

2-21-1980

Letter, Congressman Jamie Whitten from Congressman John Breaux, February 21, 1980

The office of Congressman John Breaux

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FEB 22 1980

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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February 21, 1980

Hon. Jamie Whitten
Chairman
House Appropriations
Committee
H-218
U. S. Capitol

Dear Chairman Whitten:

I am writing to express an urgent need to you and the Members of Committee to restore to the proposed Fiscal Year 1981 agriculture appropriations sufficient funding to allocate a total PL-480 Title I rice program amounting to 400,000 tons, the same amount as last fiscal year. Also, it is urgent to restore to that Title I allocation, funding for 200,000 tons of rice for the Indonesian PL-480 program which, as I understand, has been eliminated for FY 1981.

The decision to drop Indonesia from the PL-480 rice program is both hasty and precipitous. Regardless of what some may say about Indonesia's foreign reserves, the people of Indonesia basically have a low per capita income level and rice is a major staple in their diets as a source of food and nutrition. Population trends there indicate continued strong growth, with an accompanying requirement for food assistance for a hungry and growing population. Indonesia's import requirements therefore, will continue.

In addition to humanitarian needs, the Indonesian PL-480 rice program has since Fiscal Year 1955 represented a substantial portion of our food aid to needy peoples. Last fiscal year, the Indonesian allocation of 200,000 tons comprised fifty percent of the Title I rice program. The sudden reduction of such a significant amount of rice will have damaging impact on U. S. rice producers and this nation's rice export program.

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For the United States and its domestic rice industry, Indonesia represents an excellent example of long-term market development. To eliminate Indonesia now, all of a sudden, is to simply throw away years of hard work for the rice industry. Market development will be thrown to the wind, only to be replaced by another nation, likely Japan, who is dumping rice onto the world market which is heavily subsidized and which is replacing rice exports traditionally made by this country.

Now is the natural time to restore the proposed FY 1981 rice program to the 400,000 ton level and to reinstate the Indonesian rice program at 200,000 tons for PL-480. The Administration is calling for an increase in next year's budget, especially in the area of overseas food aid for the needy. By restoring the PL-480 rice program and Indonesia's portion, the Administration's goals for food aid will be met, market development will be upheld, our rice industry will not be damaged, and poor and hungry people will be able to be fed.

I appreciate your attention to this request and ask to be kept posted as to developments with regard to it.

Sincerely,


JOHN BREAUX, M. C.