

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 6, 2021

President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to urge you to take immediate, comprehensive action to address ongoing threats to American food security. In the interest of securing America's critical supply chains, including for domestically-sourced food, we hope that you will do what is necessary to ensure that America never has to rely on other nations in order to feed our own citizens.

While most agricultural producers across the nation are preparing for winter, Florida's fruit and vegetable growers are currently making plans to plant their crops to assume their annual role, along with other growers in the Southeast, as the only domestic source of seasonal and perishable fresh produce during the late fall to spring months of the year. In any given winter, more than one hundred million Americans will consume fresh fruits and vegetables grown in Florida. The ability of Florida's growers to produce perishable fruits and vegetables during these critical months of the year is foundational to America's food security and self-reliance. Unfortunately, the long-standing threats posed to our security by unfairly-priced and high-volume imports are as grave as ever, and deserve your urgent attention and action.

In an August 30, 2021 report, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services comprehensively identified the harm that Mexico's actions have inflicted on Florida's fruit and vegetable growers. According to the report, between the years 2000 and 2020, the volume of specialty crop imports from Mexico to the United States has increased by an estimated 580 percent, riding a wave of low-cost, high-volume agriculture production supercharged by government agricultural subsidies, labor-wage disparities, and dumping. This has resulted in massive market share losses during peak growing season for Florida's growers. Between the years 2000 and 2020, Florida-grown bell peppers, tomatoes (rounds), strawberries and blueberries have seen American market share declines of 74.75 percent, 52.1 percent, 30.3 percent, and 57.86 percent, respectively. These declines have caused annual losses of \$1.31 billion to \$2.63 billion to Florida's economy, resulting in as many as 35,741 lost jobs. Market share loss has also resulted in decreased agricultural production, which has contributed to the loss of as many as 123,000 acres of fruit and vegetable-producing agricultural land since 2000. From a food security perspective, this consequence may be the most worrying. In most cases, once this agricultural land is lost, it is lost permanently.

For decades, U.S. Trade Promotion Authority has explicitly called for comprehensive action to implement safeguard mechanisms for combating trade practices that harm producers of seasonal and perishable fruits and vegetables, such as those jointly employed by the Mexican

government and Mexico's agriculture industries. For decades, despite clear evidence of the systematic use of malicious trade practices, the Federal government has failed to take meaningful steps to hold Mexico accountable for its economic warfare.

In anticipation of Florida's fruit and vegetable harvest season beginning this November, we implore you to work with us, and our colleagues in Congress, to expeditiously develop an action plan to secure immediate, effective, and enforceable trade relief for our growers, so that another harvest season is not lost to unfair imports. The long-term harm that Florida's growers have suffered these past two decades cannot continue if the United States intends to maintain reliable food supply chains and retain self-sufficiency. However, fatal harm to Florida's agricultural base will occur if the Federal government does not take immediate action.

The coronavirus pandemic has clearly demonstrated the threat posed by the offshoring of our critical supply chains. Disruptions caused by the pandemic should serve as a wake-up call that our critical domestic food production, including our seasonal and perishable produce, cannot be allowed to wither due to unfair foreign trade and labor practices. You must take action now.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Rick Scott
U.S. Senator



Brian Mast
Member of Congress



Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress



Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress



Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress



Bill Posey
Member of Congress



Maria Elvira Salazar
Member of Congress



John H. Rutherford
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



C. Scott Franklin
Member of Congress



Neal P. Dunn, M.D.
Member of Congress



Carlos A. Gimenez
Member of Congress



Daniel Webster
Member of Congress



Al Lawson
Member of Congress



W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress



Michael Waltz
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Kat Cammack
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Charlie Crist
Member of Congress

CC:

Gina Raimondo, Secretary of Commerce

Thomas Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture

Brian Deese, Director of the National Economic Council

Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor

Katherine Tai, U.S. Trade Representative