

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES
COMMISSIONER NICOLE “NIKKI” FRIED
THE CAPITOL

September 15, 2022

The Honorable Katherine Tai
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Ambassador Tai:

On behalf of the State of Florida and our \$149.5 billion agriculture industry, I write in strong support of the September 8th petition filed by members of Florida’s bipartisan delegation under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 requesting the administration conduct an investigation into the flood of imported seasonal and perishable agricultural products from Mexico. As you know, my office has been involved in discussions between your office, congressional offices, and our industry partners that have been devastated by decades of unfair trade practices going unchecked since the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Since my first days in office, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) has been calling on federal officials, including your predecessor, to provide timely and effective relief for domestic seasonal produce growers. While we were beyond disappointed that the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) failed to provide remedies to address unfair seasonal produce import practices by Mexico and others, we were cautiously optimistic that an August 2020 field hearing held by the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the U.S. Department of Commerce and subsequent investigations launched by the U.S. International Trade Commission (USITC) would yield meaningful action to protect domestic producers rather than foreign interests. My Department provided the USTR, USDA, and USITC with major reports showing the economic harm these unfair foreign trade practices are having on Florida farmers and our economy overall, showing the gap between Mexican agricultural exports and Florida’s total agricultural value widened from \$11 billion to \$23.3 billion as Mexican specialty crop imports have soared by 580 percent since 2000. I am enclosing the most recent economic report produced by my Department on the negative impact this has had over the years across many commodities and multiple states.

This documented, decades-long harm is why it is critical for your office to conduct a Section 301 investigation into Mexico’s trade-distorting practices and provide Florida’s farmers with long-overdue and much-needed relief so they can keep our state and nation growing. As you can imagine, after experiencing losses year after year due to such unfair foreign trade practices with no remedies accessible to seasonal producers, we have seen more and more of our domestic farms shutter their operations. Without relief, the future of our state’s second largest industry and the 2.4 million jobs it supports is at risk. Beyond the negative economic impact, this also poses a risk to the strength and security of our domestic food supply – a troubling matter of national security. Given the Biden Administration’s commitment to bolstering

Ambassador Katherine Tai

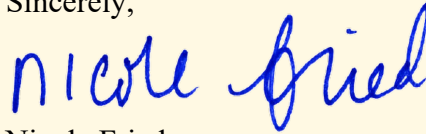
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domestic supply chains, supporting American agriculture, and combatting unfair trade, we look forward to continuing to work with your office and other federal partners to provide timely and effective relief for our domestic seasonal produce industry and are hopeful that you will move forward with a Section 301 investigation as bipartisan members of the Florida Congressional Delegation have requested.

Thank you for your attention to this matter of critical importance to Florida's growers, the domestic seasonal produce industry, and the security of our nation's food supply. Know that the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services stands ready to assist our federal partners as we continue working together towards a solution that will put American farmers and families first.

Sincerely,



Nicole Fried

Commissioner of Agriculture