

September 18, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer,

As former Secretaries of Agriculture, we recognize how important agricultural trade is to the U.S. economy and rural America. We know from experience that improved market access creates significant benefits to U.S. farmers and ranchers.

We believe that the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) will benefit American agriculture and related industries. With Canada and Mexico being the first and second largest export markets for U.S. agricultural products, we believe USMCA makes positive improvements to one of our most critical trade deals. Currently, NAFTA supports more than 900,000 jobs in the U.S. food and agriculture sector and has amplified agricultural exports to our North American neighbors to \$40 billion this past year. Before NAFTA went into effect in 1994, we were exporting only \$9 billion worth of agricultural products to Canada and Mexico. The International Trade Commission's recent economic analysis concluded that USMCA would benefit our agriculture sector and would deliver an additional \$2.2 billion in U.S. economic activity.

Trade is extremely vital to the livelihood of American farmers and the U.S. food industry. U.S. farm production exceeds domestic demand by 25 percent. In addition, agricultural exports account for 20 percent of farm income and support more than 1 million jobs. By increasing agricultural exports, this will generate more farm production, which is a major engine of U.S. economic growth. The food and agriculture industry is worth \$1 trillion, which is 5 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product. With farmers facing one of the lowest net farm incomes in the last decade, USMCA would create enhanced export opportunities and help fully capitalize on increased global demand for food products. Furthermore, USMCA would significantly boost farm incomes and create jobs both on and off the farm in rural communities.

We need a strong and reliable trade deal with our top two customers for U.S. agriculture products. USMCA will provide certainty in the North American market for the U.S. farm sector and rural economy. We strongly support ratification of USMCA.

Sincerely,

Secretary Tom Vilsack (2009-2017)

Secretary Ed Schafer (2008-2009)

Secretary Mike Johanns (2005–2007)

Secretary Dan Glickman (1995–2001)

Secretary John R. Block (1981–1986)

Secretary Ann Veneman (2001–2005)

Secretary Mike Espy (1993–1994)