

December 5, 2011

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
Room 200-A Jamie Whitten Building
14th Street & Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

The undersigned food and agricultural organizations appreciate the time and effort you and your staff have devoted to the advancement of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations this year. The progress made in these complicated and groundbreaking talks has been exceptional.

As you know, the government of Japan recently announced its interest in joining the TPP negotiations. We urge the Obama administration to work quickly and closely with Japan to smooth the way for Japan's full participation in the TPP. The addition of Japan to these negotiations would enhance the significance of the TPP and make the agreement much more encompassing. The inclusion of Japan would generate enormous interest and support among the undersigned organizations. It would also spur even broader interest among other Asia-Pacific countries, which could lead to the type of Asia-Pacific regional arrangement envisioned by the administration when you embarked on these talks last year.

Japan's economy is second only to China's in the region, and it is our fourth largest agricultural export market overall, despite maintaining substantial import barriers in the food and agricultural sector. Even with these barriers, our exports to Japan in 2010 totaled nearly \$12 billion.

We understand that there are important issues to be tackled before any final decision can be made with respect to Japan's participation, not the least of which is to gain assurances from Japan that it recognizes and accepts that the TPP must be a comprehensive agreement. We believe the Japanese government is beginning to undertake the necessary changes to domestic programs that will permit it to negotiate on that basis.

Japan is ready to join other nations in entering into trade agreements that are critical to its future economic well-being and global competitiveness. Japan is almost certain to enter into free trade talks with the European Union in 2012 and will be looking to negotiate with other countries if its TPP bid is rejected.

The opportunity to include Japan in the TPP negotiations must be seized. It is an opportunity that may not present itself again.

Sincerely,

Agri Beef Co.
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Feed Industry Association
American Frozen Food Institute

American Meat Institute
American Peanut Product Manufacturers, Inc.
American Seed Trade Association
Animal Health Institute
California Cherry Export Association
California Dried Plum Board
California Fig Advisory Board
California Grape & Tree Fruit League
California Pear Growers
California Strawberry Commission
California Table Grape Commission
California Walnut Commission
Cargill, Incorporated
Commodity Markets Council
Corn Refiners Association
Distilled Spirits Council of the United States
Grocery Manufacturers Association
Hormel Foods Corporation
International Dairy Foods Association
JBS USA
Kraft Foods
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Chicken Council
National Confectioners Association
National Corn Growers Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Grain and Feed Association
National Meat Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
National Renderers Association
National Sorghum Producers
National Turkey Federation
North American Equipment Dealers Association
North American Export Grain Association
North American Millers' Association
Northwest Horticultural Council
Ocean Spray Cranberries
Pet Food Institute
Produce Marketing Association
Seaboard Foods
Smithfield Foods
Sunkist Growers
Sweetener Users Association
Tyson Foods, Inc.
U.S. Apple Association

U.S. Dairy Export Council
U.S. Dry Bean Council
U.S. Grains Council
U.S. Premium Beef
U.S. Wheat Associates
United Egg Association
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
USA Poultry & Egg Export Council
USA Rice Federation
Western Growers Association

Cc: The Honorable Ron Kirk, United States Trade Representative