

March 31, 2020

The Honorable Robert E. Lighthizer  
United States Trade Representative  
600 17<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer,

The undersigned organizations greatly appreciate your support for agricultural biotechnology in trade negotiations and other bilateral and multilateral engagements. Biotechnology is delivering valuable tools that help farmers increase productivity, better protect the environment, and support consumer health. To realize the benefits of biotechnology, we need global regulatory systems that are transparent, predictable, efficient and based on science and risk so farmers can use the latest technologies and fully access the global market. The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative is critical to the advancement of policies that support both innovation and trade.

We are writing to bring to your attention the existing delays in biotechnology approvals in Mexico. Recent changes in the Government of Mexico disrupted the operations of several agencies, including the Federal Commission for the Protection Against Sanitary Risks (COFEPRIS), the agency affiliated with the Secretaria de Salud (Health Secretariat) and responsible for import approvals of genetically modified organisms. COFEPRIS has a statutory timeline of six months to issue an approval, however, the agency has not approved a GMO for import since May 2018. Despite numerous engagements from various levels of the U.S. Government, we still have not seen any indication that approvals will resume.

Mexico is the second largest market for U.S. agricultural exports, importing approximately \$6 billion of GMO-derived products for food and feed in the form of corn, soybeans, distillers dried grains with solubles (DDGS), soybean meal, cottonseed meal, and other products. Given its market size, Mexico can have a significant impact on innovation and the supply chain, like other large markets such as China and the European Union. Should this situation continue, we will likely face the economic impacts of delayed commercialization of proven technologies in the U.S., loss of investment in new technologies, and the loss of export opportunities.

We ask that you raise this issue at the highest levels of the Government of Mexico with the objective of aligning Mexican regulation with the nation's commitment to science-based and risk-based standards and realizing the resumption of import approvals. The U.S. agriculture sector celebrated the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) with its unprecedented achievements on agricultural biotechnology. This current situation contradicts the spirit and the letter of this landmark trade agreement and it is not where we imagined we would be as parties prepare the agreement to enter into force.

Thank you for considering this request, and we stand ready to support you in your engagements with the Government of Mexico on this issue.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Seed Trade Association  
American Soybean Association  
Biotechnology Innovation Organization  
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture

National Corn Growers Association  
U.S. Grains Council  
U.S. Soybean Export Council

CC. The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
The Honorable Ted McKinney  
The Honorable Gregg Doud