

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