

The Honorable Katherine Tai
U.S. Trade Representative
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative
600 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20508

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

November 19, 2021

Dear Ambassador Tai and Secretary Vilsack:

The undersigned organizations are writing to you to express our keen interest in the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) of the World Trade Organization (WTO). We are pleased to see recent statements from Ambassador Tai regarding the Administration's desire to engage comprehensively and boldly at the WTO, and we hope that MC12 provides an opportunity for the United States to take a significant step towards achieving its policy goals and working to reduce agricultural protectionism.

As an efficient, competitive sector of the U.S. economy, American agriculture benefits greatly from trade agreements and strong, enforceable trade rules. As we indicated in a July 23 letter to Ambassador Tai and Secretary Vilsack signed by many of the same organizations, the WTO has served the interests of U.S. farmers and ranchers particularly well. We also recognized in that letter the need to reform the institution, update the rules, and achieve further multilateral market access liberalization. We offered what we hope is useful input on specific issues under discussion. We also underscored the importance of reforming and restoring the binding dispute settlement system and dealing appropriately with urgent issues such as climate change and sustainability.

We look forward to working with you in pursuit of these objectives, and we hope that the MC12 outcome will represent significant progress. However, we understand that setting the proper direction for future talks will not be easy. One significant obstacle is the legacy issues that have become so prominent on the WTO agriculture agenda in the run-up to MC12 – especially the proposals related to public stockholding (PSH) and the special safeguard mechanism (SSM). These proposals are remnants of a negotiation that is now decades old, and each represents a significant step in the wrong direction. The PSH proposal would significantly weaken disciplines on domestic subsidies, while the SSM proposal would seriously impair access to markets for U.S. exports in developing countries. Adoption of either proposal would point the reform process in the wrong direction and doom future negotiations to failure.

Rather than accepting efforts to undermine current obligations and existing concessions, we urge you to use MC12 to clean the negotiating slate and launch talks on agriculture post-MC12 that are balanced and comprehensive, including on market access, and that address the real issues affecting agricultural production and trade in today's world. Only this type of negotiation can yield results that serve the interests of U.S. farmers and ranchers.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation
American Peanut Council
American Seed Trade Association
American Soybean Association
Corn Refiners Association
CropLife America
Idaho Potato Commission
International Dairy Foods Association
National Association of Egg Farmers
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Chicken Council
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Sorghum Producers
North American Meat Institute
Pet Food Institute
Sweetener Users Association
U.S. Apple Association
U.S. Dairy Export Council
U.S. Grains Council
U.S. Soybean Export Council
U.S. Wheat Associates
United Phosphorus Limited
USA Poultry & Egg Export Council
USA Rice

cc: Mr. Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor