

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2309

December 13, 2013

The Honorable Michael Froman
United States Trade Representative
Executive Office of the President
600 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20508

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Ambassador Froman and Secretary Vilsack,

I am writing to urge you to make improving market access for U.S. pork products a high priority in the context of our trade policy.

As you know, pork production in Minnesota is a vital part of the state's economy. Minnesota ranks second in the nation in the number of hogs raised and processed into meat products. In fact, according to the Minnesota Pork Board, the total economic activity generated by Minnesota's pork production in 2011 was \$6.9 billion. This economic engine has a major impact on jobs. According to the National Pork Producers Council, the Minnesota pork industry supports over 21,000 jobs, with over 4,000 of those jobs tied to pork exports. And pork exports from the U.S. overall are a key part of our nation's economic activity.

I strongly support efforts to expand those exports, and that should be a central part of our nation's trade policy. Numerous countries, however, put up a wide range of market access barriers that prevent our pork products from competing on fair terms in those markets. Among those countries are several that are part of the negotiations over the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a massive, multi-country trade deal. The ultimate value of the TPP will be dependent on many different factors. But there can be no question that, as you are negotiating this trade agreement, it is of vital importance that you work to eliminate the unduly restrictive tariff and non-tariff barriers to markets in those countries that our pork products currently face.

For instance, Japan has set up a restrictive, complex system of tariffs to pork, along with a host of other agricultural products. Vietnam limits U.S. pork imports through tariffs and non-tariff barriers from arbitrary administration requirements and non-science based bans on certain products to assessing import duties on pork and other products based not on the delivered price but reference prices established by the government. Australia – with which the United States has a bilateral trade agreement – uses non-tariff barriers to significantly limit pork imports from the U.S.

I urge you to make sure the elimination of such tariff and non-tariff barriers is a part of our overall trade policy and of the negotiations over the TPP. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Al Franken". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Al Franken
United States Senator