



March 28, 2017

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

America's farmers and ranchers are encouraged by your comments during your February 28 address to a Joint Session of Congress, where you stated, "I believe that real and positive immigration reform is possible, as long as we focus on the following goals: to improve jobs and wages for Americans, to strengthen our nation's security, and to restore respect for our laws." Mr. President, we stand ready to help you do just that.

Farming in America is a growth industry and a world-class example of something America does better than anyone else. The many agricultural products we produce, harvest and process comprise one of the few sectors of our economy in which the U.S. has a trade surplus with the rest of the world. Agriculture makes up a significant portion of the overall U.S. economy. In fact, agriculture and agriculture-related industries contributed \$985 billion to the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) in 2014, a 5.7 percent share, and 17.3 million full- and part-time jobs were related to agriculture, which is 9.3 percent of total U.S. employment. In addition, food manufacturing accounts for 14 percent of all U.S. manufacturing jobs.

However, the economic health of food and fiber producers, and the rural communities in which they live, is threatened by the lack of a reliable, stable and legal workforce. Our farmers face growing shortages of legally authorized and experienced workers each year. Jobs in agriculture are physically demanding, conducted in all seasons and are often transitory. This shortage of labor negatively impacts our economic competitiveness, local economies, and jobs. Reforms are necessary to address the agricultural labor shortage.

A common misconception is that agriculture is a low wage paying industry. However, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, wages for U.S. fieldworkers rose 36 percent over the past decade through the conclusion of last year's harvest in October, compared with 27 percent wage increases for non-farm employees. Not only is agriculture competitive with other industries in terms of wages, many U.S. jobs are created for each farmworker hired, and those U.S. jobs tend to be year-round jobs. In fact, every farmworker engaged in high-value labor intensive crop and livestock production sustains two to three off-farm but farm-dependent jobs. The activities that occur on domestic farms support not only farmworkers, but also an entire supply chain of transportation providers, input suppliers, processors and consumer retail functions.

Many of those American jobs will be lost if access to agriculture's current workforce is jeopardized without providing a mechanism for future legal workers. The economic health of many rural economies is largely dependent on a strong agriculture sector. At a time when many factories have closed and communities have been decimated, agriculture continues to be a bright spot. Yet the loss of the foreign-born workforce in rural communities will have the same economic impact on those communities as factories closing and moving to other countries. We believe that these contributions to the U.S. economy and American jobs fall in line with your comments.

Furthermore, we want to work with you to strengthen our nation's security. We support strengthening our border, and we believe to do so, we must also relieve pressure on the border by providing a lawful path for foreign workers to enter the U.S. on a nonimmigrant basis. Despite employers' best efforts, much of the agricultural workforce is in the U.S. without proper work authority. And while many others in agriculture can attempt to utilize the current but dysfunctional H-2A temporary and seasonal guest worker program, those with dairy, livestock, and mushroom operations cannot utilize this or any other program because of their year-round, rather than seasonal, need. For dairy farmers, cows must be milked twice a day, 365 days a year. Thus they are left without any legal channel to find workers when U.S. workers are simply not available or not interested. In addition to maintaining access to our current workforce, agriculture needs a new program that meets the needs of our diverse industry and functions as efficiently as the current free market while providing the security of legal, documented temporary workers. In addition to

maintaining access to our current workforce, in the short term the H-2A program must be reformed to function more efficiently and effectively for all of agriculture. For the long term, agriculture needs a new guest worker program based on free-market principles that meets the needs of our diverse industry and provides U.S. agriculture with reliable access to a legal workforce.

Lastly, agriculture wants to work with you to restore respect for and enforcement of our nation's laws. Enforcement of our immigration laws is critical to any successful immigration system; however, because there is no other industry with greater workforce demographic challenges and foreign labor reliance than agriculture we must work together to ensure our agricultural economy stays strong. Our farmers want to follow the rule of law and would welcome an E-Verify system that is simple, efficient, effective, and certain so long as reforms to our current immigration system allow for work authorization for experienced agricultural workers and a new, flexible visa program for long-term stability and applicability to all agricultural industries. Based on a farm labor study conducted by the American Farm Bureau Federation in 2014, an enforcement-only approach to immigration that causes agriculture to lose access to its workforce would result in agricultural output falling by 30 to 60 billion dollars.

Reforms to the immigration system can ensure that American agriculture has a legal, stable supply of workers, both in the short- and long-term, for all types of agriculture including those with year-round labor needs, such as dairy and livestock. Simply put, farm employers cannot grow and create jobs unless they know they will have workers, today and tomorrow, to help with harvesting, caring for livestock, and feeding the world.

We can and must do better for our economy and country by modernizing our immigration system to include work eligibility for our existing workforce and farmer-friendly programs to provide future legal guest workers. Done properly, reform will deter illegal immigration, protect and complement our U.S. workforce, better respond to changing economic and demographic needs, and generate greater productivity and economic activity.

Thank you and we look forward to working together.

Respectfully,

Agricultural Council of California
Agricultural Retailers Association
Agri-Mark, Inc.
Alabama Farmers Cooperative, Inc.
Almond Alliance of California
Amcot, Inc.
American Beekeeping Federation
American Farm Bureau Federation
AmericanHort
American Mushroom Institute
American Sugar Cane League
Apricot Producers of California
Aurora Cooperative
California Canning Peach Association
California Citrus Mutual
California Date Commission
California Dried Plum Board
California Fig Advisory Board
California Fresh Fruit Association
California Strawberry Commission
California Walnut Commission
Ceres Solutions, LLP
Co-Alliance, LLP
Cooperative Network
CropLife America
Dairy Business Milk Marketing Cooperative
Idaho Dairywomen's Association
Iowa Institute for Cooperatives
Farm Credit East

Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association
Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association
Gulf Citrus Growers Association
Michigan Farm Bureau
Michigan Milk Producers Association
National All-Jersey
National Cotton Council
National Cotton Ginners Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Council of Agricultural Employers
National Farmers Union
National Grange
National Milk Producers Federation
National Onion Association
National Peach Council
National Potato Council
North American Blueberry Council
Northwest Farm Credit Services
Northwest Food Processors Association
NORPAC Foods, Inc.
Olive Growers Council of California
Oregon Cherry Growers, Inc.
Pacific Coast Producers
Producers Cooperative Association
South East Dairy Farmers Association
Southern States Cooperative, Inc.
Sun-Maid Growers of California
Sunsweet Growers, Inc.
United Dairymen of Arizona
United Egg Producers
United Fresh Produce Association

U.S. Apple Association

USA Farmers

USA Rice

U.S. Sweet Potato Council

U.S. Tobacco Cooperative Inc.

Valley Fig Growers

Western Growers

Western United Dairymen

Wine Institute

Yuma Fresh Vegetable Association