

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 20th, 2013

The Honorable Michael Froman
United States Trade Representative
Office of the United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington D.C. 20508

Dear Ambassador Froman,

Thank you for your on-going efforts to promote trade throughout the world and to create opportunities for American businesses to export goods. Today, we write to express the importance of keeping the Republic of Korea's (ROK) markets open to U.S. organic food product producers. Without any action, U.S organic exports to the ROK will be halted at the end of the year as the ROK implements new laws regarding organic products. To maintain this valuable trade relationship for both nations, it critical for the USTR to facilitate a short and long term arrangement and to leverage access to the growing and valuable U.S. organic market if the ROK government refuses to negotiate in a timely manner.

Beginning on January 1, 2014, all U.S. organic exports to the ROK must either be certified as organic by the Korean Ministry of Agriculture (MAFRA) or MAFRA must recognize the equivalence of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) certified organic status. Unfortunately, many U.S. businesses will not be certified by MAFRA by December 31, 2013. Furthermore, we understand, the ROK is unwilling to initiate formal equivalence negotiations until January 2014, after U.S. organic food producers will have already been barred from ROK markets. With your support, the U.S. has already negotiated equivalency arrangements with the European Union, Japan and other countries, and there is no reason that the ROK should be any different.

Last week, along with several colleagues, we sent a letter to the Korean Ambassador urging the ROK to reconsider this impending policy change that will lead to a disruption of trade. We asked the Ambassador to consider extending the current grace period set to expire on December 31, 2013 and to initiate an expedited equivalency agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. We request that you continue to engage with the Ambassador to discuss the mutual exchange of organic products.

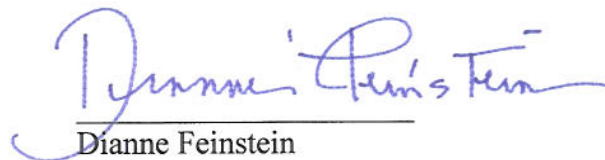
The Organic Trade Association estimates the current value of South Korea's organic food market for US producers at approximately \$50 million. For the quickly growing organic food product industry, fair trade can enhance markets by expanding export opportunities and product choices. However, if organic trade agreements aren't applied fairly, folks will quickly lose trust in trade's ability to benefit both producers and consumers.

While we understand the Office of the USTR is extremely busy negotiating several trade agreements, we ask that you attempt to resolve this issue with the ROK to avoid losing a valuable trade opportunity. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



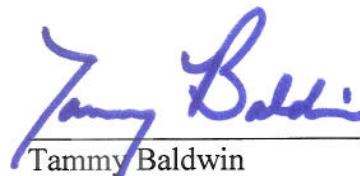
Jon Tester
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

cc: Secretary Vilsack, United States Department of Agriculture