National Pork Producers Council
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Office of United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20508

Dear Office of the United States Trade Representative,

NPPC welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the Office of the United States Trade Representative's review of unfair trade practices and harm from non-reciprocal trade agreements. This submission is in response to the Federal Register Notice Document No. USTR-2025-0001.

NPPC represents 43 state producer organizations and the domestic and global interests of more than 60,000 U.S. pork operations. The U.S. pork industry is a major value-added enterprise in the U.S. agricultural economy and a significant contributor to the overall U.S. economy, producing more than 28 billion pounds of high-quality, safe, and affordable pork in 2024. More than 500,000 American jobs are supported by U.S. pork production, and U.S. pork exports sustain more than 155,000 of these jobs. In any given year, the U.S. pork industry ships product to more than 100 countries. Exports contribute significantly to the bottom line of all U.S. pork producers, accounting for more than $66 of value for each hog marketed in 2024. Last year, the U.S. pork industry exported 3 million metric tons of pork and pork products valued at over $8.6 billion.

Exports are especially – but not only - helpful for creating value from pork products like offal that are more highly valued in other countries. Pork products are covered by a variety of tariff lines that might be set at different levels without corresponding to U.S. tariff lines. Most countries that import pork, including countries where we face trade barriers, would not be competitive in the United States, so adjusting the U.S. barriers on pork to reflect their barriers would not be an effective way to create leverage. This is one reason why negotiating reductions of tariffs and other trade barriers is a better way to achieve reciprocity.

Negotiating reciprocal trade policies is a commendable objective, and while exploring ways to achieve this, it is essential for USTR to keep in mind that U.S. pork producers require access to foreign markets and must avoid retaliation that can disrupt this access. A key strategy to achieve reciprocity is negotiating the elimination of tariffs with strong enforcement mechanisms to ensure that non-tariff barriers do not prevent market access, following model of the U.S.-

Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). By focusing on negotiations, the U.S. can promote reciprocal trade through fair and open markets, which can create long-term opportunities for U.S. pork producers, while imposing unilateral tariffs will likely lead to retaliation and harm long-term trade relationships.

U.S. pork exports face various tariff and non-tariff barriers in markets around the world. As a low-cost, high-quality provider of protein, significant growth in pork exports can be achieved by removing barriers to trade. Countries that have significant potential for U.S. pork exports with unfair barriers for U.S. pork are listed below with their unfair trading practices, which are adapted from NPPC's submission for the 2025 National Trade Estimate report.

Australia

In 2024, the U.S. exported $328 million in pork and pork products to Australia, but this is limited because of sanitary and phytosanitary barriers related to Porcine Reproductive Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS). Australia prohibits imports of fresh pork and bone-in products from the United States, even though the United States has provided evidence documenting the safety of U.S. pork products. NPPC continues to find no science or legal justification for these barriers and continues to push for full market access.

Brazil

Brazil has a de facto ban on U.S. pork that lacks any scientific justification and must be eliminated. Despite a 2019 joint statement agreeing to establish a science-based process for allowing pork imports, Brazil has still not opened its market to U.S. pork. NPPC supports opening the Brazilian market to allow fresh, frozen, and processed U.S. pork to be shipped to Latin America's largest economy.

China

Although China has been an important market for U.S. pork in recent years, there are many restrictions on U.S. pork exports that are inconsistent with international standards. China's onerous facility registration system continues to limit U.S. export potential. Recently, two U.S. pork facilities had their registration lapse on the General Administration of Customs of China, on March 16, 2025, more than 100 facilities registration will expire, and the Government of China has not responded to multiple requests from USDA to renew these facilities registration. China bans the use of ractopamine, for example, instead of following Codex MRLs. The Phase I agreement required China to conduct a risk assessment for ractopamine in pork, but over three years later, the ban remains in place. There are also continuing problems related to African swine fever (ASF) and COVID-19 that slow or disrupt trade. U.S. pork fresh and frozen pork exports to China are subject to 25 percent retaliatory tariffs in response to U.S. Section 232 tariffs on imports of Chinese steel and aluminum. These tariffs put U.S. pork products at a disadvantage to imports from competing suppliers.

Ecuador

U.S. pork faces onerous import licensing schemes that block access. In 2020, the U.S.-Ecuador Trade and Investment Council Agreement (TIC) identified simplification of this process as a goal. The opposite has occurred. Since the TIC was negotiated, import permits have been painfully slow to materialize or denied without justification. Furthermore, Ecuador requires domestic purchases prior to assigning import licenses and limits total imports to a predetermined amount, in likely violation of its WTO commitments.

Ecuador has also established additional export registration requirements known as "Annex 2." This ambiguous process is further impeding U.S. pork's ability to successfully export to Ecuador. There is also concern with AGROCALIDAD Resolution 115-2019 and Resolution 003-2016, which require registration of processing facilities for veterinary inputs and for livestock products and byproducts – an expansive and unnecessary scope – to receive import permit authorization.

European Union

In the European Union, U.S pork must compete with suppliers that have preferential access under free trade agreements the EU has concluded with 20-plus other nations, putting U.S. producers at a significant disadvantage. U.S. pork access is also disadvantaged because the EU does not recognize the equivalence of U.S. pork production practices nor accept exports from all USDA-approved facilities. The EU restricts pork through several non-science-based measures, including restrictions on hormones and beta agonists such as ractopamine. Recent introduction of onerous and unnecessary testing requirements for stilbenes and antithyroid use for imports add additional bureaucracy that hinders U.S. pork market access. These restrictions are not based on Codex standards or scientific analysis. NPPC also remains concerned about how the EU intends to implement policies around sustainable production, including the proposed deforestation-free supply chain regulation and "mirror clauses" for the extraterritorial application of EU animal welfare regulations, especially given its history of disregarding legitimate concerns and input from trading partners.

Honduras

The Honduran president has publicly discussed renegotiating the agriculture provisions of the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA). Furthermore, the government has previously required local purchases prior to importing pork from the United States. NPPC notes that DR-CAFTA's pork import provisions were phased in over 20 years. Renegotiating DR-CAFTA to restrict U.S. imports would undermine an important trade relationship and food security in Honduras.

Honduran consumers benefited from $147 million worth of high-quality U.S. pork imports in 2024. However, problems remain, including a discriminatory 15 percent tax applied on certain pork cuts imported with customs documentation in English, while the same cut is exempt domestically.

India

In early 2022, India granted access for U.S. pork and pork products. However, in late September 2022, India proposed an additional export certificate with additional attestations that were not negotiated with U.S. regulatory authorities. Pork exports have been virtually zero since access was granted. NPPC implores the U.S. government to continue working with the Indian government to resolve this issue.

Indonesia

U.S. pork exports to Indonesia totaled a mere $3.7 million of mostly frozen pork in 2024. The country has a plant approval process that is cumbersome and laborious, which discourages U.S. pork plants from registering. In addition, Indonesia requires payment to conduct audits, a highly unusual demand. NPPC is continuing to work with the U.S. government for additional plant approvals and a more streamlined questionnaire process.

Jamaica

Jamaica has maintained an effective ban on non-hermetically sealed U.S. pork exports for over 30 years. Its limited pork imports from the United States consist primarily of canned ham. There is no science-based justification for this unfair trade barrier. Despite decades of negotiations, Jamaica's ban on U.S. pork remains, while it has granted access to other pork-producing countries, including other countries with the same porcine disease conditions as the United States, including Canada, the United Kingdom, and the European Union. NPPC strongly supports a science-based approach to trade and the opportunity to compete on a level playing field with countries that have the same commercial swine herd health status. A broadening of access for U.S. products to include fresh and frozen pork would make Jamaica a more significant potential market.

Malaysia

U.S. pork can only ship to Malaysia from seven pork plants. While access is technically allowed for fresh, frozen, and unprocessed pork, the Malaysian authorities have only authorized imports of frozen pork from these seven plants, creating an unjustified barrier to fresh pork exports.

New Zealand

Pork imports are limited because of unfounded concerns about disease transmission, such as the porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS). However, in the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) chapter on PRRS it is stated that the disease is not transmissible through legal trade pork, and that all products should be allowed without restrictions. Currently, pork can only be imported if it is cooked, cured, canned, in consumer-ready packages of less than 3 kg, or destined for further processing.

Nigeria

In early 2022, Nigeria granted access for U.S. pork sausage, though there have been zero pork sausage exports since. The country still has a de facto ban on other U.S. pork that lacks any scientific justification and must be eliminated.

Panama

In 2020, the Ministry of Health issued Decree 255, requiring facility registration for establishments that store, display, distribute, or sell meat and meat products. This has caused major delays in facility registration. On January 10, 2024, the Panamanian government issued a decree to protect domestic pork producers from the economic effects of imports. The decree authorizes import control measures through the establishment of an import quota of 8,791 metric tons for 2024. The quota will grow by 6 percent in each subsequent year. Existing tariff rate quota (TRQ) access under Panama's various international trade agreements will count against the overall quota of 8,791 metric tons.

Article 3 of the decree says that the difference between the annual quotas under Panama's existing trade agreements and the total import volume ceiling (8,791 metric tons in 2024) are subject to an import licensing system that will be administered by the Trade Policy Unit of the Ministry of Agricultural Development.

In effect, the measure places a limit on how much U.S. pork can enter Panama under over-quota tariff conditions. The preferential over-quota tariff rate for U.S. pork lines under the FTA TRQ (except carcasses and half-carcasses) was 15.6 percent in 2024 (year 13 of the agreement). On January 1, 2026, the over-quota rate is scheduled to reach zero under the agreement.

This decree is not consistent with Panama's market access commitments under the FTA or restrictions on quantitative limits applicable under the WTO, nor did Panama give notification of these measures under either.

Panamanian leaders have also discussed renegotiating aspects of the U.S.-Panama Trade Promotion Agreement, including pork market access. NPPC supports the original agreement, compliance with its terms, and full implementation of negotiated commitments on both sides.

Philippines

The Philippines government in May 2021 cut the in-quota tariff on pork to 15 percent from 30 percent and the out-of-quota rate to 25 percent from 40 percent. Those reduced duty rates have been extended three times and were in place through the end of 2024. Elections in the

Philippines stalled efforts to expand the minimum access volume (MAV) quota for imported pork cuts. The MAV, which expired Jan. 31, 2022, was raised to 254,210 metric tons (MT) from just 54,210 MT in 2021. As a result of those actions, U.S. pork exports to the Philippines soared in 2021, topping $205 million compared with $114 million in 2020, an 80 percent increase, but fell to $135 million in 2022 without the expanded MAV, dropped to $110 million in 2023, and picked up slightly to $121 million in 2024. The Philippines has been battling African swine fever (ASF) since 2019, and NPPC has been pressing both the U.S. and Philippines governments to lower pork import tariffs since ASF outbreaks began in the country.

Russia

Russia has more than doubled its production of pork since 2010 and shifted from being a major pork importer to a net exporter. It has maintained a ban on pork imports from the United States since 2014. These are political restrictions unrelated to any health or safety concerns.

Singapore

While the Singapore market is technically open to U.S. pork exports, there are several SPS issues that cause problems in the market. These include application of the 2022 regulations on pathogen reduction treatments (PRTs), trichinae mitigation requirements, and non-scientific shelf-life requirements. NPPC supports eliminating obstacles to trade that are not based on sound scientific requirements to provide better access to the Singapore market.

South Africa

South Africa has a partial ban on U.S. pork and pork products. NPPC wants full market access for U.S. pork, including offal, heat-treated products, and casings for export to South Africa. This could be a growing market for U.S. pork producers, but exports are hampered by unwarranted, non-scientific restrictions. These restrictions include no market access for pork offal, heat-treated/canned products, and casings; no guidance for the unjustified requirement that lymph nodes must be removed from shoulder cuts; stringent, non-science-based, trichinae-related freezing requirements; and limits on pork cuts allowed for importation because of concerns related to Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS) and the pseudorabies virus (PRV). These restrictions do not recognize animal health controls in the United States, including disease elimination, and are not compliant with international standards.

Taiwan

NPPC is deeply concerned about the effects of Taiwan’s country-of-origin labeling (COOL) requirements for pork. These were introduced in 2021 to coincide with new maximum residue limits (MRLs) for pork, with resulting negative impacts on U.S. pork exports. While pork exports to Taiwan recovered to more historical levels in 2023, the market is nowhere near the size it should be because of the ongoing COOL requirements and the lingering effects of non-science-based MRL policies. NPPC will continue to defend the right of U.S. hog farmers to use production processes and products that are safe and oppose government mandates that, with no scientific backing, dictate production practices, unnecessarily increase food prices, and inhibit consumer choice.

Thailand

Thailand maintains a de facto ban on U.S. pork imports. It also has not established MRLs for ractopamine even though Codex established an MRL for it in 2012. Despite removing some duty-free trade preferences under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program, Thailand has not made progress on granting market access (likely in part because GSP is currently expired).

Vietnam

In 2020, Vietnam reduced its Most Favored Nation (MFN) tariff rates from 15 percent to 10 percent for frozen pork products. NPPC is pleased with this reduction, but the tariff rate remains significantly higher than the rates for competitors such as the European Union, Russia, and Canada that have trade agreements in place with Vietnam. Vietnam also bans the importation of white offal, with no scientific reasoning for the restriction.

Again, NPPC expresses its appreciation for the opportunity to comment on unfair trade practices and harm from non-reciprocal trade agreements and is looking forward to continuing to work with USTR and other U.S. government agencies to open and maintain market access for U.S. pork and pork products.

Sincerely,

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National Pork Producers Council