



The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave SE
Washington, DC 20590

March 1, 2017

Dear Secretary Chao:

Congratulations on your new role as Secretary of Transportation. The Agriculture Transportation Coalition has previously engaged with you in your roles at the Department of Labor, Department of Transportation, and Federal Maritime Commission, and we look forward to working with you further in your new capacity.

An enormous challenge in transportation for all agriculture commodities is the current truck weight limits on Interstate highways. We'd like to work with your agency to modernize these outdated regulations and increase allowable limits for U.S. agriculture, forest products, and other commodity exporters.

In fiscal year 2016, the American agriculture industry exported \$129 billion worth of goods. These products are grown, raised, processed, packaged and shipped from all regions of the U.S. on our highways to our land and sea ports, and then on to markets worldwide. Domestic transportation efficiency plays a critical role in determining the cost and thus competitiveness of our U.S. exports in foreign markets.

A major challenge for all U.S. agriculture exporters is the 1982 Federal law limiting truck weights on Interstate Highways to 80,000 pounds gross vehicle weight, and the 1991 Federal law freezing weights for longer combination vehicles. Although there are some exceptions, exporters still face significant constraints when using Interstate highways to move their products to the closest seaport or rail ramp. Agriculture exports shipped in ocean containers such as hay, frozen meat protein, soybeans, and forest products, often "weigh out" and exceed truck weight limits before storage capacity is reached inside the container.

Additionally, agriculture exporters in other countries have long had access to truck transportation at heavier gross weights than are generally available here in the U.S., disadvantaging our U.S. exporters.

We support safe and efficient truck weight limit modernization, whereby the gross vehicle weight is increased on Interstate routes and at critical connector routes at land and sea ports provided that the heavy weight truck configuration meets specific criteria. For example, heavier

trucks with additional axles have better braking power and improved weight distribution, which limits road wear and improves safety. There are also fuel savings and emission reductions.

We are eager to meet with you to discuss a safe and responsible way forward on this important issue. We need to make U.S. agriculture exporters more competitive now.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Agriculture Transportation Coalition

Agropur

Allied Potato, Inc.

Almond Alliance of California

American Feed Industry Association (AFIA)

American Frozen Food Institute

Border Valley Trading

Borges of California

Capay Canyon Ranch

Carriere Family Farms

Dairy Farmers of America

EFI Logistics

El Toro Export LLC

Fornazor International, Inc.

Gold Dust Potato Processors, Inc.

Grocery Manufacturers Association

Indiana Packers Corporation

International Express, LLC

J&W Walker Farms, Inc.

Johnsonville Sausage, LLC

MacMillan-Piper, Inc.

Midwest Shippers Association

National Beef

National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA)

National Frozen Foods Corporation

National Onion Association

National Pork Producers Council

National Potato Council
North American Meat Institute
Northern Food Grade Soybean Association
Oregon Potato Commission
Pacific Northwest Asia Shippers Association
PCC Logistics
Produce Marketing Association
R & T Truck Inc.
Ray-Mont Logistics
Rural & Agriculture Council of America
SB & B Foods
Smithfield Foods
Standlee Premium Western Forage
Sunsweet Growers Inc
Sunview Marketing
Superior Foods International
Tally Ho Farms
The Gombos Company, LLC
U.S. Forage Export Council
U.S. Hide, Skin and Leather Association
United Fresh Produce Association
United States Cattlemen's Association
USSA [U.S. Shippers Association]
Washington State Potato Commission