

January 21, 2021

U.S. International Trade Commission
500 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20436

RE: Investigation No. TA-201-77 (Fresh, Chilled, and Frozen Blueberries)

Dear Chairman Kearns and Commissioners:

We write in support of the domestic blueberry growers in the above-referenced investigation.

We understand that domestic blueberry growers have been seriously injured by surging imports of blueberries, which have increased in volume by nearly 62 percent between 2015 and 2019. These imports have suppressed and undercut prices at the most sensitive times during the harvest cycle, with the effect of significantly diminishing or eliminating profits for domestic growers. We are also aware that some blueberry growers have been forced to forego harvesting at times because low prices make it uneconomic to pick their blueberries. Without safeguard relief, the domestic blueberry growers from Florida and Georgia, north to Michigan, and west to California, Oregon, and Washington could be wiped out, accelerating the devastation faced by family farmers and their local communities and undermining the security of our nation's food supply.

Foreign production for some of the largest exporters has been unnaturally stimulated as a number of countries have provided support to their blueberry growers to increase production rapidly in recent years. The result is export oriented foreign blueberry industries targeting the United States' large and open market. Data on imports of blueberry plants into countries like Mexico and Peru also make clear that future production there is likely to ramp up and further swamp the U.S. market as blueberry bushes mature and reach peak yield in coming years.

All of this is occurring as domestic demand for blueberries is exploding. Domestic blueberry growers should be reaping the benefits of the growing U.S. market even as they share it with imports. Instead, family farmers, suppliers, and local communities are being seriously injured as domestic blueberries compete with imports from countries that have lower food safety, labor, and environmental standards.

A number of issues facing our organizations and the domestic blueberry growers are very similar. We face foreign targeting of U.S. markets and support for expanded production and export of agriculture products. We face similar conditions of foreign competition with unfair differentials in wages and regulatory regimes (environmental controls, food safety enforcement, etc.), and inadequate country of origin labeling. And we operate in an environment in which small, independent businesses are in competition with large businesses that favor and benefit from imports. The cumulative effects of imports under these conditions have significant negative impacts on rural agricultural producers and communities.

American agriculture producers, such as the blueberry growers in this case, deserve a chance to sell their goods in the United States at reasonable prices and deserve the breathing space of effective safeguard relief to make the necessary adjustments to sustain a secure domestic supply of blueberries. We urge the Commission to give full consideration to the facts in this case in recognizing the serious injury affecting domestic blueberry growers.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Bullard". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Bill Bullard, CEO, R-CALF USA and for the groups listed below.

American Grassfed Association
Buckeye Quality Beef Association
Cattle Producers of Louisiana
Cattle Producers of Washington
Coalition for a Prosperous America (CPA)
Colorado Independent CattleGrowers Association
Colorado Land, Water & Food Alliance
Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance
Independent Beef Association of North Dakota
Independent Cattlemen of Nebraska
Independent Cattlemen of Wyoming
National Farmers Organization
National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
Oklahoma Independent Stockgrowers Association
Range Allotment Owners Association
R-CALF USA
Rural Coalition
Southern Colorado Livestock Association
Stevens County Cattlemen's Association
The American Agriculture Movement
World Farmers