

SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.
SECOND DISTRICT, GEORGIA



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Congress of the United States
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July 17, 2012

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The Honorable Rebecca Blank
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
14th Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Blank:

I am writing to express my strong support for the withdrawal of the 1996 antidumping petition and the termination of the 2008 Suspension Agreement governing the importation of tomatoes from Mexico.

I believe that the 2008 Agreement has not lived up to expectations and has had a detrimental impact on our domestic tomato industry. As you know, the agreement was intended to discourage, if not prevent, our Mexican trading partners from undercutting tomato prices in the United States. Unfortunately, however, that has not been the effect. Both the Mexican government as well as Mexican tomato producers have ignored the agreement in total.

Over sixteen years ago, tomato producers from across the nation, including producers from my District in Southwest Georgia, filed an antidumping petition requesting relief from unfairly traded imports of fresh tomatoes from Mexico. The United States government, after examining the facts, determined that there was reason to believe that the subject tomatoes were being sold in this country at less than fair value at margins as high as 188 percent.

For the past two decades, growers in the United States have been the victims of gamesmanship and evasive actions by Mexican growers. Imports today are roughly tripled since the case was first brought reaching a staggering level of roughly \$1.8 billion last year. There has been virtually no change in the underlying reference price in the three suspension agreements that are supposed to reflect Mexican costs of production.

Finally, our tomato farmers in southern Georgia, northern Florida, and throughout the country are still reeling from the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) tomato *salmonella* recall debacle from the summer of 2008.

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In Georgia alone, tomato growers lost over \$14 million from tomatoes grown, and in some cases harvested, but ultimately could not be sold since consumers 'quit buying tomatoes' on the recommendation of the Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control.

It is conservatively estimated growers nationwide lost more than \$125 million from this false indictment from our own federal government. More importantly, in the four years since that *salmonella* recall, the majority of our southeastern tomato producers have yet to fully recover financially from the losses suffered as a result of the recall.

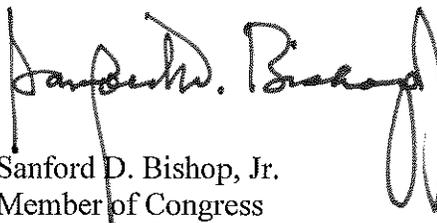
The current Suspension Agreement only serves to compound the challenges faced by our domestic tomato producers, particularly small, family owned tomato operations located in southwest Georgia and northern Florida.

By terminating that Agreement, it is our hope that fair market competition will be restored, and predatory actions on the part of tomato producers in Mexico will be stopped. The existing Agreement ties our hands behind our backs, while a flood of unfairly priced tomatoes flood our market.

Your favorable consideration in this matter is greatly appreciated. Should you have any questions or need additional information, do not hesitate to contact me or Michael Reed of my staff.

With warmest personal regards, I remain

Sincerely yours,



Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress