January 13, 2017

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Minority Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the undersigned U.S. agriculture, trade, and commerce-related businesses, and associations we urge you to show your support for American agriculture by advancing the relationship between the U.S. and Cuba.

As you are well aware, U.S. agricultural and food products can be exported to Cuba for humanitarian reasons under the Trade Sanctions Reform Act of 2000 (TSRA). While TSRA opened the channel for shipping agricultural commodities and food products to Cuba, restrictions on financing those sales have made it difficult to compete with our foreign competitors in the Cuban market.

Since the normalization process between the U.S. and Cuba began in December 2014, successive rounds of amendments to Cuba-related regulations have been made through the Departments of Treasury and Commerce. Those changes have allowed for different industries to explore business opportunities in Cuba and for the authorized export and financing of those exports in particular sectors, such as telecommunications, civil aviation, and entertainment. However, agriculture is at a unique disadvantage owing to the codified restrictions of TSRA that prevent similar regulatory authorizations from being extended: as of January 2016, there is a general policy of approval for exports and re-exports of some agricultural items, but not those defined as agricultural commodities and equipment.

This Congressional roadblock puts U.S. agriculture at a serious, global disadvantage as we watch foreign competitors continue to take away our market share because of their ability to offer generous credit terms. As recently as 2008, we were selling nearly $700 million in agriculture products to Cuba annually. In 2015, our sales were under $200 million in what is nearly a $2 billion market—U.S. market share is now less than 10 percent of Cuba’s agricultural imports, despite the superior quality and competitive prices of our products and the logistical advantages we have. Located just 90 miles from the U.S. coast, Cuba should be an obvious and reliable market for American businesses, as it has been in the past.

Net farm income and U.S. commodity prices are continuing to sharply decline. Depriving U.S. farmers and agribusinesses of the tools they need to be successful, such as private financing, is not only harmful for their bottom lines, but for state and local economies.
We ask you to recognize the economic value Cuba could provide as an agricultural trading partner and take action to usher in a new era for U.S. agricultural exports. **Therefore, we urge you to support H.R. 525, The Cuba Agricultural Exports Act, which would remove restrictions on export financing for agricultural products, allowing U.S. businesses to provide payment or financing terms for sales of agricultural commodities to Cuba. In addition, please reject any course of action that would reverse the critical progress we’ve made toward a more productive relationship with Cuba.**

We appreciate your continued support of legislation that would improve American agricultural trade opportunities that are vital to our industry.

Sincerely,

c: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives

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**National Organizations**

- American Farm Bureau Federation
- American Feed Industry Association
- American Pulse Association
- American Seed Trade Association
- American Soybean Association
- Association of Equipment Manufacturers
- Corn Refiners Association
- Independent Professional Seed Association
- International Dairy Foods Association
- Livestock Exporters Association of the USA
- National Association of Egg Farmers
- National Association of Wheat Growers
- National Barley Growers Association
- National Black Growers Council
- National Corn Growers Association
- National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
- National Farmers Union
- National Foreign Trade Council
- National Grain and Feed Association
- National Milk Producers Federation
- National Oilseed Processors Association
- National Potato Council
- National Turkey Federation
- Navajo Agricultural Products Industry
- North American Millers Association
- Rural & Agriculture Council of America
- U.S. Cattlemen's Association
- U.S. Cava Exports
- U.S. Dry Bean Council
- U.S. Rice Producers Association
- USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council
- USA Poultry & Egg Export Council
- USA Rice
State Organizations

Alabama Farmers Federation
Alabama Poultry Association
Agricultural Council of Arkansas
Arkansas Farm Bureau
Arkansas Rice Council
Arkansas Rice Federation
California Rice Commission
Central Louisiana Rice Growers Association
Colorado Farm Bureau
Colorado Pork Producers Council
Georgia Farm Bureau
Idaho Grain Producers Association
Idaho Potato Commission
Illinois Corn Growers Association
Illinois Farm Bureau
Illinois Soybean Growers
Iowa Corn Growers Association
Iowa Farm Bureau Federation
Iowa Institute for Cooperatives
Iowa Soybean Association
Kansas Association of Wheat Growers
Kansas Corn Growers Association
Kansas Farm Bureau
Kansas Livestock Association
Kansas Soybean Association
Kansas Wheat Commission
Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation
Louisiana Rice Growers Association
Louisiana Rice Producer’s Group
Michigan Agri-Business Association
Michigan Bean Shippers
Michigan Soybean Association
Minnesota Barley Council
Minnesota Farm Bureau
Minnesota Farmers Union
Minnesota Grain and Feed Association
Minnesota Turkey Growers
Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation
Mississippi Poultry Association
Mississippi Rice Council
Missouri Farm Bureau
Missouri Rice Council
New Mexico Cattle Growers Association
New Mexico Wine and Grape Growers Association
Northeast Louisiana Rice Growers Association
Ohio Agribusiness Association
Ohio Corn & Soy
Ohio Farm Bureau
Texas Farm Bureau
Texas Grain Sorghum Producers
Texas Rice Producers Legislative Group

Agribusinesses

AGCO
Amerex Corporation
Bibler Brothers Lumber and Construction
Bunge
Campbell Farms
Cargill, Incorporated
Carnes Farms, Inc.
Clark AG Company
Claxton Poultry
CoBank
Falcon Rice Mill
Farmers Rice Milling Company
Gary Murphy Farms
Gulf Wise Commerce
Hormel Foods Corporation
Kennedy Rice Mill, LLC/Planters Rice Mill, LLC
Koenig Vineyards
Louisiana Rice Milling Company
Mannco Fertilizer
Martin Rice Company
Newcomb Farms
Poinsett Rice & Grain
Producers Rice Mill
Riceland Foods
RiceTec, Inc.
Riviana Foods – American Rice, Inc.
Simmons Foods
Texas Rice Belt Warehouse, Inc.
TRC Trading Corporation