

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0908

April 28, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write to urge you to reverse a decision by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to allow the importation of five varieties of citrus fruits from China. This decision, made public on April 15, 2020, has unnecessarily occurred amidst severely adverse conditions for Florida's citrus growers and must be immediately reconsidered.

In recent years, Florida's citrus growers have suffered the impacts of hurricanes, unfairly priced imports, and from citrus greening, a disease which originated in China, and spread to the U.S. from imported citrus. Citrus greening has devastated Florida's citrus groves, decreasing our state's citrus production capacity by approximately seventy percent since 2000.

At a time when citrus growers face unprecedented challenges, the department's decision will increase unfair foreign competition by Chinese government-subsidized products and may expose domestic growers to a host of new pests and diseases. The department's notice released on April 15<sup>th</sup> includes details of the Pest Risk Assessment (PRA) of allowing imports of these citrus products from China, including a list of species which are likely to enter the country. The PRA identifies fifteen pest species of mites, fruit flies, and moths and two pathogens, which could "cause unacceptable impacts" if they enter the U.S. via imports of these Chinese citrus products.<sup>1</sup> Risking the introduction of invasive species and diseases into the U.S. is irresponsible, especially given our knowledge of how citrus greening previously entered our country by imported citrus and is spread by an invasive pest species.

The federal government and the state of Florida have invested hundreds of millions of dollars to research citrus greening and to slow its spread and find a cure. Allowing new imports from China further harms Florida's citrus growers and risks undermining the progress that has been made through these investments.

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<sup>1</sup> "Decision To Authorize the Importation of Fresh Citrus From China Into the Continental United States," April 15, 2020. <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=APHIS-2014-0005-0049>

We respectfully urge you to reconsider this decision.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senator



Rick Scott  
U.S. Senator