

July 30, 2020

The Honorable Robert Lighthizer
U.S. Trade Representative
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative
600 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20508

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer and Secretary Perdue:

Thank you for working with Congress on the modernized United States-Canada-Mexico Agreement (USMCA). USMCA includes important safeguards intended to protect products using certain common food names or labeled with traditional terms. Unfortunately, countries outside of North America exploit protections meant for valid geographical indications to limit competition and block imports. These trade barriers have a harmful effect on the entire agriculture and food value chain.

On behalf of the food and beverage manufacturers, producers, and exporters we represent, we write today to request that the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) establish as a core U.S. policy objective in all trade-related discussions the goal of securing concrete market access assurances regarding specific common food names and wine grape varietal designations or traditional terms, including those of importance to cheese, meat, wine, and other food producers across the United States.

We appreciate the important first step that USTR and USDA have made to defend common food names and tear down trade barriers that harm U.S. exports. Our competitors continue to employ trade negotiations around the world to prohibit American-made products from using common food names and wine grape varietal designations or traditional terms, such as bologna, parmesan, chateau, and feta, which have been in use for decades. Due to this continued practice by our competitors, we urge the administration to improve upon the template established in the USMCA negotiations and continue to prioritize market access and the ability of U.S. producers to use common food names in ongoing and future trade negotiations. We appreciate your leadership on this matter and look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

JOHN THUNE
U.S. Senator

DEBBIE STABENOW
U.S. Senator

Also signed by the following U.S. Senators:

Thom Tillis
Charles E. Grassley
Pat Roberts
John Barrasso, M.D.
Michael B. Enzi
Kevin Cramer
Jerry Moran
Joni K. Ernst
Mike Braun
Ben Sasse
Deb Fischer
Pat Toomey
Cory Gardner
M. Michael Rounds
John Boozman
John Hoeven
Joshua Hawley
Roger Wicker
Ron Johnson
Martha McSally
John Cornyn
David A. Perdue
Roy Blunt
Tom Cotton
Cindy Hyde-Smith
James M. Inhofe
Rob Portman
Tim Scott
Susan M. Collins

Tammy Baldwin
Ron Wyden
Patty Murray
Chris Murphy
Kirsten Gillibrand
Tom Carper
Kyrsten Sinema
Tim Kaine
Tina Smith
Sherrod Brown
Jeff Merkley
Robert P. Casey Jr.
Patrick Leahy
Chris Coons
Jeanne Shaheen
Richard Blumenthal
Amy Klobuchar
Dick Durbin
Elizabeth Warren
Mark R. Warner
Tammy Duckworth
Margaret Wood Hassan
Gary C. Peters
Chuck Schumer
Michael F. Bennet
Angus King
Benjamin L. Cardin
Maria Cantwell
Dianne Feinstein
Chris Van Hollen