

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 15, 2024

Ms. Andrea Gacki  
Director  
Office of Foreign Assets Control  
U.S. Department of the Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW-Annex  
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Director Gacki:

We are writing to request the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) work quickly and cooperatively with your colleagues at the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and State to find a resolution for financing restrictions which prevent the Government of Iraq from procuring their essentials for the monthly food basket. For the past several years, U.S. rice has been part of the food basket providing approximately 41 million Iraqis with a nutritious, healthy food staple commodity.

Iraq is the second largest market for milled U.S. long grain rice, and through a 2021 memorandum of understanding (MOU) with USA Rice, there has been 200,000 metric tons of U.S. rice, valued between \$100 and \$200 million, contracted and shipped annually. The Iraqi people are import dependent for much of their food, and without access to a staple of their diets, middle- and low-income Iraqi families will quickly move into a food insecure situation. Given the food insecurity and political instability prevalent in other parts of the Middle East, it is critical that we work creatively to ensure that Iraq can finance staple food imports.

We commend OFAC and the Department of Treasury for working with banks around the world to curb transactions related to fraud, money laundering and other illegal uses of U.S. currency, however, there must be other compliance steps that can be taken to thread the needle and provide support to banks that play a commercial role in financing substantial U.S. exports. The Trade Bank of Iraq, which will eventually be the only institution with pure Iraqi ownership in the country with access to U.S. dollars, does not have adequate leverage to finance the food basket items and additionally has cumbersome requirements for financing which disincentivizes private companies, like Al Awees, who imports all of the U.S. rice, from doing business.

The rice exported to Iraq is all value-added and grown in our states, this means that it's not only supporting the thousands of rice farmers we represent but also the merchants and millers that subsequently handle, process, and package that rice. These other businesses in the value chain all provide thousands of additional jobs across rural towns in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Texas. Everyone from the farmer to the truck driver, to the storage facility, to the mill, to the port is benefiting from the strong win-win partnership between the United State and Iraq over the last two decades that has helped to promote reliable sales and also protect Iraq's food security. At a time when our farmers are planting this year's rice crop, the uncertainty in one of U.S. rice's top export markets is causing concern.

We appreciate your service in implementation and enforcement of economic restrictions during critical national security challenges facing the United States and hope you can also work proactively to find a timely solution to maintain commerce with Iraq moving forward.

Sincerely,



Bill Cassidy, MD  
United States Senator



Roger Wicker  
United States Senator



Mike Ezell  
Member of Congress



Trent Kelly  
Member of Congress



Clay Higgins  
Member of Congress



Eric A. "Rick" Crawford  
Member of Congress




Cindy Hyde-Smith  
United States Senator



John Boozman  
United States Senator




French Hill  
Member of Congress



Steve Womack  
Member of Congress



Julia Letlow  
Member of Congress



Bruce Westerman  
Member of Congress