Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Timothy Geithner
Secretary of the Treasury
Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

February 23, 2009

Dear Secretary Geithner:

Given current economic uncertainties, it is imperative that the United States takes advantage of all available world markets. A recent study by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) states, "in FY2009, the global recession, accompanied by weaker global demand for commodities, falling prices, and an appreciating dollar, will create an unfavorable outlook for U.S. agricultural exports." In recognition of this, we are writing to request a change from current policies to allow free rice trade between the United States and Cuba.

Prior to the trade embargo, Cuba was the number one market for U.S. rice. Moreover, rice was the number one commodity shipped from the United States to Cuba. However, regulatory impediments imposed by the Treasury Department now limit the export of rice to Cuba. Current regulations require that Cuban buyers pay cash to U.S. sellers before the shipments leave U.S. ports rather than requiring payment upon delivery. This requirement is an atypical trade practice and unnecessarily inhibits sales.

A CRS study predicts that removing the current embargo against U.S. rice to Cuba "would have a significant positive effect on U.S. rice exports to Cuba." CRS estimates rice exports would increase by $14 million to $43 million.

It is time for the United States to change our current rice trade policy with Cuba. We urge you to amend current policy to facilitate rice trade with Cuba, providing an immediate and beneficial economic impact to American farmers.

Sincerely,

Mike Ross
Member of Congress

Ted Poe
Member of Congress

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Marion Berry
Member of Congress

Bill Cassidy
Member of Congress

Allyson Schwartz
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