



June 1, 2020

The Honorable Robert Lighthizer
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20006

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
United States Secretary of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer and Secretary Perdue,

On behalf of America's dairy farmers, processors and exporters, we are writing today in gratitude for the support your departments provided to our efforts to seek a reduction of Vietnam's Most Favored Nation (MFN) tariffs on U.S. dairy exports. This assistance was invaluable. Thanks in key part to outreach from your interagency team, Vietnam has lowered tariffs on key U.S. dairy products and ingredients, opening new opportunities for our manufacturers and supplying farmers at a critical juncture for the U.S. dairy industry.

Vietnam is a growing dairy market, and its domestic dairy industry is unable to fully meet this robust demand. Vietnam's decision to unilaterally lower its MFN tariffs is an important step towards expanding our market access and will better position the U.S. dairy industry to provide a consistent supply of high-quality dairy products to the benefit of both of our nations.

However, Vietnam's recent announcement, while important progress forward, is just the first step towards securing greater access for U.S. exports. The U.S. remains the only major dairy supplier to Vietnam without a free trade agreement, putting our dairy exports at an inherent disadvantage to those from our competitors. Of primary concern is the free trade agreement recently ratified by the European Union that will eliminate all tariffs on European dairy exports to Vietnam over a 5-year period. That agreement with the EU will also impose new barriers to U.S. cheese exports due to its geographical indications (GI) provisions. Further work is needed to ensure that U.S. dairy can remain competitive and continue providing Vietnamese food manufacturers and consumers an affordable supply of dairy products, until such a time when the U.S. can negotiate a free trade agreement that fully removes all dairy tariffs.

We sincerely appreciate that you and your staff recognize the importance of equalizing tariffs and breaking down barriers to U.S. dairy exports around the world, including in Vietnam, and we look forward to continuing this work together in the years to come. Thank you for your unwavering support of America's dairy industry and to advancing the principles of fairer trade.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Vilsack
President and CEO
U.S. Dairy Export Council

James Mulhern
President and CEO
National Milk Producers Federation