

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 10, 2013

His Excellency Ahn Ho-young
Ambassador of the Republic of Korea
to the United States
Embassy of the Republic of Korea
2450 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Ambassador Ahn:

We write to express our concern regarding the impending closure of the Republic of Korea's (ROK) organic food market to U.S. exports. Without immediate action, U.S. organic processed food exports to ROK will be halted on January 1, 2014. This will jeopardize a growing trade relationship that benefits both of our nations. We ask that you look into this matter and examine all options to avoid trade disruption, including an extension of the current grace period set to expire on December 31, 2013 and the initiation of an expedited equivalency agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

On May 29, 2013, the ROK's Act on Promotion of Eco-Friendly Agriculture and Management of Organic Products went into effect. This law requires that all organic food products sold in the ROK be certified by persons accredited by the Korean Ministry of Agriculture (MAFRA). It is our understanding that the U.S.-ROK organic food trade can continue by two routes:

1. U.S. exporters can be certified "organic" by the MAFRA by December 31, 2013; or
2. The ROK and U.S. governments can conclude an equivalency agreement recognizing each other's "organic" certification standards, thereby eliminating the need for duplicate certification.

Unfortunately, many U.S. businesses cannot be certified by MAFRA-accredited certifiers by December 31, 2013, which will eliminate their ability to export to the ROK. Moreover, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Trade Representative have informed us that the ROK government is unwilling to initiate any formal equivalence agreements until January 2014, after the provision


concerning equivalence takes effect and after U.S. businesses have already been excluded from ROK markets.

To prevent this unnecessary disruption of trade, we ask that the ROK government allow for current commerce to continue by extending the current grace period until an organic equivalency agreement between our two countries is enacted.


Unless the ROK government acts quickly to allow the continued importation and sale of U.S. organic products as they are sold today, the stream of commerce will come to a stop before the year is over. We appreciate your urgent attention to this request, and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

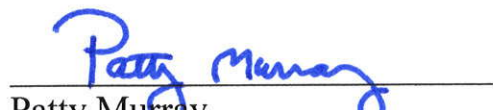
Sincerely,

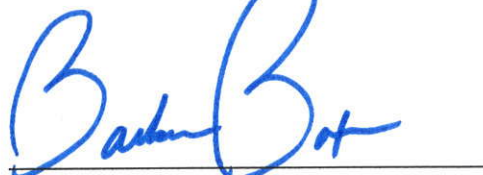

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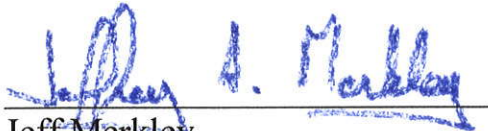
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