CONGRESSMAN MICHAEL F.Q. SAN NICOLAS (GU-00)
WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD
AND DRUG, AND RELATED AGENCIES
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Thank you, Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Harris, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, for the opportunity to share my district of Guam’s priorities as they relate to the Fiscal Year 2023 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

Robust investments towards enhancing food security, building resilient supply chains, and restoring America’s advantage in agriculture continue to be critical needs for Guam. With approximately 90% of consumer goods and food products imported to the island, and a unique vulnerability to supply chain disruptions, resource reliability both directly and dramatically impacts the quality of life for Americans in Guam. The ongoing pandemic further underscores the demand for locally produced food and greater access to new opportunities for self-sustainability.

Mr. Chairman, thanks to your leadership and support, Guam now has the necessary funds to complete the modernization of our long-awaited Guam Fishermen’s Cooperative Facility, a state-of-the-art space with improved resources valuable to the community, crucial to the success of our fishermen, and instrumental in realizing the abundance of our surrounding waters. Together, we have worked to lay agricultural foundations that will continue to deliver essential services and provide locally sourced food for our island. We have undertaken significant efforts to build in-country capacity to confront food security. However, there is still much to be done.

This appropriation round, I respectfully request the Subcommittee’s support for the
design and construction of a Guam Custom Slaughterhouse – the realization of which serves a two-fold mission. First, in partnership with the Guam Department of Agriculture and the Joint Region Marianas, this facility strengthens the mitigation of invasive ungulate populations of feral hogs and wild deer throughout Guam. Second, it would simultaneously address longstanding food insecurities of our homeless and at-risk constituencies on a non-commercial basis by making the food product of ungulate management available for consumption.

From the contamination of agricultural commodities and competition with native plants, to the loss of our flora and fauna, declining totals of endangered species, and overall disturbance of our ecosystems, ungulate populations have severely impacted the island and continue to threaten our agricultural circumstances. The establishment of a Guam Custom Slaughterhouse is an immediate recourse to combatting these ecological issues while developing local meat processing capabilities.

To be clear, there is no USDA Slaughterhouse capacity on Guam that can bring livestock from farm to table. While such capacity is indeed desirable, the immediate need to manage ungulate populations and capture the food source available in such management is primary and addressing such need will further improve Guam’s readiness to level up to USDA Slaughterhouse capacity over time. The importance of such experience and capacity building is self-evident, with Guam currently reliant on 100% imports of USDA and market compliant meats and zero meat food security should such imports be compromised. This is further compelling when considered in the context of significant U.S. military presence and national security interests stationed in Guam, and the 180,000 Americans and Allies calling Guam home and "holding the fort" closest to our Asian points of interest. Guam is ready to fill this need over time, beginning with this request.
Distinguished colleagues, this community project is not simply an opportunity to build on the work we have already achieved for comprehensive rural development. It is an opportunity to meaningfully improve our food system and the very lives of Americans in the Pacific. It is a physical means of delivering greater value to ungulate management, offering our most vulnerable an available selection of healthy food, and empowering local Custom Slaughterhouse patrons with expanded production and sourcing possibilities. Moreover, this project squarely addressed the USDA vision to cultivate a food system that is fair, distributed, and resilient, and it is a first and necessary step on critical capacity building in this area. Thank you again Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member for your leadership, and for extending me this opportunity to advocate for Guam’s needs. I look forward to working closely together to advance the priorities of this committee and bring this project to fruition.