

February 25, 2020

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We the undersigned Governors would like to draw your attention to an important issue facing U.S. agriculture. Farmer access to new biotechnologies, such as gene editing, is critical to maintaining the security and stability of the rural economy and our nation's food supply. These technologies offer significant promise to enhance the health of animals and plants, make better use of agricultural resources, and produce safer food. This potential can only be realized with appropriate, science-based regulation at the federal level.

The United States Department of Agriculture has a long history of providing regulatory oversight of the use of biotechnology in plant breeding under the Plant Protection Act and has moved swiftly and thoughtfully to ensure that their regulatory framework is kept current with recent advances in gene editing. Farmers have had, and will continue to enjoy, access to many important innovations that contribute greatly to the strength of American crop production.

The Food and Drug Administration, which does not have the same track record with fostering new biotechnologies in agricultural animal production, insists on regulating agricultural applications of gene editing and similar technologies in animals under the Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act. This approach is having a chilling effect on the development and adoption of new gene edits that promise significant benefit to livestock and poultry producers and the public they serve. As other nations move forward with more appropriate, science-based regulatory frameworks, the U.S. is in danger of losing its global preeminence in livestock production.

We ask that you move all agricultural applications of biotechnology in animals under the regulatory authority of the USDA. As plant applications are regulated under the Plant Protection Act, so too should agricultural animal applications be regulated under the Animal Health Protection Act. Not only will a common policy under the USDA better foster development of this technology for the public good, it will also far better serve U.S. interests in marketing our agricultural products overseas. The current situation—having significantly different regulatory approaches under different agencies for plants and animals—is simply not tenable.

The U.S. agriculture sector is vital to the American economy, generating over \$1 trillion in annual economic activity. The continued success of American agriculture depends on access to new biotechnology that has been well-vetted under a rational, science-based regulatory system administered by the USDA. We appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Hon. Doug Burgum, Governor of North Dakota
Hon. Kristi Noem, Governor of South Dakota
Hon. Mike Parson, Governor of Missouri
Hon. Kim Reynolds, Governor of Iowa
Hon. Pete Ricketts, Governor of Nebraska

cc:

The Honorable Lawrence Kudlow
Director, National Economic Council

The Honorable Joe Grogan
Director, Domestic Policy Council

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture

The Honorable Robert Lighthizer
Ambassador, Office of the United States Trade Representative