

Excerpts from U.S. Senator Reverend Warnock's Opening Statement

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry Subcommittee on Commodities, Risk Management, and Trade

Subcommittee Hearing: *Agricultural Trade: Priorities and Issues Facing America's Farmers*

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“Today’s hearing, titled ‘Agricultural Trade: Priorities and Issues Facing America’s Farmers,’ is an opportunity for members of this Subcommittee to hear directly from our farmers regarding their trade challenges and priorities in today’s changing economy. Just last week, I spent time in Musella, Georgia meeting with a group of farmers and agriculture leaders to discuss the stress our farmers are experiencing. The message I heard was clear – farming is always a tough job, but especially right now. Farmers in Georgia and throughout the country have been forced to navigate a tremendous amount of uncertainty over the last few years. Trade wars, COVID-19 supply chain disruptions, and Russia’s war in Ukraine have all sent shockwaves through global commodity markets.”

“In Georgia, the success of our farmers is integral to the success of our state. According to the University of Georgia’s Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development, food and fiber production and processing contributes nearly \$70 billion to Georgia’s economy, supporting over 350,000 jobs in my state. **Expanding trade opportunities is not a guarantee for success, but it is a vital tool in the toolbox for our farmers—and the farmers in Musella told me repeatedly that trade barriers are a risk to their profitability. I believe it is our responsibility to support policies that keep our farmers competitive in the global market and expand opportunities for market access.**

“I’m focused on doing all I can to help Georgia’s farmers thrive economically and in their communities. And as we prepare for the next Farm Bill, I look forward to working with members of the Agriculture Committee, including Ranking Member Hoeven, to ensure we are making strategic investments that set all farmers up for success, including those who have been historically underserved and overlooked. While passage of the next Farm Bill is likely months away, our farmers are facing trade barriers in international markets right now. Here are just a few examples:

- Last year, I partnered with Senator Tuberville to highlight concerns to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) raised by our peanut farmers in getting their products to market in Europe, and ways we need federal agencies to better coordinate and step up to help address this issue.
- I also remain concerned that our trade policies are leaving certain sectors behind, including Georgia’s seasonal fruit and vegetable farmers. A steep increase in cheap imports have made it difficult for Georgia’s produce farmers to compete in the market. I’ve worked with Senator Rubio to support legislation to defend domestic produce production, and level the playing field for Georgia’s fruit and vegetable growers.
- And, as a proud Georgian, it would be a missed opportunity in this hearing to not mention pecans. My state is number one for pecan production, but Georgia’s pecan growers are currently facing tariff rates as high as 36 percent when attempting to export their product to India. I am currently working with Senator Cornyn to address this, and in the coming days, we will be pushing USTR to prioritize engagement on this issue.

“These are just a few examples of concerns I hear from farmers in Georgia. But these examples underscore how we can work across party lines to tackle trade barriers in support of our farmers. And as Chair of this Subcommittee, it is my goal to ensure farmers’ voices and experiences are heard throughout the halls of the Senate, to better inform our work. **This moment of uncertainty in our international markets demands strong leadership. I’m glad to see that Alexis Taylor has been nominated to be the USDA Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs, and I look forward to considering her nomination before this Committee. But I also urge President Biden to quickly nominate a Chief Agriculture Negotiator for USTR. We are a year and a half into this administration, so I think it is unacceptable that we are still waiting on a nominee for this critical post that is integral to addressing farmers’ trade concerns. I look forward confirming qualified nominees who will advocate for our farmers within the administration.**”

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