

April 4, 2024

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

Re: USDA Should Support the Expansion of Pub.L. 93-638 Authority Throughout the Agency

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

I am writing on behalf of the Alliance to End Hunger, a coalition of over 100 multi-sector [organizations](#) coming together to eradicate hunger domestically and internationally. I am writing in support of the Native Farm Bill Coalition's call to urge you to express to the House and Senate Agriculture Committees your public support for making permanent and expanding 638 Indian Self-Determination contracting and Tribal Self-Governance compacting throughout the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Although Native Americans make up less than 2% of the U.S. population, they suffer from some of the highest rates of food security, diet-related diseases, and socioeconomic challenges. Since 1975, Tribal governments have utilized Pub.L. 93-638 to provide critical services to their Tribal members and surrounding non-Native communities. The programs, services, functions, and activities Tribal governments provided under Pub.L. 93-638 are more complex to administer than most USDA programs, services, functions, and activities. As a result, Congress rightfully recognized the potential benefits that expanding 638 Indian Self-Determination contracting to USDA could have on the well-being of Tribal members. More importantly, it aimed to strengthen regional Tribal food economies by integrating the purchase of traditional and culturally relevant Native American and Alaska Native foods from USDA-authorized Tribal farmers and producers. It also allows for Tribal discretion on designing, purchasing, and distributing FDPIR food.

This project was the first step to expand self-governance at the USDA. Through the enactment of the 2018 Farm Bill, the 16 Tribal governments below are now directly procuring healthy and culturally relevant foods from local Tribal and non-Tribal producers as part of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) pilot program:

- **Oneida Nation & Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin (WI):** Tribal procurement includes bison, ground beef, beef roast, fish, wild rice, and apples.
- **Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (WI):** Tribal procurement includes frozen white fish, apples, carrots, potatoes of various colors, cucumbers, lettuces, frozen squash, fresh and frozen blueberries, and wild rice.
- **Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians (MI):** Tribal procurement includes all fresh fruits and vegetables currently offered by USDA, fresh eggs, and walleye.
- **Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MS):** Tribal procurement includes turnip greens, collard greens, yellow squash, tomatoes (red/green), tomato berries, bell peppers, variety hot/sweet peppers, and cucumbers.
- **Chickasaw Nation (OK):** Tribal procurement includes ground beef, roast beef, dry hominy, and pecans.
- **Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (AK):** Tribal procurement includes Alaskan halibut, Cod, and Alaskan-grown potato.

- **Lummi Nation (WA):** Tribal procurement includes salmon, halibut, prawn/shrimp, and crab.
- **Sokaogon Chippewa Community (WI):** Tribal procurement includes wild rice, carrots, cauliflower, pickling and slicing cucumbers, sweet corn, Roma and slicing tomatoes, zucchini, bison burger, ground beef, pork chops, and chicken breast.
- **Spirit Lake Tribe (ND):** Tribal procurement includes bison.
- **Cherokee Nation (OK):** Tribal procurement includes beef chuck roast, and ground beef chub.
- **Gila River Indian Community (AZ):** Tribal procurement includes tepary beans.
- **Tohono O'odham Nation (AZ):** Tribal procurement includes soft wheat berries (various), hard wheat berries, wheat flour (various), white tepary beans, brown tepary beans, and garbanzo beans.
- **White Mountain Apache Tribe (AZ):** Tribal procurement includes barbecue corn, corn, summer squash, patty pan squash, green chilies, blue corn meal, ground beef, tongue, intestines (beef), steak, liver, sweetbread, walnuts, acorns, and pine nuts.
- **Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla (OR):** Tribal procurement includes ground beef, beef chuck roast, celery, lettuce, cabbage, carrot, squash, cucumber, honeydew melon, peaches, oranges, apples, cherries, apricots, and eggs.
- **Quinault Indian Nation (WA):** Tribal procurement includes canned albacore tuna, canned coho salmon, canned king salmon, king salmon fillet, razor clams, ling cod, and rock fish.

This has resulted in 70,473 pounds of food, totaling \$504,676.00, purchased by Tribal government pilot sites in Fiscal Year 2022. It is critical that we make this program permanent and open it to more Tribal governments. Expanding Section 638 Authority for Tribal Nations aligns with the Alliance to End Hunger's goals to support indigenous cultural economies, improve indigenous health, and combat the high levels of food insecurity among Native Americans.

Additionally, witnessing the positive impacts the FDPIR pilot is having on regional food economies, we urge USDA to support the enactment of the following marker bills as part of the upcoming Farm Bill negotiations:

- **S. 1780, PRIME Meat Processing in Indian Country Act** (*Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) meat inspection*)
- **S. 2354, the ARCTIC Act** (*Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, FSIS meat inspections, establishes an Office of Self-Governance*)
- **S. 2489, FDPIR Tribal Food Sovereignty Act of 2023** (*FDPIR*)
- **S. 2457, A bill to amend the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 to establish an Office of Self-Governance, and for other purposes** (*Establishes an Office of Self-Governance*)
- **S.2912/H.R. 5790, SNAP Tribal Food Sovereignty Act of 2023** (*Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*)
- **S. 2563 Tribal Access to Nutrition Assistance Act of 2023** (*FDPIR and SNAP*)

Thank you for your dedication to improving equitable delivery of USDA services for and addressing food insecurity in Indian Country. We look forward to seeing USDA support and implement the expansion of 638 at USDA.

Sincerely,



Eric P. Mitchell,  
President,  
Alliance to End Hunger

CC

House Agriculture Committee  
Senate Agriculture Committee  
House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs  
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs