



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES
COMMISSIONER NICOLE "NIKKI" FRIED

THE CAPITOL
April 5, 2019

The Honorable Robert Lighthizer
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer:

On behalf of the State of Florida and our agriculture industry, I write to raise serious concerns regarding the lack of remedies in the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) to address unfair seasonal produce import practices by Mexico. In the years since the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the dumping of fresh fruits and vegetables from Mexico into our domestic markets has increased exponentially resulting in growing losses for U.S. producers. These unfair and destructive trade practices have a disproportionate impact on Florida farmers, as Mexico's growing season parallels ours for produce including tomatoes, peppers, strawberries, watermelon, and blueberries, among others. Without enforceable remedies in place, these unfair practices will continue, further threatening Florida's farmers, agriculture industry, and economy.

Florida's \$132 billion agriculture industry is our second largest industry and the backbone of our economy. Across the state, 47,000 commercial farms provide two million jobs and help feed our families, communities, country, and the world – with Florida exporting \$4 billion in commodities to 164 countries. But here at home, our seasonal producers are struggling in the face of massive government subsidies for Mexican producers, significant wage differentials, and unfair pricing practices. Our farmers are used to competition, but Mexico's unfair advantages have kept Florida's producers from competing on a level playing field. This has resulted in billions of dollars in economic losses and job losses in the tens of thousands across the state.

Florida fruit and vegetable farmers cannot afford this trend continuing. Given the absence of remedies in the USMCA as written, I urge the Administration to take appropriate action to protect U.S. seasonal growers from unfair foreign imports and trade practices. I strongly support the *Domestic Produce Production Act* (S. 16 and H.R. 101) put forward by Sen. Marco Rubio and Reps. Vern Buchanan and Al Lawson, which has support of all 27 of Florida's representatives in the U.S. House and call on Congress to pass this legislation. I respectfully request the Administration enact the remedies outlined in this bipartisan legislation through existing trade authorities, providing assurances to U.S. seasonal growers ahead of the debate over the USMCA that they will not once again be left behind.

Thank you for your attention to this matter of critical importance to Florida's agriculture industry and communities. I look forward to working with you towards a solution that will put American farmers and families first.

Sincerely,

Nicole Fried
Commissioner of Agriculture

