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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

September 11, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C.

Dear Secretary Perdue,

I write to you today to seek your assistance on a vital international trade issue involving opening the Japanese market for U.S. fresh table stock potatoes. The current negotiations over the U.S.-Japan Free Trade Agreement (FTA) provide a unique opportunity to bring this long-unresolved issue to a positive conclusion and generate an estimated \$75- \$100 million in annual exports.

In 1993, the Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) first requested Japan to open its market to U.S. fresh potatoes. For more than 20 years, APHIS and the U.S. potato industry have attempted to engage Japan in meaningful discussions to achieve market access for fresh table stock potatoes. Unfortunately, these efforts have been repeatedly unfulfilled as Japan refuses to pursue even initial discussions on the matter. Twenty-six years later, the Japanese market remains closed.

This closure exists even though Japan had already conducted a thorough review of U.S. fresh potatoes in 2006 when the market was opened for U.S. potatoes for processing. During this review, the U.S. potato industry addressed all Japanese technical concerns with comprehensive mitigations. There is no valid phytosanitary justification for the market to remain closed.

The U.S. potato industry has a proud history of exporting fresh potatoes to many countries in the Pacific Rim, including South Korea, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Taiwan.

I strongly urge you to pursue full market access for U.S. fresh table stock potatoes to Japan as USDA is working to conclude the U.S.-Japan FTA. The length of this outstanding market access and the absence of pest and disease issues should make this an achievable goal that will benefit Washington State's potato industry and the entire U.S. economy.

Sincerely,

Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress

Cc: The Honorable Greg Ibach
Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs
United States Department of Agriculture