

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 7, 2013

Secretary Thomas Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Ambassador Demetrios Marantis
Acting United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Ambassador Marantis:

American agriculture has made significant advancements in the last 100 years. We have seen vast improvements in how farmers grow crops, raise livestock, manage risk, and conduct their operations. American farmers are constantly looking for new tools to maximize efficiencies and productivity. Biotechnology has been one of these tools. Biotechnology helps farmers better manage droughts, pests, and weeds with fewer resources. Biotechnology provides a major boost to American farmers that face an increasingly competitive international market. Biotechnology has also helped feed a growing world population with abundant, nutrient rich crops.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that as much as 90 percent of commodity crop acres utilize seeds improved through modern biotechnology. Trade disruptions caused by barriers to biotechnology derived crops hurt both American farmers and the international customers they serve. Regulatory asynchrony, zero tolerance policies, and re-registration requirements are among the most prevalent and costly regulatory hurdles.

We know and appreciate how both of you and your offices have given priority to these international regulatory challenges, and work extensively with our trading partners to find long term solutions. For instance, USDA has been engaged in efforts to launch a pilot project with China which aims to address, bilaterally, some asynchrony issues. We also understand that the U.S. government is engaging trading partners in multilateral efforts to discuss how to best address other critical issues, including unintended low-level presence.

Given the widespread adoption of biotechnology by American farmers, it is imperative you further raise the priority of these regulatory issues in discussions with our trading partners, emphasizing the importance of facilitating robust international trade. We appreciate your attention to this important matter, and we look forward to working with you to address these important and complex issues.



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