

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

[[DATE]]

The Honorable Katherine Tai  
United States Trade Representative  
600 17th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20006

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Ambassador Tai and Secretary Vilsack:

We write to urge the Administration to make agriculture a priority in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (Framework) as the Administration works to intensify economic engagement with countries in the Indo-Pacific region. This dynamic region provides opportunities for our agricultural producers whose exports will be highly valued by growing economies. Prioritizing agriculture in Framework discussions will benefit both domestic farmers and ranchers and consumers here and abroad.

With U.S. agricultural production outpacing domestic demand for many commodities, American farmers and agribusinesses rely on global markets to sustain prices and revenues. As a result, agricultural exports have grown steadily over the last few decades, reaching over \$177 billion in 2021, up from \$46.1 billion in 1994.<sup>1</sup> Increasing agriculture U.S. exports not only creates jobs in the U.S., but also strengthens global sustainability efforts by enabling commodities produced under strict environmental and labor standards to meet a significant share of global demand.

America's farmers and ranchers lead the world in efficient and sustainable production. For example, one kilogram of California almonds typically results in less than one kilogram of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and current almond farming practices are offsetting roughly 50 percent of these emissions.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, no other country is as greenhouse gas efficient in milk production as the United States, where producers were able to reduce the GHG emissions for producing a gallon of milk by almost 20 percent from 2007 to 2017.<sup>3</sup> Due to advancements in cattle nutrition, and stewardship practices by producers, the U.S. is a global leader in sustainable beef production. In fact, no other country is as efficient as the U.S., producing 18 percent of the global beef supply with only six percent of the world's herd. Compared to 1977, today's ranchers produce the same amount of beef with 33 percent fewer cattle.<sup>4</sup> Stable domestic forest acreage and innovative

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2022/02/08/american-agricultural-exports-shattered-records-2021>

<sup>2</sup> <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jiec.12333>

<sup>3</sup> <https://dairysustainabilityframework.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Climate-Change-and-the-Global-Dairy-Cattle-Sector.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com/raising-beef/beef-sustainability#:~:text=U.S.%20AS%20A%20WORLD%20LEADER%20IN%20EFFICIENCY%20%26%20PRODUCTION&text=If%20the%20rest%20of%20the,6%25%20of%20the%20world's%20cattle.>

farming practices used by U.S. soybean farmers – including the use of agricultural biotechnology – have directly led to U.S. soy having the lowest global carbon footprint.<sup>5</sup> More than 80 percent of California wine is made in a Certified California Sustainable Winery, which includes 37 winery prerequisites related to climate, water and energy conservation and greenhouse gas emission reduction.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, U.S. produce growers export high quality, nutritious fruits and vegetables planted and harvested with strong environmental and labor protections. Our nation's sustainability prowess in the global market is undeniable, but these exports unfortunately continue to face major tariff and non-tariff barriers to entry to many nations in the region.

The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework offers an excellent opportunity to address these barriers to U.S. agricultural exports throughout the region. We understand that the Framework will work to set standards in several areas, and we urge the inclusion of high standard Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, including certification and inspection rules. Coordination with our trading partners on such regulations and measures will help facilitate trade and protect consumers.

In addition, we strongly support efforts to create mutually agreed-upon regulatory reforms, guidelines or exchanges of letters that could improve the ability of U.S. farmers and food manufacturers to reliably and easily export to key markets throughout the Indo-Pacific region. For example, timely results that remove or streamline certification or registration requirements by recognizing the strength of the U.S. food safety and plant and animal health oversight systems could deliver meaningful benefits for the millions of Americans working in the food and agriculture sector.

The Framework should also include efforts to reduce tariffs on U.S. agricultural exports to improve our competitiveness in the region. While we understand the Framework will not initially be a comprehensive trade agreement that deals broadly with tariffs, this should not preclude efforts to increase agricultural market access by reducing our trading partners' tariffs, both in the interest of U.S. exporters and our trading partners' interest in enhancing their access to high quality, affordable agricultural products. This was precisely the outcome in 2020 and 2021 when the United States successfully sought to reduce Vietnamese Most Favored Nation tariffs on various agricultural products. The Administration should seek to pursue and build upon this type of success in the context of the Framework.

With global food demand set to double by 2050, there is no one better equipped to lead the charge of feeding a hungry world than American producers, and enhanced access to these markets will be vital in achieving that goal. We look forward to working closely with you as you develop and pursue U.S. negotiating positions in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework and other areas of international economic engagement.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://ussec.org/resources/u-s-soy-a-better-environmental-footprint/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.sustainablewinegrowing.org/amass/library/30/docs/1-CSWA.AnnualReport2020.pdf>

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