

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski, Ranking Member Shelby, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey,

The undersigned organizations and companies represent a sizable portion of the \$140 billion in annual U.S. agricultural exports. We are writing to express our deep concern over the current and future funding of the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR). The agriculture community at large depends heavily on opening markets and enforcing current trade agreements. Today, insufficient funding jeopardizes USTR's mission to safeguard U.S. exports and carry out trade negotiations necessary to keep the United States competitive in world markets.

While USTR is one of the smallest agencies of the federal government, it is one of the most important to our economic growth. We urge you to take into account the critical importance of exports to the nation's current economic recovery by funding USTR at levels that will allow it to fulfill its duties in the trade arena. The growth in exports since the recession has supported over 1.3 million additional jobs and accounted for more than one-third of U.S. GDP growth. In agriculture alone, the \$51 billion in additional exports since 1997 have supported about 347,000 new jobs both on and off the farm.

Expanding and defending exports is not a part-time job and cannot be accomplished if USTR's ability to conduct trade negotiations and to initiate enforcement actions is compromised by a lack of funding. Financial constraints are already forcing USTR to make difficult decisions every day about which unfair trade barriers can be tackled and, unfortunately, which must be tolerated.

USTR's annual reports on foreign trade measures provide ample evidence of the hundreds of problems we face around the world and, yet, staffing and funding limits prevent USTR from pursuing more than just a handful each year. The inability to challenge such barriers has a real effect on whether or not our nation is able to take full advantage of the benefits, in the form of jobs and growth, promised by trade agreements.

In short, trade does matter to our economy and a fully funded trade agency is essential to maintaining that important engine of growth.

Sincerely,