculture (USDA) should communicate USDA's policy on vehicle utilization to USDA's fleet management staff to ensure staff are aware of USDA policy. (2016-20-05-E)

- The USDA, along with nine other federal agencies, should ensure that an inventory of mobile devices and services is established agency-wide. (2016-35-01-E)

- The USDA, along with thirteen other federal agencies, should ensure that procedures to monitor and control spending on mobile devices and services are established agency-wide. Specifically, they should ensure that procedures include assessing devices for zero, under, and over usage; personnel with authority and responsibility for performing the procedures are identified; and the specific steps to be taken to perform the process are documented. (2016-35-03-E)

- Several agencies, including the USDA, should improve program evaluation and performance metrics, specifically they should conduct program evaluations and collect data on performance measures; conduct more program evaluations to better understand why programs have not met performance goals and their overall effectiveness; consistently collect information that would enable them to track the specific type of

assistance programs provide and the entrepreneurs they serve and use this information to help administer their programs. (2012-07-02-E)

- The Food and Drug Administration should coordinate and communicate with the Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service in developing drug residue testing methods and corresponding maximum residue levels for imported seafood that may also be applicable to imported catfish. (2018-01-01-E)

- The Secretary of Agriculture should direct the Administrator of Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) to establish additional guidance to help states analyze Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) transaction data to better identify SNAP recipient households receiving replacement cards that are potentially engaging in trafficking, and assess whether the use of replacement card benefit periods may better focus this analysis on high-risk households potentially engaged in trafficking. (2015-22-01-E)

- The Federal Housing Administration (FHA), Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and Department of Agriculture (USDA) should periodically analyze the effectiveness and long-term costs and benefits of their foreclosure mitigation strategies and actions. (2014-25-01-E)