

Trade Issues and Priorities for the U.S. Seed Industry

About ASTA: Founded in 1883, the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA) represents over 700 companies involved in plant breeding, seed production, and related industries in North America. ASTA's broad and diverse membership researches, develops, produces and distributes all varieties of seeds – including grasses, forages, flowers, vegetables, row crops, and cereals.

The U.S. is the largest market for seed in the world and the largest global exporter of seed, with 2019 seed exports totaling over \$1.7 billion. Strong free trade agreements and other mechanisms to uphold science-based standards and to challenge non-tariff trade barriers will ensure that the U.S. seed industry can competitively export seed.

Key Priorities:

Maintain U.S. leadership in plant breeding: Innovation is fundamental to the U.S. seed sector. The U.S. plant breeding and seed production sector is among the most advanced in the world when it comes to research and development to serve global agriculture. This enables the industry to continuously integrate new, sophisticated breeding methods to develop new plant varieties, not only for the U.S. marketplace, but also for an ever-growing number of countries worldwide.

U.S. agriculture has been successful thanks to a long-standing public and private commitment to science and research that brings new discoveries to farmers and consumers. The seed industry plays an active role in this partnership, and considering the challenges of climate change and global food security, sees an opportunity and pressing need to accelerate improvement in the years ahead to support sustainable agriculture. Public policy and trade policy must foster and not unnecessarily hinder continuing innovation in the United States and globally.

Encourage adoption of harmonized global standards: Seed movement globally relies on establishing appropriate science and risk-based standards for phytosanitary measures, intellectual property rights, crop protection, breeding techniques, and regulatory frameworks. ASTA encourages the creation and adoption of global standards and influences their development to ensure the needs and concerns of ASTA members are considered. ASTA recommends including these standards from international conventions, such as the International Union for the Protection of New Plant Varieties 1991 Act (UPOV 91) and the International Plant Protection Convention's Standard on the International Movement of Seed (ISPM 38), in bilateral and regional free trade agreements where possible.

New Free Trade Agreements and Continuation of Preference Programs: ASTA supports free trade agreements as an important mechanism to encourage countries to adopt and enforce global standards and as a tool to promote ongoing dialogue. The creation of the Agriculture Biotechnology Working Group under the US-Mexico-Canada agreement is an example of this. Priorities include renewal of Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) legislation in Congress in order to initiate new trade agreements, and to renegotiate others such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

ASTA encourages the retroactive renewal of preference programs such as the Generalized System of Preferences program and Miscellaneous Tariff Bill which provide important duty relief to seed imports from critical seed production markets. ASTA supports maintaining the China Phase One Agreement's structural reform commitments relating to the regulation of agricultural biotechnology.

Removal of Section 301 Tariffs: Many of ASTA's vegetable and flower member companies use China for highly specialized and labor-intensive seed multiplication and production. This seed is then imported into the U.S. for sale to U.S. farmers and gardeners. Vegetable and flower seeds are included in the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative's Section 301 List 3 and face 25% tariffs when imported into the U.S. from China. The tariffs have tremendous impact on our member companies' ability to provide affordable, quality seed to their customers.

Engagement with USDA: ASTA has been a cooperator to the USDA Foreign Market Development (FMD) program since 1963 and the Market Access Program (MAP) since 1994. These grant programs are matched with private sector in-kind contributions to enhance market access for the U.S. seed industry and to promote favorable and harmonized policies globally. ASTA works closely with USDA Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) Posts around the world, as well as with APHIS, the U.S. Plant Variety Protection Office, and FAS in Washington, DC.

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