



Georgia Department of Agriculture

Gary W. Black, Commissioner

19 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, SW • Atlanta, Georgia 30334-4201

September 6, 2018

The Honorable Johnny Isakson
U.S. Senate
131 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Isakson:

Throughout my career I am not sure how many letters I have written to members of the Georgia delegation. I do know that it is quite a few. I have always tried to be reasonable, present facts and offer a solution for the concerns expressed on behalf of Georgia's farm families. I do so again today.

The Mexico-NAFTA trade proposal in route to Congress is unacceptable in my view. The action taken by the Administration to abandon seasonal protection for fresh fruit, vegetable and pecan producers is tantamount to distributing U.S. government printed "going out of business" signs across a substantial part of rural Georgia and the Southeast. Duty-free blueberries from Mexico have already altered the course of the nation's number one producing region. Squash, tomato and cucumber market windows continue to shrink for our producers while produce streams across our southern border arriving from a country known for an inconsistent regulatory environment.

Mexican pecan production continues to expand at a rapid pace. University of Georgia researchers have documented evidence of the use of growth regulating chemicals that are banned here in the United States. Labor standards, and even the emissions from tractor exhausts, favor Mexican production while our farmers continue to wrestle with Tier 4 engines and the Food Safety Modernization Act.

I have spoken to senior officials in the White House. I have spoken directly with Ambassador Greg Doud, an honorable man and lead USTR negotiator for agriculture. My objections and reasoning have been registered. I have received gracious, sincere offers to continue the dialogue. However, no one has offered any satisfactory equation to convert dialogue into legal tender sufficient to meet future obligations with their financial institutions.

I am attaching two documents for your consideration. The first is a recent letter from the Mexican President to President Trump. The second is the USTR Congressional notification regarding the agreement. I would appreciate your full attention to both of these documents.

I do not believe Georgia consumers or farmers believe that the way to solve immigration challenges and fruit and vegetable availability is for the Mexican government to underwrite 2.54 million

acres of new production, the proposition of the Mexican President. Secondly, the Administration's agricultural prosperity celebration would not gain a single "amen" from the fruit and vegetable growers I serve.

My ask is simple. Please encourage the Administration to return to the negotiating table or vote no on the Mexican/NAFTA proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary W. Black".

Gary W. Black, Commissioner
Georgia Department of Agriculture