

The Honorable Katherine Tai
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

November 8, 2022

Dear Ambassador Tai:

We are writing to express our keen interest in the future of the negotiations on agricultural trade liberalization in the World Trade Organization (WTO). As you know, the U.S. agricultural sector has a big stake in the world trading system. For that reason, we followed with considerable interest the recent WTO Ministerial Conference in Geneva and would like to congratulate the U.S. government on securing several important outcomes.

The declaration on food insecurity and the decision on World Food Program purchases put a spotlight on critical, timely issues. The declaration on sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) challenges established a potentially productive work program for the SPS Committee, which will allow the United States to continue to build on the strong program of work conducted in recent years. Most significantly, the United States and like-minded Members successfully resisted attempts by India and others to circumvent and erode WTO subsidy disciplines. Through these negotiations, U.S. credibility was boosted among pro-liberalization WTO Members and set the stage for future collaboration. We welcome these outcomes.

While Members failed to agree to a post-MC12 work program for agriculture, we believe that this outcome was necessary to avoid endorsing work on specific issues that would have been counterproductive. For example, we did not support the program as proposed to ministers at the Conference, because it put too little emphasis on the market access pillar, which we see as a critical component of future negotiations. Moreover, the proposed program would have forced negotiators to continue to devote attention to legacy issues from the Doha Round negotiations that have dominated the agenda for two decades and have little to do with the challenges facing agricultural producers in today's world and global concerns with food security

Now more than ever, international agricultural trade and global food security depend on continued U.S. leadership at the WTO. We believe the negotiations are at a crossroads, and that the post-MC12 environment in Geneva is conducive to efforts – already under discussion among some Members – to make a fresh start. We would welcome the creation of a forum at the WTO that would facilitate a productive discussion at the WTO, not only of the traditional core issues – market access, domestic support and export competition – but also emerging trade-related issues, such as the contribution of trade liberalization and innovation-friendly regulatory approaches to agricultural sustainability and climate change mitigation. If the current structure of WTO talks does not allow for such blank-slate negotiations, we encourage you to develop alternatives to address these issues.

Finally, a critical element of agricultural trade liberalization will be an effective enforcement mechanism. Indefinitely extending the block on Appellate Body appointments or agreeing to reforms that weaken dispute settlement will be detrimental to U.S. agriculture producers and future discussions on agricultural trade issues.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the U.S. government's plans for the WTO in the coming months. We are eager to provide input and to support your efforts to improve market conditions for American agriculture. Please let us know when you would be available.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation
American Seed Trade Association
American Soybean Association
Corn Refiners Association
CropLife America
Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative
International Dairy Foods Association
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Milk Producers Federation
National Sorghum Producers
Sweetener Users Association
U.S. Apple Association
U.S. Dairy Export Council
U.S. Dry Bean Council
U.S. Grains Council
U.S. Peanut Federation
U.S. Soybean Export Council
U.S. Wheat Associates
USA Poultry & Egg Export Council
USA Rice
World Perspectives, Inc.

Cc:

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo
Secretary of State Antony Blinken
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan