

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 26, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to you today to express my concern that your administration is not making agricultural trade a priority. Two positions that are essential to agriculture trade have been left vacant and there is no indication on when they will be filled. I urge you to appoint qualified individuals to the position of Chief Agricultural Negotiator at the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) and the role of Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Agriculture is essential to the livelihood of 86,000 family farmers in Iowa and Americans rely on export markets to sell our abundance of food. Appointing individuals to these two positions will allow the U.S. to expand market access and strengthen our agriculture community.

At a recent Senate Finance Committee hearing, members were able to hear from a panel of experts about the implementation of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) and receive an assessment of its effectiveness. The committee heard of two ongoing issues that are occurring under the trade agreement. While the USMCA resulted in new access for the United States dairy industry, the Canadian government continues to manipulate dairy tariff rate quotas. In addition to Canadian dairy market access, Mexico hasn't approved a new biotech trait since May of 2018 and now has made moves to phase out GMO corn for human consumption. USCMA was intended to bring us closer together and increase future innovations, but Mexico seems to be going backward on this policy. To advance our efforts, we need a Chief Agricultural Negotiator at USTR.

Additionally, the role of Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs at the USDA remains vacant. The Under Secretary plays a vital role in advancing American farmers' interests in the international marketplace. As farmers face many uncertainties relating to weather and tax policy, I hope your administration moves quickly to soothe concerns and strengthen foreign market access. As USDA data show, nearly 20 percent of agricultural products are exported and every \$1 billion in agricultural exports support 8,000 American jobs¹. These exports are crucial in maintaining jobs and providing resilience as we recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Appointing a qualified individual to this position would allow for the U.S. to have a Senate confirmed Under Secretary that can lead trade missions and attend trade shows on behalf of U.S. producers.

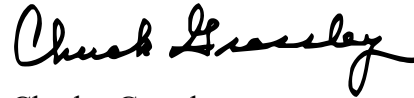
This past year the United States has seen record exports to China as the Trump administration made significant strides in the China Phase One Agreement, which required structural reforms and total exports of U.S. agricultural products to China to be \$80 billion. While I am encouraged

1. <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2017/05/11/secretary-perdue-announces-creation-undersecretary-trade>

by the current agricultural export figures, we need officials in place that can focus on the long-term stability of the relationship. The Trump administration also announced the intention to initiate trade agreement negotiations with the Republic of Kenya and the United Kingdom. As I've long said, agriculture is the locomotive that brings along manufactured goods and services. For the locomotive to have full force, qualified officials are needed who have the full faith of the President to negotiate on behalf of the American people.

Every day that passes without qualified leadership in these positions means the United States is playing without a full team against our competitors. Agriculture trade issues will continue to matriculate and these two positions will have a portfolio that impacts every farmer and producer in the country. It is critical to nominate a Chief Agricultural Negotiator and an Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs to promote American agricultural products abroad. I look forward to hearing what plans your Administration has to nominate individuals to these positions and to having the opportunity to review their qualifications when their nominations are received in the Senate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles Grassley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles Grassley
U.S. Senator

Cc: Secretary Thomas Vilsack
Ambassador Katherine Tai