

September 23, 2020

The Honorable Robert Lighthizer  
U.S. Trade Representative  
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative  
600 17th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer,

The undersigned organizations appreciate the value and benefits of the United States involvement in the World Trade Organization (WTO). We support effective reform in this critical international body to enhance the ability of American agriculture to access foreign markets.

There is no doubt that the Uruguay Round, along with many other rounds, provided a more stable world trading environment for U.S. agriculture.

In the WTO's first two decades overall trade in goods has nearly quadrupled, while WTO members' import tariffs have declined by an average of 15 percent. Over half of world trade is now tariff-free. The WTO affords U.S. agriculture producers and exporters most-favored nation (MFN) treatment in 163 countries, representing over 80 percent of the global economy. The WTO provides rules to guard against arbitrary use of technical regulations or standards to block imports, such as actions associated with sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures that lack a clear basis in science and are protectionist in intent.

With more than twenty percent of overall agricultural production in the United States destined for foreign markets, U.S. agriculture is heavily dependent on exports. The existing WTO rules and the day-to-day work of its committees and secretariat to provide transparency and accountability from its Members remains critical to future export growth, for America's farmers and ranchers, and the millions of American jobs – most of them off-the-farm – that are linked to and dependent upon U.S. agriculture.

While the WTO has been beneficial for U.S. agriculture, its rules have not kept pace with changes in the global economy, and improvement is needed to hold members accountable and improve the organizations' governance. We appreciate and support efforts to provide needed reforms.

The present transition in WTO leadership is strongly linked to the success of WTO reform, and the opportunity to reinvigorate its negotiating function. Choosing a Director General with the ability to facilitate these reforms should be an overriding consideration in the selection of the next WTO Director General. We note other essential traits and leadership abilities critical to the evolution and success of the WTO moving forward:

- Proactive leadership of the WTO and advocate for rules-based trading system;
- Vision for WTO reform and resiliency in the future;

- Adept at navigating across disparate member country positions and demonstrated ability to build coalitions;
- Balance of political and management experience and acumen;
- Ability to explore creative solutions and flexible thinking; and
- An appreciation of the complexities of agriculture and food trade structures and global supply chains.

Today's economic adversity in rural America underscores the importance of constructive engagement in needed WTO reform. The implementation of U.S. supported agreements through the WTO remains necessary to achieve progress on a wide variety of international agricultural trade concerns. American agriculture's future continues to lie in expanding access to foreign markets and eliminating barriers to our exports.

Continued U.S. membership and active participation will help ensure that necessary reforms are undertaken, and that the WTO will continue to play an important and effective role in economic development of the United States and our trading partners. As long as exports are important to U.S. agriculture, WTO membership will be essential as well.

Sincerely,

American Dairy Products Institute  
 American Farm Bureau Federation  
 American Feed Industry Association  
 American Potato Trade Alliance  
 American Seed Trade Association  
 American Soybean Association  
 Animal Health Institute  
 Association of Equipment Manufacturers  
 BelGioioso Cheese, Inc.  
 Biotechnology Innovation Organization  
 Cargill  
 Commercial Creamery Co  
 Corn Refiners Association  
 Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative  
 Farmers for Free Trade  
 FMI - the Food Industry Association  
 Foremost Farms USA  
 Fresh Produce Association of the Americas  
 Hop Growers of America  
 International Dairy Foods Association  
 International Ingredient Corporation  
 KCoe Isom, LLP  
 Leather & Hide Council of America  
 National Aquaculture Association  
 National Association of Egg Farmers

National Association of State Departments  
 of Agriculture  
 National Association of Wheat Growers  
 National Barley Growers Association  
 National Confectioners Association  
 National Corn Growers Association  
 National Council of Farmer Cooperatives  
 National Grain and Feed Association  
 National Milk Producers Federation  
 National Oilseed Processors Association  
 National Pasta Association  
 National Potato Council  
 National Retail Federation  
 National Sunflower Association  
 National Turkey Federation  
 Nebraska Grain and Feed Association  
 North American Export Grain Association  
 Inc  
 North American Meat Institute  
 North American Millers' Association  
 North American Renderers Association  
 Northeast Agribusiness and Feed Alliance  
 Northwest Horticultural Council  
 Northwest Horticultural Council  
 Produce Marketing Association  
 Roquette

Sartori Company  
Sweetener Users Association  
Syngenta  
The Hershey Company  
U.S. Apple Association  
U.S. Canola Association  
U.S. Dairy Export Council

U.S. Wheat Associates  
United Fresh Produce Association  
US Dry Bean Council  
USA Rice Federation  
WineAmerica  
World Perspectives, Inc.

Cc: Honorable Chuck Grassley, Chairman, Senate Finance Committee  
Honorable Ron Wyden, Ranking Member, Senate Finance Committee  
Honorable Richard Neal, Chairman, House Ways and Means Committee  
Honorable Kevin Brady, Ranking Member, House Ways and Means Committee  
Honorable Pat Roberts, Chairman, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry  
Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition, & Forestry  
Honorable Collin Peterson, Chairman, House Agriculture Committee  
Honorable K. Michael Conaway, Ranking Member, House Agriculture Committee