

January 12, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President-Elect
Wilmington, DE

Dear President-Elect Biden,

The undersigned specialty crop organizations congratulate you on your election and we look forward to working closely with your Administration on effective policy and actions that support our nation's farmers.

Together, our organizations represent a sizeable and diverse population of American farmers across the country who grow our nation's fresh fruits, vegetables, and tree nuts. Every day they strive to put safe, nutritious foods on the table of consumers here and abroad, support their communities through job creation, and be good stewards of the natural resources they depend on. For such a vital sector in agriculture, the challenges our members face every day are substantial and numerous.

For the purposes of this letter, we focus on the international trade policy arena where we have shared concerns. As you begin building your team and crafting your four-year agenda, we look forward to working with you to address the following important issues and priorities for our sector that should be considerations for your Administration.

Ensure agricultural trade policy objectives remain robust. It is wholly understandable that domestic matters will, and should, be take priority in the country's ongoing fight against the pandemic. Nevertheless, the U.S. agricultural industry is integral to the global food supply and develops foreign markets for success – markets that have been significantly disrupted in recent years. In fact, the impact has reverberated into markets at home as domestic-facing farmers grapple with export-bound supplies staying put and driving down prices. While our farmers continue to make necessary adaptations to stay competitive, there is still much to be done to both regain lost markets and claim new ones. We urge your Administration to not move the agricultural trade portfolio to the back burner and leave farmers to fall even further behind.

Resume negotiations with trade partners to resolve retaliatory tariffs. China, India, and the European Union continue to impose hefty retaliatory tariffs on several major exported produce categories as a consequence of non-agricultural trade disputes. Year over year, these tariffs have become a financial burden that drags down the competitiveness of these products and renders hard-won market access illusory. We urge your Administration to be mindful of the negative impact of these tariffs on our nation's farmers and consider efforts that will bring relief as soon as possible.

Resume negotiations with trade partners to achieve new or updated trade agreements. Our industry continues to see substantial opportunity to promote U.S. products to new consumers around the world. There is foundation to build off efforts in China, Japan, Southeast Asia, and the United Kingdom, to name a few. We urge your Administration to resume talks and advocate for fair and equitable market access for our products. Such access will be achievable not only through

tariff elimination or reduction, but also progress on non-tariff trade barriers like sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) restrictions, testing and protocols, which have become increasingly and unjustly utilized to restrict American import access. For many fruits, vegetables and tree nuts these types of barriers are just as problematic as tariffs and are often more complex and difficult to resolve without concerted efforts. Even short delays in entry result in decay or spoilage, reducing value and leaving American companies with no opportunity to reshipe to another country. We encourage your Administration to engage with trade partners to ensure that new or existing commitments to free and fair market access are adhered.

Conduct effective trade enforcement and ensure trade partners are abiding by international laws and agreements. It cannot be denied that the long-standing international trade policies and principles have faced a significant reckoning in recent years. One result has been renewed attention and utilization of U.S. trade review processes and enforcement tools. Looking ahead, we anticipate the trade landscape will continue to be volatile and the U.S. government, in turn, will need to remain vigilant in enforcing free and fair trade to the betterment of our national interests. Should trade cases continue to arise, we urge your Administration to be judicious and seek sensible resolutions for our domestic growers and consumers.

Reinforce the importance of defending science and proper risk assessments. There is an inherent civic responsibility to ensure safe food is traded and consumed, but foreign countries are increasingly utilizing unjustifiable or scientifically dubious SPS measures to erect trade barriers. The European Union has long pursued measures based on hazard rather than risk and allowed such misguided perceptions to drive agricultural policy. More troubling, we are witnessing more markets adopt similarly restrictive measures, such as Southeast Asia and Canada. We urge the Administration to work with allies to aggressively push back against this dangerous precedent and reaffirm the importance of scientifically sound trade measures through a commitment to global organizations such as Codex Alimentarius.

Strengthen industry competitiveness through federal programs and policy. Given a fair shot, we are confident that our farm products can compete with the best. However, domestic operational costs and regulation continue to rise. This not only hurts our price competitiveness in the global marketplace, but also here at home as there is increasing competition with foreign imports for domestic shelf space. We urge your Administration to implement strong programs and policies that will support our farmer's competitiveness. This includes those that directly assist with market development and promotion abroad, as well as spur innovation and research that would ultimately improve growing operations and cut costs of labor, land, and other expensive inputs here at home.

Appoint and hire staff with strong knowledge of, and experience with, the fresh produce industry. The fresh fruit, vegetable, and tree nut sector is a substantial segment of the U.S. agricultural industry, with nearly ten million acres nationwide and over \$75 billion in market value. However, U.S. agricultural policy has traditionally focused on bulk commodities with little understanding of our sector's diverse complexities, resulting in programs or actions that are insufficient or incompatible with our farmers. With domestic and foreign consumers becoming more health and nutrition conscientious than ever, this sector will only grow in size, value, and importance. As such, it will be crucial for your agriculture and trade teams to have personnel who

understand the unique characteristics and challenges of our diverse industry and can help craft effective solutions.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input as you develop your priorities. Our industry strives to feed consumers at home and abroad with safe, healthy and delicious fresh fruits, vegetables and tree nuts, and we look forward to working with your Administration to create long term success for our farmers and workers by expanding their ability to compete on the world stage. In the coming months, we hope to be able to set up a time for our organizations to connect with your transition team and future trade staff to further discuss these priorities.

Sincerely,

California Apple Commission
California Avocado Commission
California Blueberry Commission
California Blueberry Association
California Citrus Mutual
California Farm Bureau
California Fresh Fruit Association
California Table Grape Commission
California Walnut Commission
Olive Growers Council of California
National Pecan Federation
Northwest Horticultural Council
Texas International Produce Association
Western Growers