



August 7, 2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Secretary of Agriculture Thomas J. Vilsack claims safety concerns at Port of Vancouver, WA, denying federally mandated grain inspection services to United Grain Corporation's export grain facility despite positive outcomes on four separate safety assessments

United Grain Corporation (UGC) requests that Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) provide service in the absence of delegated Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) grain inspectors, who have refused to cross a union picket line due to alleged safety concerns since July 6, 2014. FGIS inspections are still being denied as Secretary Vilsack states *"it is incumbent on me to make sure that any decisions are made with safety in mind"* as reported in the Hagstrom Report on August 6, 2014. UGC agrees that safety should be a top priority for everyone entering the Port of Vancouver.

In response to the Secretary's claims, UGC would again like to offer alternative methods of ingress/egress of the Port of Vancouver to assuage safety concerns for FGIS grain inspectors. The company transports employees with a security team via the company bus twice a day through a designated entry gate with a union picket line on the Port of Vancouver property to the company's grain facility. FGIS inspectors are welcome to utilize the same means of transportation. If riding the provided company bus is not acceptable, the company will provide a van for the exclusive use of the inspectors. If the federal grain inspectors select a security team of their choosing, the company will provide the funding. This should not be a problem as FGIS is a fee-for-service entity. Further, the company will provide a secure place to park FGIS employees' vehicles.

In addition, the company offers the use of a helicopter to completely avoid passing through the Port of Vancouver designated union picketed gate. The pickup of FGIS employees would be provided at the same secure location where vehicles would be watched, and a security detail, or one of grain inspectors' own choosing, would be provided to transport employees to and from the helicopter pickup points.

We urge the Secretary to consider the above mentioned security protocols in order to re-establish grain inspections services as quickly as possible. There have been thousands of picket line crossings using these methods (99% via ground transportation) including government agencies such as Labor and Industries, Southwest Clean Air, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Customs Agents, National Cargo Bureau, WSDA grain elevator inspectors, and others, without any known or reported injuries. In addition, the picketed gate is under the surveillance of six video

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cameras. The company's suggested safety protocols are equal or more secure than the current van/private car method utilized by FGIS at a Portland, OR grain facility, where inspections by FGIS personnel have continued uninterrupted under a similar picket line situation. In an independent safety review conducted by the Washington State Patrol, it was concluded:

CONCLUSION of SAFETY REVIEW by WASHINGTON STATE PATROL (WSP)

The transportation of non-union UGC employees have proven both safe and effective for entering and exiting the picket lines from both a security and cost effectiveness standpoint. In addition, UGC has afforded WSDA employees the option of using a helicopter service. Neither of these options is unsafe and they both provide WSDA employees a safe and secure ingress/egress of the Port during this labor activity. While no direct threats or crimes have been documented targeting WSDA employees specifically, there are a number of documented instances investigated by VPD (Vancouver, WA Police Department) typical for this type of labor dispute that have caused WSDA employees concern. It is recommend WSDA employees utilize the same ingress/egress mode of travel offered and being used by non-union UGC employees provided by (security firm) Gettier and Associates.

UGC is willing to send the Secretary a full transcript of the WSP report.

Additionally there have been three USDA safety/security assessments conducted at United Grain's facility and the Port of Vancouver designated picketed gate. The first USDA assessment was conducted in October of 2013, by the USDA/GIPSA Safety and Occupational Health Manager. The Manager determined any one of several methods of transport offered for FGIS inspectors to be safe and verbally communicated the findings to UGC personnel. However the report has yet to be released despite numerous requests by UGC and other industry stakeholders.

On July 6th the company was denied service that effectively continues to shut down operations. On July 15th, two USDA safety officers were dispatched to perform a second independent assessment. Those individuals were the Chief of the Physical Security Division of USDA, and again the USDA/GIPSA Safety and Occupational Health Manager. The onsite visit was concluded on July 17th and once again the facility and the Port of Vancouver designated picketed gate were determined to be safe as verified in direct conversation with UGC personnel. The reports were finalized and turned in to GIPSA Administrator Larry Mitchell by July 22.

On July 28th two more USDA safety inspectors, the Director of the Emergency Management, Safety and Security Division for APHIS and the Aviation Safety/Security Specialist for APHIS arrived at the facility. The assessment of the facility and the Port of Vancouver designated picketed gate was completed by July 31st with the same result as the two previous assessments.

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It was communicated verbally to UGC personnel that any of the modes offered, with the company bus being preferred, were acceptable for safe transport of FGIS personnel.

As the U.S. Department of Agriculture is mandated under the *U.S. Grain Standards Act* to provide official inspection and weighing services for exports of U.S. grains and oilseeds, we urge Secretary Vilsack to utilize any of the methods offered by UGC, which have been deemed safe by the USDA's own safety experts, to immediately resume grain inspections. UGC represents 20% of the export capacity from the Pacific Northwest. With harvest upon us, a disruption of this magnitude in the supply chain will create irreparable damage to U.S. farmers and the reputation of the U.S. as a reliable supplier.