

Open Letter From U.S. Producers, Processors And Exporters Of Food and Agricultural Products On West Coast Ports Slowdown

The 92 undersigned food, agricultural and allied groups express their deep disappointment in the failure to resolve an ongoing labor dispute that has resulted in a severe slowdown of terminal activity at five west coast ports. This regrettable situation is having a severe impact on our ability to export agricultural and food products to many of our main export markets. Inevitably, these overseas customers will look to other sources for their supply of these goods. Similar to what we encountered after ill-advised export embargoes in the past, once lost, a foreign customer can be difficult to recapture. Additionally, the dispute is affecting imports from counter-seasonal production areas important for serving U.S. consumers.

A more immediate problem, however, is the effect the drastic reduction in containers being loaded is having on perishable commodities. Those goods are spoiling and being destroyed before they can be shipped or are being diverted to the domestic market at severe discounts. This represents an unconscionable waste of food products and a serious loss in revenue for U.S. producers.

The United States is the largest exporter of food and agricultural commodities in the world. Our sectors, as much as any in the economy, have taken full advantage of trade agreements negotiated over the past two decades to provide farmers, ranchers and other American businesses new opportunities for their output. Exports of agricultural products have grown from \$46 million in 1994 to \$144 billion in 2013 (the last full year for which data are available), and much of that growth has been to Asian markets, which are most directly affected by the ports slowdown.

The increase in food and agriculture products exported and imported has been extremely beneficial to the terminals and to the thousands of workers that handle shipments. The apparent indifference by parties in the dispute to the impact the slowdown is having on our sectors is disturbing.

We urge the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) to take into account the impact this dispute is having on many of their fellow Americans and to resolve their differences as quickly as possible. We also urge the federal government to consider all available remedies to bring this dispute to a rapid end. The interests and welfare of more than just the union and the terminals are at stake.

Agribusiness Council of Indiana

Agriculture Transportation Coalition (AgTC)

Almond Hullers & Processors Association

American Apparel & Footwear Association

American Farm Bureau Federation

American Feed Industry Association

American Frozen Food Institute
American Malting Barley Association, Inc.
American Potato Trade Alliance
American Pulse Association
American Seed Trade Association
American Soybean Association
Association of American Railroads
Association of California Egg Farmers
Basic American Foods
CALAMCO
California Cherry Export Association
California Dried Plum Board
California Farm Bureau
California Fresh Fruit Association
California Grain and Feed Association
California League of Food Processors
California Pear Growers
California Rice Commission
California Seed Association
California Walnut Commission
California Warehouse Association
Corn Refiners Association
CropLife America
Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S.
Farmers' Rice Cooperative
Furniture Shippers Association
Grocery Manufacturers Association
Idaho Potato Commission
Idahoan Foods
International Dairy Foods Association

J.R. Simplot Company
Juice Products Association
Michigan Agri-Business Association
Michigan Bean Shippers
Midwest Food Processors Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Chicken Council
National Confectioners Association
National Corn Growers Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Fisheries Institute
National Grain and Feed Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
National Renderers Association
National Sorghum Producers
National Sunflower Association
National Turkey Federation
Naturipe Farms
North American Blueberry Council
North American Equipment Dealers Association
North American Export Grain Association (NAEGA)
North American Meat Institute
Northharvest Bean Growers Association
Northwest Horticultural Council
Ohio AgriBusiness Association

Oregon Potato Commission
Pacific Egg and Poultry Association
Pet Food Institute
Produce Marketing Association
Promotional Products Association International (PPAI)
Sunmaid Growers of California
Sunsweet Growers Inc.
The Fertilizer Institute
U.S. Apple Association
U.S. Apple Export Council
U.S. Dairy Export Council
U.S. Grains Council
U.S. Hide, Skin and Leather Association
U.S. Livestock Genetics Export, Inc.
U.S. Soybean Export Council
U.S. Wheat Associates
United Fresh Produce Association
United States Meat Export Federation
US Canola Association
US Dry Bean Council
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
USA Poultry & Egg Export Council
USA Rice Federation
Washington State Potato Commission
Western Growers Association
Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association