

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 14, 2022

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C.

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write today out of deep concern for the ongoing dispute regarding U.S. fresh potato access to Mexico. It appears that Mexico is continuing to delay restoring this access that was blocked due to legal proceedings initiated by the Mexican potato industry over seven years ago. The cost of this inaction is estimated to be \$150 million to U.S. growers on an annual basis. We request that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) continue to work with their counterparts in Mexico to ensure that the trade deal is honored by expeditiously reinstating access for U.S. fresh potatoes and to express that any Mexican request for enhanced agricultural access to the U.S. should not be granted until this access is restored.

In December of 2021, Mexican officials toured U.S. potato operations in Colorado as the final step in restoring this access. That site visit came after the Mexican Supreme Court unanimously ruled in April 2021 against the Mexican potato industry's legal claims. At the conclusion of the visit, Mexico indicated their satisfaction to USDA and further stated that market access should be complete by early February 2022.

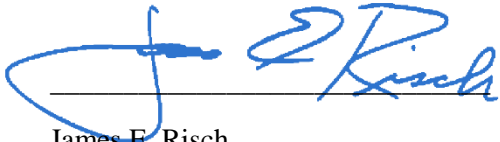
However, on Wednesday, February 16th, 2022, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) jointly announced with their Mexican counterparts, SENASICA, that fresh table stock potato access would be substantially delayed well into 2022. That statement was made due to Mexico's later demands for additional site visits in 2022 as a prerequisite to opening the market. Additionally, it was announced that processing potato access to Mexico would be arbitrarily limited to only two companies for 2022.

Neither of these requirements exist within the U.S.-Mexico work plan that was concluded at the end of last year. As you will recall, the process that the U.S. is supposed to be pursuing is one to restore, not establish, access for these potatoes. The U.S. had previously negotiated market access and was shipping potatoes to Mexico in 2014 until the Mexican industry filed suit in an effort to avoid competition with U.S. growers.

Given that Mexico appears to be continuing to avoid its responsibilities to restore this access, we request that APHIS explain its decision-making process to agree to these unscientific and inconsistent demands. Additionally, we are extremely concerned that APHIS came to this agreement with SENASICA without consulting the domestic industry and that this may be indicative of the process that USDA is undertaking to restore fresh access.

We respectfully request that USDA reconsider the statements announced at the end of February, as they are not stipulated in the work plan. The U.S. continues to honor our side of this trade deal, and it is imperative USDA ensure that Mexico do the same.

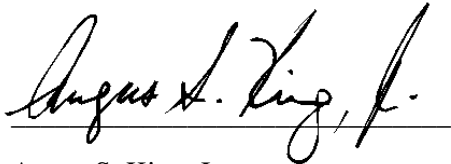
Sincerely,



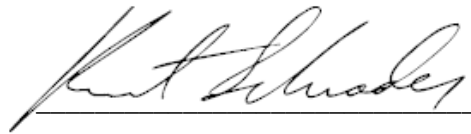
James E. Risch
United States Senator



Mike Simpson
Member of Congress



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress



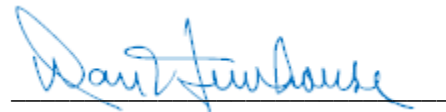
Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress



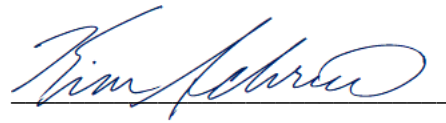
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



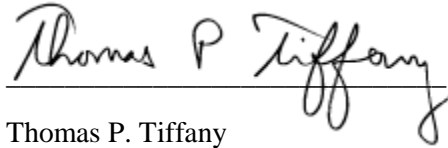
Mike Crapo
United States Senator



Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



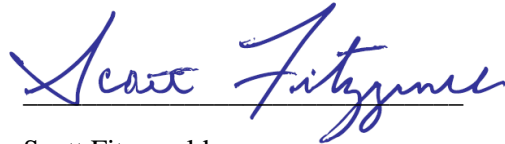
Tina Smith
United States Senator



Thomas P. Tiffany
Member of Congress



Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



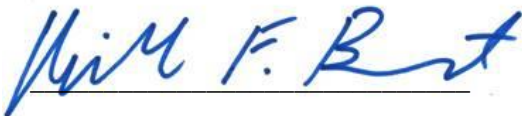
Scott Fitzgerald
Member of Congress



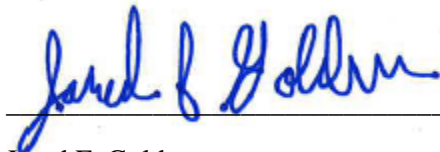
Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Lauren Boebert
Member of Congress



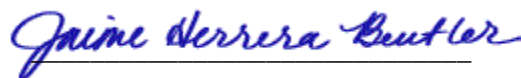
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Jared F. Golden
Member of Congress



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress



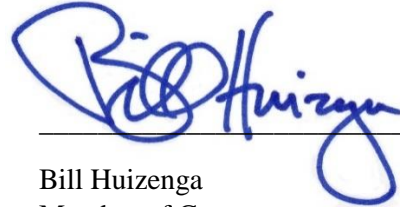
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Lisa C. McClain
Member of Congress



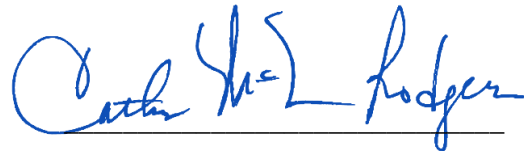
John Hoeven
United States Senator



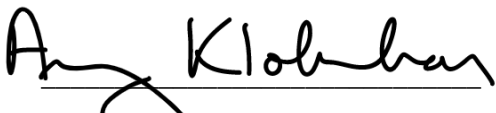
Bill Huizenga
Member of Congress



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



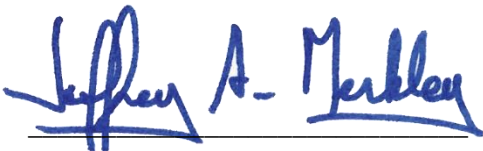
Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress



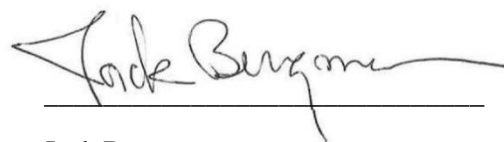
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Kelly Armstrong
Member of Congress



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Jack Bergman
Member of Congress



Glenn Grothman
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



Tom Emmer
Member of Congress



Elise Slotkin
Member of Congress