

October 23, 2023



The Honorable Gina M. Raimondo  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo,

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Ramiro A. Cavazos  
President & CEO

On behalf of the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (USHCC), we write to you today about an issue that is important to many of our members, and indeed to consumers nationwide. As you know, the 2019 Tomato Suspension Agreement is the arrangement that ensures fair trade practices and market stability for importers of fresh tomatoes from Mexico. Recently, the U.S. Department of Commerce received a petition from the Florida Tomato Exchange (FTE) to terminate the agreement. We urge the Department to reject the petition, which would lead to substantial economic damage to companies throughout the fresh tomato supply chain and raise food prices for consumers at a time when inflation is already a concern for many.

The USHCC is the nation's largest Latino Business Advocacy organization and works to actively promote the economic growth, development, and interests of more than five million Hispanic-owned businesses. The USHCC exists to support these businesses that contribute over \$800 billion to the American economy each year. We operate through a network of more than 260 local chambers and business associations throughout the nation and have partnerships with more than 200 major global corporations.

As you know, cross-border trade with Mexico is of vital economic importance to many American businesses and consumers and to the stability of critical U.S. supply chains including food. A study conducted by Texas A&M University found that "the total economic impact associated with the import and sale of Mexican fresh tomatoes was estimated at \$7.54 billion." Furthermore, the same study found that fresh tomato imports supported "49,128 full- and part-time jobs across the United States in various supporting and related industries." According to a separate Arizona State University study, if the agreement were to be terminated "consumers can expect to pay prices that average some 50.0% higher than they currently are, and grocery retailers...will earn almost \$7.53 billion less in revenue." The petition by the FTE risks causing severe harm to businesses and consumers alike.

Although this issue was brought to our attention by our Hispanic chambers in the southern border region states, we understand it to be of national significance. Additionally, we understand that importers have worked closely with the Department of Commerce and with the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service to comply fully with the terms of the suspension agreement. The Department in its own findings has determined through multiple compliance reviews that there have been zero consequential violations of the agreement and furthermore that "the 2019 Agreement is preventing price suppression or undercutting and can be effectively monitored." The claim by the FTE indicating that importers are engaging in unfair trade practices is inconsistent with the findings of the Department itself.

Again, we urge the Department to reject the FTE petition in order to ensure ongoing stability, availability, and affordability in the market for fresh tomatoes. We appreciate the time and attention by you and your staff to this important issue. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Anthony Hinojosa, Vice President of Government and International Affairs of the USHCC at [AHinojosa@ushcc.com](mailto:AHinojosa@ushcc.com). We commend you for your leadership and look forward to a positive outcome on this important matter.

Respectfully,

Ramiro A. Cavazos  
President and CEO  
U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce