

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 15, 2026

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Jamieson Greer
Ambassador
Office of the United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Secretary Rollins and Ambassador Greer:

We appreciate the Trump Administration's commitment to restoring fair trade practices that prioritize American jobs and strengthen local economies. That leadership is urgently needed as U.S. onion growers face an increasingly uneven competitive environment. Structural cost disparities, inconsistent regulatory enforcement, limited access to food safety inspections, and rapid agricultural expansion in northern Mexico are distorting the market and placing sustained pressure on domestic producers. We ask for your support in ongoing trade negotiations with Mexico to end these unfair practices and ensure American growers can meet domestic demand.

American onion producers operate under some of the strictest labor, safety, and regulatory standards in the world. Production costs have risen 343% from \$1,876 per acre in 1992 to \$6,438 in 2025. Labor alone creates a major imbalance: U.S. growers must pay federally mandated wages averaging \$16.50–\$17.00 per hour, while comparable wages in Mexico average roughly \$1.80. At the same time, American farms undergo rigorous food safety inspections, while Mexican producers selling into the same market face far less oversight. The 2021 recall of Mexican onions underscored this gap, as Food and Drug Administration (FDA) inspectors were unable to conduct on site investigations due to credible safety threats, and are still largely unable to today. This combination of higher U.S. compliance costs and limited enforceable oversight abroad allows Mexican producers to undercut American growers and rapidly expand their market share.

Mexico's repeated failure to meet its water delivery obligations under the 1944 Treaty has further contributed to this imbalance. As you know, Mexico currently owes the United States more than one million acre feet of water from the Rio Grande system. Unfortunately, over time these shortfalls have enabled rapid agricultural expansion in northern Mexico, directly benefiting producers who compete with U.S. growers operating under constrained water supplies. The rapid development of onion production in this region, combined with limited oversight, has also raised concerns about criminal cartel activity within parts of Mexico's agricultural supply chain. We are grateful for the Administration's efforts to secure these water deliveries back to American states as quickly as possible. As USMCA negotiations develop, we encourage consideration of enforceable compliance mechanisms to ensure Mexico fully adheres to its water-sharing obligations.

Increasing volumes of Mexican onion imports are contributing to oversupply, price suppression, and concerns about predatory pricing practices that undermine the stability of U.S. farms. Prior to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), imported onions were subject to a duty of 87½ cents per 50 pound bag. When adjusted for inflation and the significantly higher input and compliance costs borne by American producers, it is clear that a modernized duty in the range of \$3 to \$5 per bag is both reasonable and necessary.

We respectfully ask USTR to consider increasing duties on imported onions from Mexico. A \$5 duty per 50 pound bag of onions would most effectively offset existing cost disparities and ensure that imported onions compete under conditions comparable to those required of U.S. producers. Domestic producers stand ready to


meet U.S. demand, and such a fee would stabilize the market while strengthening food safety, regulatory compliance, and fair competition within the North American produce sector.

Additionally, we request USDA's support in strengthening FDA's enforcement of the Foreign Supplier Verification Program, particularly for Mexican onion imports, to ensure that foreign suppliers meet the same food safety standards required of American producers. When American families go to the grocery store, they should have affordable options and feel confident that the produce they choose is held to high safety standards.

American onion producers are essential to the economic vitality of our rural communities and to the nation's agricultural supply chain. After all, food security is national security. We stand ready to work with your Administration to ensure U.S. onion growers can compete on fair and equitable terms.

Sincerely,

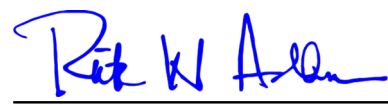

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