

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Ambassador Tai:

As members of the House Agriculture Committee, we write to express our appreciation for your efforts to enforce our trade agreements and to resolve agricultural trade barriers. We noted that among its top priorities, the Biden Administration's Trade Policy Agenda emphasized expanding export markets for farmers and ranchers, fighting climate change, and enforcing the rules. We support these priorities and are concerned that the continued non-tariff trade barriers that trading partners impose on agricultural biotechnology products undercut those parts of the agenda.

As we press forward collectively to confront the existential, global threats of climate change and food and nutritional insecurity, it is essential that farmers have as many tools as possible. Biotechnology is one important tool that can facilitate sustainable solutions in agriculture and help combat climate change. Biotechnology crops enable agricultural practices—such as no-till farming—which can help sequester carbon, reducing greenhouse gases.

When trading partners erect non-tariff barriers to these technologies, their actions have a chilling effect on global adoption and commercialization of new technologies. As a result, farmers at home and abroad are forced to choose between innovative technologies or access to foreign markets. China and Mexico are two nations that are failing to comply with their commitments to science-based, and timely regulatory approval processes.

China has long subjected agricultural biotechnology products to import approval process delays. Under the U.S.-China Phase One agreement, China committed to predictable and consistent average timelines for regulating biotechnology products for import and agreed not to request information unnecessary for assessing the safety of a product for its intended use. However, nearly a year and a half into the two-year agreement, timelines for product approvals for import still average more than seven years. We encourage you to hold China accountable to this Phase-One commitment so that American farmers maintain access to these innovative production tools.

Despite committing to enhanced biotechnology measures and sanitary and phytosanitary standards in the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), Mexico has demonstrated a troubling reversal in its treatment of U.S. biotechnology products. Mexico's regulatory authority has not issued a biotechnology approval in over three years. In addition, the Government of Mexico published a decree on December 31, 2020, intending to ban the use of biotechnology corn by 2024. As a result, US farmers are at risk of losing access to a critical market should they choose to use biotechnology tools. We appreciate your willingness to raise Mexico's delays in agricultural biotechnology product import approvals during your bilateral engagements and ask that you raise concerns related to the decree as well. If dialogue does not resolve these issues, we encourage you to leverage a range of enforcement tools at your disposal to enforce the USMCA.

We stand with you as you confront these trade barriers and impress upon our partners the value of biotechnology as a tool that can benefit climate smart agricultural production, food security, and society. Please let us know how Congress can support you in your efforts to achieve a fairer playing field and to ensure that an important climate tool is not unnecessarily restricted.

Sincerely,

Chairman David Scott

Rep. Jim Costa

Rep. Stacey Plaskett

Rep. Angie Craig

Rep. Jimmy Panetta

Rep. Cindy Axne

Rep. Cheri Bustos

Rep. Abigail D. Spanberger