

December 20, 2024

Donnie King
Chief Executive Officer
Tyson Foods
2200 W Don Tyson Parkway
Springdale, AR 72762

Dear Mr. King:

You have previously stonewalled my efforts to learn the truth about your shutdown of poultry plants in Noel and Dexter, Missouri. Now, your company is apparently trying to deter injured farmers from speaking out against it.¹ This is wrong and anti-American, and you must immediately stop.

An ongoing class-action lawsuit alleges that your company sold its shuttered Dexter plant to a non-competitor—Cal-Maine Foods—which produces table eggs rather than processing broiler chickens.² This left local farmers, who built their farms around broiler chicken production, in a bind. And it happened after you previously assured me, on September 15, 2023, that you would not prevent a competitor from acquiring your closed plants.

Importantly, the lawsuit alleged that you were always planning to sell the plant to a non-competitor, in defiance of commitments you made to me and Congressman Jason Smith. When I wrote to you about this issue earlier this year,³ you declined to produce evidence rebutting the lawsuit's allegations—instead claiming it would “not be appropriate” to make the relevant documents public.

Now, court records indicate that your company is trying to chill its critics' free speech. Your lawyers have sought to compel farmers' disclosure of “communications—emails and letters—written to the USDA and members of the press about the lawsuit.”⁴ This request is, transparently, a deterrent to First Amendment-protected speech. Farmers will, of course, be far less likely to speak to the press at all if they're required to track and preserve all those communications, and then turn them over to the very corporation they're challenging in court.

You must immediately suspend all efforts to compel this information. In addition, please provide answers to the following questions:

¹ <https://investigatamidwest.org/2024/12/17/tyson-foods-cut-contracts-with-poultry-farmers-now-the-company-is-working-to-silence-their-legal-fight/>

² <https://www.yahoo.com/news/tyson-foods-cut-contracts-missouri-140042074.html>

³ https://www.kq2.com/news/top-stories/senator-hawley-demands-tyson-foods-come-clean-about-chicken-plant-closures-in-missouri/article_e8405364-3e13-11ef-aeba-6b999a80583f.html

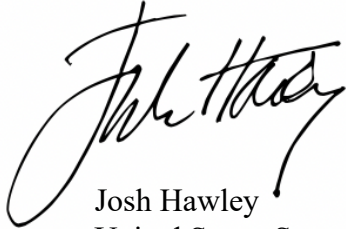
⁴

<https://www.courts.mo.gov/fv/c/Defendants%20Motion%20to%20Enforce%20Discovery.PDF?courtCode=34&di=1146735>

1. Did you personally greenlight the decision to seek disclosure of farmers' contacts with the press and federal regulators? If not, who did?
2. Will you produce the documentation I requested from you on July 9, 2024 regarding your company's sale of the Dexter plant to Cal-Maine Foods, or will you continue to withhold this information from the public?

I await your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Hawley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

Josh Hawley
United States Senator