

May 19, 2020

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

As representatives of U.S. agriculture, representing farmers, agribusinesses, and related industries we are writing to bring to your attention recent actions by the Mexican government that threaten our important trade relationship.

Last week, Victor Toledo, the Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources in Mexico published an [editorial](#)¹ essentially suggesting that the world's modern food production system is responsible for pandemic diseases. His call for suppression of pesticides and a ban on biotechnology crops is not new, but is a dangerous precedent for our food, fiber, and feed system in a moment of crisis. We are seeking your engagement with President Lopez Obrador to challenge these statements and defend our nation's farmers, food companies, and the millions of Americans who are a critical part of our U.S. agriculture system.

Our modern agricultural production system has evolved specifically to improve human health and environmental quality. Contrary to Minister Toledo's assertions, sustainable intensification of food and fiber production has decreased the disruption of fragile lands and the destruction of wildlife habitat. Modern agricultural innovations including pesticides have helped American farmers reduce soil erosion and greenhouse gas emissions. And modern agricultural production and innovations continue to enhance and improve food safety and environmental quality. We have food available today, even during a pandemic, because of these innovations and advancements.

If this editorial was just rhetoric, it would be concerning for those of us who work daily to ensure a safe food supply. The fact that Mexico's Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) has already taken steps to ban imports of pesticides and intermediate products, however, demonstrates that this editorial is not just rhetoric but a new pathway that puts one of our closest allies on a collision course with the U.S. on consumer health, sound science, environmental quality, and fair trade. Mexico is one of our closest trading partners—and the U.S. has recently certified Mexico's compliance with the new U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). The policies called for by Minister Toledo, however, run counter to the spirit and intent of the USMCA, which was supported by many in the US agriculture community. It might be easy to suggest his call reflects only a change in Mexican policy, but we have seen in Europe how domestic policies have destructive global implications for the world's food supply.

¹ See <https://www.jornadabc.mx/opinion/05-05-2020/la-reactivacion-pos-covid-19-sera-ecologica-o-no-sera>

Policies in the European Union have inhibited the development of agricultural innovations that have been approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other global regulatory bodies. Trade in U.S. agricultural products has also been disrupted by these EU policies. We urge you not to allow these types of precautionary policies to become ingrained with Mexico, one of our closest and most important trading partners. We are requesting you address these issues directly with President Lopez Obrador before the Minister's irresponsible attacks on our agriculture system grow into a larger international trade conflict.

Sincerely,

American Pulse Association
Agricultural Retailers Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Seed Trade Association
American Sugar Alliance
Animal Health Institute
California Specialty Crops Council
Council of Producers and Distributors of Agrotechnology
CropLife America
National Agricultural Aviation Association
National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants
National Association of Egg Farmers
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pest Management Association
National Sorghum Producers
National Sunflower Association
North Dakota Grain Growers Association
North American Export Grain Association
U.S. Canola Association
U.S. Dairy Export Council
U.S. Dry Bean Council
U.S. Pea & Lentil Trade Association
U.S. Wheat Associates
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
USA Rice
Western Growers

cc: The Honorable Sonny Perdue
The Honorable Wilbur Ross

The Honorable Andrew Wheeler
The Honorable Robert E. Lighthizer
The Honorable Christopher Landau
The Honorable Ted McKinney
The Honorable CJ Mahoney
The Honorable Gregg Doud
The Honorable Alexandra Dunn
Tate Bennett