

March 13, 2017

Re: Time for Canada to shine in multilateral Pacific Rim trade talks

Dear Minister Champagne,

We are writing to express our strong support for Canada to continue seeking better access for our agriculture and agri-food products in the burgeoning economies of the Asia-Pacific region. We are focused on opportunities to implement the gains made in Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement as this holds the best opportunity to keep the Canadian agri-food sector competitive, add jobs and grow the Canadian economy.

The upcoming talks with the remaining TPP signatories in Chile on March 15 are a perfect time for Canada to quickly revive the partnership's framework as a basis for a new agreement, shining a light on the benefits of regional free trade. We are, after all, the second largest economy at the table now that the U.S. has withdrawn from negotiations.

The undersigned organizations represent hundreds of thousands of farmers, producers and food processors in rural and urban communities across Canada – all who rely on free trade agreements like the TPP. Better access to international markets through trade agreements has helped us grow agriculture and agri-food exports by 103 per cent to more than \$56 billion over the last ten years. Today, 90 per cent of farmers depend on export markets and more than half of everything we produce goes beyond our borders.

We are encouraged by the actions and signals coming from the federal government – your participation in the upcoming meeting is particularly good news. The report on the Economic Impact of Canada's Potential Participation in the TPP by Global Affairs Canada is also a ringing endorsement for the agreement's considerable merits.

Canada was poised to enter into a new era of freer trade before the US pulled out of the TPP, particularly with Japan. It would have meant freer access for Canadian exporters to the world's fourth-largest import market. Now, getting Japan's attention may be a challenge — especially since the U.S. has declared its intent to negotiate a bilateral trade deal with them.

The signing and ratification in Europe of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) showed a world that seems to be closing ranks that keeping our borders open to fair trade is a mutually beneficial path forward.

We would like to see that kind of momentum carry on by using the work that's been done on the TPP to capture its economic and strategic benefits. A renewed deal could leave the door open for the U.S. to join at some point and could include even more partners than the current 11 countries.

Canada has a chance to shine by reviving this agreement and helping define a path forward. As you have said, "The world is looking at Canada today when it comes to open, progressive trade."

We also know that the world is not standing still. Time is of the essence or the doors may soon close on opportunities in the some of the largest and fastest growing economies in the TPP region – Japan, Malaysia and Vietnam to name a few.

Australia already has a free trade agreement with Japan. The E.U. and Japan are very close to finalizing negotiations on a bilateral deal. Last year, the E.U. wrapped up a free trade agreement with Vietnam as well.

A renewed effort to diversify our trade options will help protect Canada from rising walls and closing doors. Canada should not lag behind when other countries are obtaining preferential access for their products.

While people might question whether we still need a deal like the TPP, we believe it is a balanced, comprehensive and modern agreement. Most importantly, it puts us on an equal footing with our global competitors and sets a precedent for increased co-operation and transparency on non-tariff barriers.

We now have an important opportunity with the remaining TPP countries to stand up for trade, speaking with one voice on the imperative of maintaining and expanding open markets around the world. As you prepare for the meeting in Chile, we urge you to assert bold Canadian leadership so that agriculture and agri-food exports can continue growing the economy and supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs across the country.

Sincerely,

Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance (CAFTA)
Canola Council of Canada
Canadian Meat Council
Canadian Pork Council
Canadian Cattlemen's Association
Grain Growers of Canada
Cereals Canada
Barley Council of Canada
Canadian Sugar Institute
Canadian Canola Growers of Canada
Pulse Canada
Soy Canada
National Cattle Feeders' Association
Alberta Cattle Feeders' Association
BC Grain Producers Association
Alberta Canola Producers Commission
Saskatchewan Canola Development Commission
Manitoba Canola Growers Association
Grain Farmers of Ontario
British Columbia Cattlemen's Association

Producteurs de Grains du Québec
Alberta Beef Producers
Saskatchewan Stockgrowers Association
Manitoba Beef Producers
Beef Farmers of Ontario
Ontario Canola Growers
Alberta Barley Commission
Saskatchewan Barley Development Commission
Atlantic Grains Council
Beer Canada
Malting Industry Association of Canada
Brewing and Malting Barley Research Institute
Canadian Malting Barley Technical Centre
Cargill
SeCan
FPGenetics
University of Saskatchewan: Crop Development Centre
Western Barley Growers Association

Contact:

Claire Citeau
Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance (CAFTA)
613-560-0500 / 613-266-9104
cciteau@cafta.org