

November 20, 2020

The Honorable Robert Lighthizer  
United States Trade Representative  
600 17<sup>th</sup> St NW,  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer:

Georgia growers testified at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative's (USTR) hearings in August regarding seasonal perishable fruit and vegetable imports. These fruit and vegetable imports from Mexico continue to dramatically impact U.S. markets and threaten the future of domestic farm production of perishable produce. As the fall season in Georgia is now in full swing, it appears that the problem is only getting worse. Just as growers are beginning to harvest, many are finding that still increasing imports from Mexico are driving prices below the cost of production.

We were pleased to see that USTR has requested a Section 332 for strawberries and bell peppers. However, we believe the inclusion of other commodities, such as cucumbers and squash, in the Section 332 request, would provide some assistance to growers as they continue to struggle with seasonal imports for the upcoming harvest season.

In the last twelve months, we have seen further growth in imports across several vegetable products. For example, cucumbers' import value is at \$894 million which is a 10% increase from September 2019 and August of 2020. Squash's import value at \$473 million is a 27% increase during that same time period. Year to date load totals from Mexico for cucumbers, in 2020, have more than doubled from the same period in 2019. Likewise, bell pepper truck loads from Mexico have also more than doubled. Squash appears to be the next crop to follow suit with over 100 additional more loads having arrived at U.S. markets so far this year just as southeastern growers have begun their squash harvests.

Price has followed supply and growers are now reporting tumbling prices across the board for vegetables. Prices are now well below U.S. production costs for several of these commodities and appear to correlate directly with increasing fall shipments from Mexico. Unfortunately, data and pricing available for national markets appears to be in direct conflict to the actual prices growers are receiving.

A Section 332 investigation request to the International Trade Commission for cucumbers and squash is needed in order to make a meaningful determination as to the impact of these seasonal imports on Southeastern markets. These market changes occur quickly and can make or break a grower's season in a matter of days if import increases and the resulting price decreases coincide with harvest.

We appreciate your efforts on behalf of our fruit and vegetable growers.

Sincerely,



Austin Scott  
Member of Congress



Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of Rick W. Allen in blue ink.

Rick W. Allen  
Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of Earl L. "Buddy" Carter in blue ink.

Earl L. "Buddy" Carter  
Member of Congress