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IBACH URGES TOP FEDERAL OFFICIALS TO EXPEDITE EFFORTS TO OPEN UP BEEF EXPORTS TO CHINA, MAINTAIN MOMENTUM ON KEY TRADE AGREEMENTS

WASHINGTON, DC - In letters to two top U.S. federal government officials, Nebraska Department of Agriculture Director Greg Ibach is requesting efforts to facilitate the movement of U.S. beef to China be expedited, and calling for continued activity on pending trade agreements with European and Asian countries.

Ibach hand-delivered the letters this week as he chaired the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) winter policy meetings in Washington, D.C. Ibach is president of NASDA, and the group heard from U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, as well as Darci Vetter, who is the lead agriculture negotiator for U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman, during its meetings.

In the letters, Ibach specifically mentioned a pending resolution between the United States and China that would open up increased opportunities for Nebraska beef exports.

“It is my understanding the United States and China have reached agreement on the parameters, with only the specific protocols to be finalized. I urge you both to complete these export protocols as soon as possible,” Ibach said.

In addition, Ibach urged continued efforts to finalize the pending multi-nation trade agreement known as TPP.

“The recently completed negotiations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership will open even greater access for our nation’s and Nebraska’s agriculture interests,” said Ibach in the letters to Vilsack and Froman. “The State of Nebraska and its agricultural leaders remain strong supporters of these types of agreements and will continue to advocate for the approval of this and other trade agreements.”

Ibach went on to point out the importance of the continuing negotiations on another critical trade agreement.

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“In addition, ongoing talks regarding another ambitious and important multicontinental agreement, the TransAtlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, should be heightened so that forward momentum will not be lost,” Ibach said. “I am excited about the opportunities for free and fair trade between Europe and North America, should this agreement reach a successful conclusion.”

A copy of the letter is attached.

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January 29, 2016

Honorable Michael Froman
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary, United States Department of Agriculture
14th and Independence Ave.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Ambassador Froman and Secretary Vilsack:

The United States has made great strides over the last few years in advancing agricultural trade and enhancing the opportunities for our nation's farmers and ranchers to gain broadened access to foreign markets. The recently completed negotiations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership will open even greater access for our nation's and Nebraska's agriculture interests. The State of Nebraska and its agricultural leaders remain strong supporters of these types of agreements and will continue to advocate for the approval of this and other trade agreements.

While we celebrate the accomplishments that have been made, I am writing to encourage your continued efforts to complete work on several other important agricultural trade issues. There are a number of opportunities to defend access to markets for U.S. pork and crops utilizing advanced technologies and production protocols, particularly in markets across Europe and Asia. In addition, ongoing talks regarding another ambitious and important multicontinental agreement, the TransAtlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, should be heightened so that forward momentum will not be lost. I am excited about the opportunities for free and fair trade between Europe and North America, should this agreement reach a successful conclusion.

The pending trade resolution with the most immediate potential for Nebraska is U.S. beef exports to China. It is my understanding the United States and China have reached agreement on the parameters, with only the specific protocols to be finalized. I urge you both to complete these export protocols as soon as possible. The U.S. beef industry cannot afford, in the light of the current economic conditions facing rural America, to have China take advantage of the uncertainty that comes with our upcoming elections and fail to open their market to our exports. I respectfully request that you instruct both of your agencies to prioritize protocols to finalize U.S. beef access to China.

The road has been long, and I applaud the progress that has been accomplished through your leadership. It truly would be a shame not to cross the finish line on this important signature market opening. Thank you in advance for your efforts in the coming months. I look forward to the momentous announcement that China is open to U.S. beef.

Sincerely,
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Greg Ibach
Director