

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 13, 2018

COMMITTEES:
AGING
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,
AND FORESTRY
ARMED SERVICES
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC
WORKS
RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

I appreciate the administration's hard work to modernize our nation's trade agreements and hold China accountable. You and I have visited before regarding my concerns about the tariffs affecting Nebraska's agriculture exports. I write today to once again emphasize the importance of strong trade agreements and international markets to the hardworking agriculture producers of Nebraska.

Agriculture is the economic engine of Nebraska. In fact, one in four Nebraska jobs are tied to production agriculture and the industry contributes to 27 percent of Nebraska's total GDP. In recent years, farmers and ranchers have fallen on tough times with net farm income down by over 50 percent compared to five years ago. Agriculture producers are facing depressed commodity prices, tight margins, and high interest rates. This combination has led to anxiety throughout farm country. In many cases, trade agreements and foreign markets are the only options available to help producers navigate the current farm economy.

Farmers and ranchers are very concerned about the impact the retaliatory tariffs from our foreign trade partners will have on their livelihoods. In my home state, commodities impacted by these tariffs include soybeans, corn, beef, pork, wheat, and sorghum. Two out of every three rows of Nebraska soybeans are exported. In 2016, Nebraska's exports of soybeans and soybean products to China were valued at \$1.07 billion. Trade accounts for \$6.27 per bushel for Nebraska soybeans, illustrating the direct impact of trade on commodity prices. This summer has not been kind to Nebraska's crop producers. During the month of June, cash prices for Nebraska soybeans fell by 14 percent and corn prices fell by 11 percent. Farmers are extremely resilient, but they are worried about planning for the future under these market realities.

Free trade and foreign markets are important to the hardworking men and women that devote their lives to feed our nation and the world. They rely on international trade opportunities to sell their products around the globe and provide for their families.

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I respectfully request the administration work expeditiously to resolve the tariff issues impacting agricultural commodities while also working diligently with Ambassador Lighthizer and Secretary Perdue to continue opening new markets. Doing so will further demonstrate this administration's commitment to rural America and provide the certainty and predictability our farmers and ranchers need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Deb Fischer", is positioned above the printed name.

Deb Fischer
United States Senator

CC: USTR Ambassador Robert Lighthizer
CC: USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue