

September 5, 2025

The Honorable Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

RE: Importance of Maintaining USDA Trade Policy Functions in Washington, D.C.

Dear Secretary Rollins:

On behalf of the industries represented by our food and agriculture trade associations, which represent a broad cross-section of producers, suppliers, processors, distributors, and exporters, we write to respectfully express our support for maintaining USDA's core international trade policy functions—including those within the Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs (TFAA) and other relevant USDA staff—in Washington, D.C. As the Department evaluates potential changes to the current USDA structure outlined in the document Secretary Memorandum SM 1078-015, and guided by *Principle 2: Bring USDA Closer to Its Customers by Relocating Resources Outside of the National Capital Region* within that document, we offer the following remarks in the spirit of collaboration and with the shared goal of supporting the expansion of U.S. agricultural exports abroad and reducing the projected \$50 billion agricultural trade deficit.

We appreciate and support USDA's continued efforts to better serve American agriculture, including through the strategic location of certain resources to ensure the Department is operating most effectively and efficiently. To that end, we believe that USDA's trade policy and certain regulatory policy functions that are deeply connected with international partners are uniquely dependent on proximity to key decision-making federal agencies, foreign diplomatic embassies and visitors, international organizations, and industry trade policy staff—virtually all of whom are primarily located in the Washington, D.C. area.

USDA's trade professionals, particularly those within TFAA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) and U.S. Codex Office, but also some within other agencies such as the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS), and the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS), provide critical support in ensuring foreign market access through engagement in agriculture in international negotiations, trade agreement enforcement, and dispute resolution. These staff work closely with interagency partners and foreign governments to represent the interests of our sector. The co-location of those presently based in Washington enables real-time collaboration, swift policy coordination, and strategic alignment with U.S. trade objectives.

In addition, many of our organizations rely on USDA's presence in D.C. to help manage relationships with foreign embassies based in the capital as well as with visiting foreign officials traveling to D.C. These connections are vital to resolving market access issues and advancing agricultural priorities abroad. Without USDA's D.C.-based presence, each organization would be

required to independently manage these diplomatic relationships—a significant responsibility, particularly for smaller associations with limited staff and budgets.

In support of your objective to optimize the functions of USDA, we respectfully request that trade policy, market access, and enforcement functions – including the regulatory agency components that support this work – remain centralized in Washington, D.C., and continue to be fully staffed with experienced professionals who bring the technical knowledge and policy expertise required to navigate increasingly complex trade environments.

Preserving USDA’s trade infrastructure in Washington will ensure continued coordination with federal partners, foreign representatives, and the industry trade community, while also maintaining the strong foundation necessary to support U.S. agriculture’s global competitiveness.

Thank you for your leadership and for your continued support of American agriculture. Our organizations welcome the opportunity to provide additional input as USDA moves forward with this important reorganization effort and stand ready for continued collaboration.

Sincerely,

American Feed Industry Association
American Pistachio Growers
American Soybean Association
Animal Health Institute
California Citrus Mutual
California Fresh Fruit Association
California Prune Board
Corn Refiners Association
Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S.
Farm Credit Council
Food Export Association of the Midwest USA
Food Export USA–Northeast
Fresh Produce Association of the Americas
Global Cold Chain Alliance
Independent Bakers Association
Leather & Hide Council of America
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Confectioners Association
National Corn Growers Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Grain and Feed Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
North American Blueberry Council
North American Export Grain Association

North American Millers' Association
Northwest Horticultural Council
Pet Food Institute
Softwood Export Council
Southern U.S. Trade Association
Sweetener Users Association
The Hardwood Federation
U.S. Apple Association
U.S. Dairy Export Council
U.S. Meat Export Federation
USA Poultry & Egg Export Council
Washington State Fruit Commission