

July 26, 2012

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Ambassador Kirk:
Secretary Clinton:
Secretary Sebelius:
Secretary Vilsack:
Acting Secretary Blank:
Administrator Jackson:

The undersigned organizations strongly support the core objectives of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations. We believe that a well-negotiated, high-standard agreement can benefit agricultural producers, processors and exporters in all TPP partner countries. However, in order for a TPP agreement to be commercially meaningful, it must include effective disciplines on the application of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures – disciplines that underscore the importance of science-based regulation and are fully enforceable.

As tariffs are reduced and world demand for agricultural products grows, there are real opportunities for U.S. producers and processors in global markets. But, too often, we have seen our access to foreign countries restricted by unjustified non-tariff barriers.

Because of this, SPS issues have been a significant point of focus for American agriculture in the TPP negotiations. Many across the U.S. agricultural sector have long been working closely with the U.S. negotiating team in pursuit of stronger SPS disciplines and have consistently stressed the need to be able to truly hold our trading partners to those commitments. In that work, industry organizations have highlighted, in particular, the vital importance of “WTO-plus” SPS provisions – that is, obligations that go beyond the WTO SPS Agreement on issues like risk assessment, risk management, transparency, border checks/laboratory testing and facilitating trade through regulatory coherence measures.

We greatly appreciate the administration’s receptivity to our concerns in these areas and very much hope the final provisions of the TPP will strongly address the challenges that agricultural exporters face on a regular basis. Without strengthening the rules on SPS measures, we run the risk that any market access gains from the TPP process will be undermined should countries make use of arbitrary, non-science-based SPS measures to restrict access.

To that end, it is imperative that all elements of the agreement's SPS provisions, including the WTO-plus components, be fully enforceable; otherwise, there will not be tangible value in the TPP process in the critical area of SPS commitments. As long as our TPP partners have the ability to diverge from TPP SPS guidelines due to political pressures or administrative intransigence, the United States will lack any actionable means to use the new TPP text to resolve these types of trade barriers. As a result, the TPP's potential value as a model for future trade agreements will be dramatically eroded for U.S. agriculture.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to continued discussions with the administration on this important topic.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation
American Feed Industry Association
American Frozen Food Institute
American Meat Institute
American Potato Trade Alliance
Archer Daniels Midland Company
American Soybean Association
Blue Diamond Growers
California Apple Commission
California Blueberry Commission
California Cherry Export Association
California Pear Growers
Cargill, Incorporated
Corn Refiners Association
CropLife America
Distilled Spirits Council of the United States
Grocery Manufacturers Association
Kraft Foods
International Dairy Foods Association
National Associations of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Chicken Council
National Corn Growers Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Farmers Union
National Grain and Feed Association
National Grange
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
National Renderers Association
National Turkey Federation
North American Export Grain Association
Northwest Horticultural Council
Pet Food Institute
USA Poultry & Egg Export Council
USA Rice Federation

U.S. Apple Association
U.S. Dairy Export Council
U.S. Grains Council
U.S. Meat Export Federation
U.S. Wheat Associates
Western Growers Association
Wine Institute

cc:

Demetrios Marantis, Deputy USTR
Isi Siddiqui, Chief Agriculture Negotiator, USTR
Max Baucus, Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
Dave Camp, Chairman, House Ways and Means Committee
Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman, Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee
Frank Lucas, Chairman, House Agriculture Committee
Orrin Hatch, Ranking Member, Senate Finance Committee
Sandy Levin, Ranking Member, House Ways and Means Committee
Pat Roberts, Ranking Member, Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee
Collin Peterson, Ranking Member, House Agriculture Committee