

January 22, 2020

Chairman Bennie G. Thompson  
U.S. House of Representatives  
House Committee on Homeland Security  
H2-176 Ford House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Mike Rogers  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Homeland Security  
H2-117 Ford House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Rogers:

The undersigned groups request that the Committee on Homeland Security expeditiously report out, without amendment, H.R. 4482, *Protecting America's Food & Agriculture Act of 2019*, a bill authorizing funding to hire additional Customs and Border Protection (CBP) personnel needed to conduct Agriculture Quarantine Inspection at the international ports of entry. The Senate version of this bill, S. 2107, was recently approved by the Senate by unanimous consent.

The U.S. agriculture sector is a crucial component of the American economy, generating over \$1 trillion in annual economic activity. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, foreign pests and diseases cost the American economy tens of billions of dollars annually. CBP employees perform critically important agricultural inspections every day at the nation's ports of entry. CBP Agricultural Specialists play a vital role in both trade and travel safety and prevent the introduction of harmful foreign animal diseases and exotic plant pests into the U.S. Diseases such as African Swine Fever, which has killed more than one out of every four pigs on the planet, would have a devastating impact on U.S. livestock producers, their communities, and the economy if introduced into the U.S.

For years, CBP has been chronically understaffed at U.S. ports of entry. The most recent results of CBP's Agriculture Specialist Resource Allocation Model (AgRAM) shows a need for an additional 721 Agriculture Specialists. Passage of the *Protecting America's Food and Agriculture Act of 2019* would authorize CBP to hire 240 Agriculture Specialists and 200 Agriculture Technicians each year until the staffing shortage determined by AgRAM is remedied. The bill also authorizes the training and assignment each year of 20 new Agricultural Canine Teams, which have proven valuable in detecting illicit fruits, vegetables, and animal products that may have otherwise been missed in initial inspections. These specially trained dogs are already being utilized by CBP to sniff out potentially contaminated products. Finally, the bill authorizes supplemental appropriations each year to pay for the activities of agriculture specialists, technicians, and canine teams.

We ask Congress to authorize and fund the needed CBP Agriculture Specialists, Canine Teams, and support staff at the international ports of entry to guard against national security threats, address public safety risks, and grow the economy. To achieve this goal, we urge you to quickly discharge S. 2107/H.R. 4482 without amendment and push for its swift passage in the House.

Respectfully submitted,

Agri-Mark Dairy Cooperative  
Airports Council International-North America  
Alabama Pork Producers  
American Dairy Coalition  
American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Feed Industry Association  
American Kennel Club  
American Sheep Industry Association  
American Veterinary Medical Association  
AmericanHort  
Border Trade Alliance  
California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association  
California Citrus Mutual  
California Farm Bureau Federation  
California Pork Producers Association  
California Poultry Federation  
Colorado Pork Producers Council  
Dairy Producers of New Mexico  
Dairy Producers of Utah  
Fresh Produce Association of the Americas  
Hawaii Pork Producers  
Idaho Pork Producers Association  
Illinois Pork Producers Association  
Indiana Pork Producers Association  
Iowa Pork Producers Association  
Kansas Pork Association  
Kentucky Pork Producers Association  
Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation  
Louisiana Pork Producers Association  
Louisiana Rice Producers Group  
Michigan Agri-Business  
Michigan Pork Producers Association  
Minnesota Pork Producers Association  
Mississippi Farm Bureau  
Mississippi Pork Producers Association  
Missouri Pork Association  
Montana Pork Producers Council  
National Animal Interest Alliance  
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture  
National Cattlemen's Beef Association  
National Christmas Tree Association  
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives  
National Customs Brokers and Forwarders Association of America

National Grain and Feed Association  
National Milk Producers Federation  
National Pork Producers Council  
National Potato Council  
National Sorghum Producers  
National Treasury Employees Union  
National Turkey Federation  
Nebraska Pork Producers Association, Inc.  
North American Meat Institute  
North American Renderers Association  
North Carolina Pork Council  
North Dakota Pork Council  
Northeast Dairy Farmers Cooperatives  
Northwest Chicken Council  
Oklahoma Pork Council  
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association  
Oregon Pork Producers  
Oregon Women for Agriculture  
Pennsylvania Pork Producers Council  
Pet Food Institute  
Rural & Agriculture Council of America  
South Dakota Pork Producers Council  
Tennessee Pork Producers Association  
Texas Broiler Council  
Texas Citrus Mutual  
Texas Egg Council  
Texas International Produce Association  
Texas Pork Producers Association  
Texas Poultry Federation  
Texas Rice Producers Legislative Group  
Texas Turkey Federation  
United Egg Producers  
United Fresh Produce Association  
United States Cattlemen's Association  
United States Chamber of Commerce  
USA Rice Federation  
Utah Pork Producers  
Virginia Pork Council, Inc.  
Washington State Dairy Federation  
Washington State Potato Commission  
Wisconsin Pork Association

cc: Members of the Committee on Homeland Security