

December 18, 2013

Ambassador Michael Froman
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

We are writing to express our concern with the state of play of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations. Each of our organizations has expressed in the past strong support for a comprehensive, high-standard TPP agreement. However, we have watched with growing alarm the unwillingness of Japanese negotiators to present a comprehensive offer on agricultural products, and we now believe this situation is threatening to undermine the negotiations.

In previous negotiations, the United States has demanded and received from developing country trading partners full and comprehensive liberalization in the agricultural sector. Yet in the TPP negotiations, Japan – a rich, developed country – is demanding special treatment for its agricultural sector. We consider an agreement that includes such special treatment for Japan to be unacceptable.

If Japan is allowed to claim exceptions for sensitive products, other TPP partners will inevitably demand the right to do the same. This could quickly lead to the unraveling of the agreement, as other parties pull their offers on sensitive products, or their concessions on sensitive issues, off the table.

However, even if it were possible to prevent the agreement among current parties from unraveling, granting exceptions to Japan, or any other party, would have far-reaching consequences. As the TPP expands to include other countries in the Asia-Pacific region, we can expect other countries with sensitivities in the agricultural sector, such as China, to make similar demands. Moreover, a weak agreement with Japan would inevitably have significant negative implications for our ability to reach an acceptable agreement with the EU in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership negotiations.

U.S. agriculture has always supported trade agreements and Trade Promotion Authority as the most effective means of eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers and expanding global trade. However, the market access package you negotiate with Japan has the potential to impact billions in future exports and hundreds of thousands of jobs.

In conclusion, TPP must include comprehensive liberalization in the agricultural sector by all participating countries. If Japan continues to insist on unreasonable protections to a range of agricultural categories, we ask you to consider concluding TPP without Japan. It will ultimately be difficult for our organizations to support a TPP agreement with Japan that does not include comprehensive trade liberalization for all agricultural sectors.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation
American Meat Institute
American Soybean Association
International Dairy Foods Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Chicken Council

National Corn Growers Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Turkey Federation
North American Meat Association
U.S. Dairy Export Council
U.S. Grains Council
U.S. Wheat Associates
USA Rice Federation

cc: Secretary Tom Vilsack, U.S. Department of Agriculture