



**U.S. Dairy
Export Council.**

Ingredients | Products | Global Markets



The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The nine-month-old contract dispute between West Coast dockworkers and port operators is a growing economic calamity that necessitates White House intervention.

As a result of the dispute, West Coast ports have been operating at less than 50 percent of their normal volumes and recently the threat of total stoppage has become a reality. That is crippling critically important U.S. maritime exports, including agriculture products. Financially, the losses are likely to reach billions of dollars. And that doesn't count losses in jobs, export markets and income for family farms and businesses across the country.

U.S. dairy products are among the many time-sensitive goods caught up in this congestion. Asia is our number one overall destination, and our fastest growing -- helping our exports grow 6% for a fifth straight record year. Yet, the port slowdown has weakened the business cycle, and foreign buyers have become severely concerned about our reliability.

Our competition for overseas customers is intense, and any threat to a reliable supply line forces them to look quickly at other ways to fill their needs. Once gone, these customers don't necessarily come back. The United States can grow and raise the best farm products in the world. But, if we can't deliver them dependably and affordably, the customers will go elsewhere.

The economic value of increased American dairy, food and agricultural exports has been extremely beneficial to the terminals and to the thousands of dockworkers who handle the shipments. Their inability to settle their contract dispute is causing tremendous collateral damage, to say the least.

Working with a number of coalitions, our organizations have urged the International Longshore and Warehouse Union and the Pacific Maritime Association to resolve their differences as quickly as possible. However, given that there has not been a solution despite current involvement from the Department of Labor, we urge you, Mr. President, to insist the parties involved in the dispute to accept the outcome of mediation.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Suber
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