

March 21, 2022

President Joseph Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

The undersigned agricultural producer, commodity, agribusiness and food-related national organizations that make up the Agricultural Transportation Working Group (ATWG) respectively request that your administration take an active role in ensuring the upcoming contract negotiations for West Coast ports don't result in any labor disruptions.

The farmers, ranchers, food and beverage manufacturers, processors, package suppliers, farm supply dealers and agricultural product marketers that comprise our collective memberships are dedicated to providing safe, abundant, affordable and sustainably produced human and animal food, fiber and other agricultural products that directly benefit U.S. and global consumers and contribute significantly to U.S. economic growth and trade. Importantly, they also support and sustain millions of American jobs, many in rural communities.

As the largest entry point for imported and exported cargo in the United States, West Coast ports play an enormous role in the supply chain we rely upon to operate our businesses. They are the single most important link in the chain, accounting for more than 9% of the nation's GDP – moving trillions of dollars' worth of goods that support millions of jobs, businesses, hospitals, and other organizations in every community throughout the country.

The agricultural community has been particularly susceptible to supply chain congestion, due in large part to the simple fact that our products have a finite shelf life. America's farmers, ranchers, growers, and the entire agricultural sector depends heavily on smooth operation at these ports to sustain our global markets. As we look to the remainder of 2022, we are closely following developments at the West Coast ports and we are encouraged by the progress toward relieving congestion.

But we see potential new challenges ahead. Our single most important concern is the upcoming contract negotiations between the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA). This contract covers *all West Coast ports* that we rely upon for our livelihoods. The current contract expires on July 1, 2022, and history shows that some past negotiations were fraught with conflict and widespread disruptions.

***The American agricultural community that relies on these ports cannot afford any labor disruption on the heels of the pandemic.***

We are writing to appeal to you to use the power of your office to urge the parties to begin negotiations as soon as possible, with the goal of reaching an agreement without any disruption at West Coast ports. We are not suggesting taking a position on the contract issues the two sides will negotiate. But keeping them at the table without disruption is a national imperative.

Given the continuing and well-chronicled fragility of the U.S. supply chain, any disruption at West Coast ports would be debilitating to the national economy and to America's farmers, ranchers, co-ops and agribusinesses. Any slowdown or disruption now, just as we are starting to recover, would be catastrophic to the entire agriculture economy.

We urge you to reach out directly to the leaders of the PMA and ILWU to encourage their respective leaders to negotiate without disruption. And should challenges at the negotiations table threaten to spill over onto the terminals – as history would indicate is very possible – please continue to pressure them to stay at the table and negotiate in a manner that protects our economic interests and those of millions of workers and businesses located far away, but reliant upon, West Coast port terminals.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association  
Amcot  
American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Feed Industry Association  
American Pulse Association  
American Seed Trade Association  
American Sheep Industry Association  
California Walnut Commission  
Consumer Brands Association  
Corn Refiners Association  
Hardwood Federation  
International Dairy Foods Association  
International Fresh Produce Association  
National Cotton Council  
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives  
National Grange  
National Oilseed Processors Association  
National Pork Producers Council  
National Potato Council  
Pet Food Institute  
Society of American Florists  
The Fertilizer Institute  
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council  
USA Pea & Lentil Trade Association  
USA Rice