June 29, 2020

Chairwoman Nita M. Lowey  
U.S. House of Representatives  
House Committee on Appropriations  
2365 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Kay Granger  
U.S. House of Representatives  
House Committee on Appropriations  
1026 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Richard Shelby  
U.S. Senate  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
304 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Vice Chairman Patrick Leahy  
U.S. Senate  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
437 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

The undersigned groups urge you to ensure adequate funding for Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Agriculture Quarantine Inspection (AQI) at U.S. international ports of entry. The global COVID-19 pandemic threatens to disrupt agriculture inspections, which are critical to preventing the introduction of plant and animal pests and diseases that could devastate American agriculture.

The $1 trillion U.S. agriculture sector is a crucial component of the American economy. CBP agriculture inspectors perform critically important agricultural inspections every day at the nation’s ports of entry to prevent the entry of foreign plant and animal pests and diseases. Foreign pests and diseases, such as African swine fever, which has killed more than one out of every four pigs globally, would have a devastating effect on American agriculture if they reached our shores.

Agriculture inspection of international passengers and cargo is carried out by CBP’s Agriculture Specialists, Technicians and Canine Teams. These CBP personnel are ordinarily funded by AQI user fees, collected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and transferred to CBP to cover salaries and expenses of the inspectors. The global COVID-19 pandemic has caused a precipitous downturn in international travel and lowered cargo imports. International air travel alone has fallen by nearly 98%. Maritime shipping is down nationally by double-digit percentages year-on-year, with drops in volume varying from seaport to seaport. And virtually all seaport passenger travel has halted, with the 2020 tourism season virtually eliminated.

This unprecedented decline has resulted in such dramatically reduced AQI user fee collections that even the APHIS’ user fee reserve fund will be depleted by the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2020. With user fee collections not expected to rebound for the foreseeable future, the shortfall in funding for AQI at the ports of entry through the end FY 2021 is estimated to be $630 million.
We urge Congress to ensure that the essential work of CBP agriculture inspectors continues uninterrupted throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We depend on AQI to ensure that America’s agriculture sector remains safe from foreign animal and plant pests and diseases. It is inconceivable that Congress would risk widespread damage to U.S. agriculture and the overall economy by not funding these inspections.

Respectfully submitted,

Agricultural and Food Transporters Conference
Agri-Mark Dairy Cooperative
Alabama Cattlemen’s Association
Alabama Nursery and Landscape Association
American Association of Avian Pathologists
American Association of Bovine Practitioners
American Association of Port Authorities
American Association of Swine Veterinarians
American Dairy Coalition
American Dairy Goat Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Feed Industry Association
American Honey Producers Association
American Horse Council
American Peanut Council
American Seed Trade Association
American Sheep Industry Association
American Veterinary Medical Association
AmericanHort
Animal Health Institute
Arizona Cattle Growers’ Association
Arkansas Cattlemen's Association
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Association of Veterinary Biologics Companies
Border Trade Alliance
California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association
California Cattlemen’s Association
California Pork Producers Association
Colorado Cattlemen’s Association
Colorado Livestock Association
Colorado Pork Producers Council
Corn Refiners Association
Dairy Producers of New Mexico
Dairy Producers of Utah
Exotic Wildlife Association
Farm Credit Council
Florida Cattlemen’s Association
Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association
Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association
Fresh Produce Association of the Americas
Georgia Cattlemen’s Association
Georgia Pork Producers Association
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council
Hawaii Pork Producers
Idaho Cattle Association
Illinois Beef Association
Illinois Green Industry Association
Illinois Pork Producers Association
Indiana Beef Cattle Association
Indiana Pork Producers Association
Iowa Cattlemen’s Association
Iowa Institute for Cooperatives
Iowa Nursery & Landscape Association
Iowa Pork Producers Association
Kansas Livestock Association
Kansas Pork Association
Kentucky Cattlemen’s Association
Kentucky Pork Producers Association
Livestock Marketing Association
Louisiana Cattlemen’s Association
Louisiana Nursery and Landscape Association
Maritime Exchange for the Delaware River and Bay
Maryland Cattlemen's Association
Maryland Nursery, Landscape and Greenhouse Association
Michigan Agri-Business
Michigan Cattlemen’s Association
Michigan Nursery & Landscape Association
Michigan Pork Producers Association
Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association
Minnesota Pork Producers Association
Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association
Mississippi Pork Producers Association
Missouri Cattlemen’s Association
Missouri Green Industry Alliance
Missouri Pork Association
Montana Pork Producers Council
Montana Stockgrowers Association
National Animal Interest Alliance
National Association of Federal Veterinarians
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Cattlemen’s Beef Association
National Chicken Council
National Christmas Tree Association  
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives  
National Customs Brokers and Forwarders Association of America  
National Grain and Feed Association  
National Milk Producers Federation  
National Oilseed Processors Association  
National Onion Association  
National Pork Producers Council  
National Sorghum Producers  
National Treasury Employees Union  
National Turkey Federation  
Nebraska Cattlemen  
Nebraska Pork Producers Association, Inc.  
Nevada Cattlemen’s Association  
New Mexico Cattle Growers’ Association  
New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau  
New York Pork Producers Co-op  
North American Deer Farmers Association  
North American Elk Breeders Association  
North American Meat Institute  
North American Renderers Association  
North Carolina Cattlemen’s Association  
North Carolina Pork Council  
North Dakota Pork Council  
North Dakota Stockmen’s Association  
Northeast Dairy Farmers Cooperatives  
Ohio Cattlemen’s Association  
Ohio Nursery & Landscape Association  
Ohio Pork Council  
Oklahoma Cattlemen’s Association  
Oklahoma Pork Council  
Oregon Association of Nurseries  
Oregon Cattlemen’s Association  
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association  
Oregon Pork Producers  
Oregon Women for Agriculture  
Pet Food Institute  
Plant California Alliance  
Pork Producers of Pennsylvania  
Produce Marketing Association  
Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania  
Rural & Agriculture Council of America  
Society of American Florists  
South Dakota Association of Cooperatives  
South Dakota Cattlemen’s Association  
South Dakota Pork Producers Council
Tennessee Cattlemen’s Association
Tennessee Pork Producers Association
Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association
Texas Cattle Feeders Association
Texas Citrus Mutual
Texas International Produce Association
Texas Pork Producers Association
U.S. Dry Bean Council
United Egg Producers
United Fresh Produce Association
United States Animal Health Association
United States Cattlemen’s Association
Upstate Niagara Cooperative, Inc.
US Rice Producers Association
USA Rice Federation
Utah Cattlemen’s Association
Utah Pork Producers
Virginia Cattlemen’s Association
Virginia Pork Council, Inc.
Washington Cattle Feeders Association
Washington State Cattlemen’s Association
Washington State Dairy Federation
Washington State Potato Commission
West Virginia Cattlemen’s Association
Western Growers Association
Wisconsin Cattlemen’s Association
Wisconsin Pork Association
Wyoming Stock Growers Association

cc:
Chair and Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Chair and Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Chair and Ranking Member, House Agriculture Committee
Chair and Ranking Member, House Committee on Homeland Security
Chair and Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
Chair and Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs