



**P.O. Box 2945, LaGrange, GA 30241**  
**1-877-994-3842 [www.gfvga.org](http://www.gfvga.org)**

February 26, 2019

The Honorable Buddy Carter  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Congressman Carter,

As you are aware, later this year after the release of the International Trade Commission report, Congress will be voting on the United States Mexico Canada Agreement (USMCA). This agreement has terrible ramifications for Georgia's produce industry. As we have noted through communications to your office, and in letters from Georgia Ag Commissioner Gary Black, the USMCA will allow Mexico to continue unfair trade practices including dumping product into the U.S. below their cost of production. The Mexican government support to growers for infrastructure and operating supplies is increasing under their new Administration, allowing wages as low as \$10 per day when Georgia farmers are paying our workers over \$11.00 per hour and providing few regulatory controls compared to our U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of Labor (DOL) regulations in the US. USMCA gives Georgia growers no recourse to file anti-dumping or countervailing duty investigations. USMCA is essentially a continuation of NAFTA for Georgia farmers which provides no relief for these imports.

Since 2002 U.S. growers have seen an exponential increase of Mexican imports into the U.S. at a level causing some southeastern growers to shut down their operations or consider this as an option in the near future. Since 2002 Mexican imports of tomatoes have increased 233%, bell pepper imports have increased 156% and blueberries have increased 1290% (from 1 million pounds in 2007 to 31 million pounds in 2016). The volume of Mexican imports, below production costs, causes U.S. prices to plummet when their product hits the U.S. domestic market. Recently Georgia squash was selling for \$14-\$16 per box. The week Mexico's squash hit the U.S. market the price dropped to \$4 per box. Even with their inexpensive labor and government subsidies, a Mexican grower cannot produce a box of squash for \$4 per box. Mexican squash is being dumped on the U.S. market under their cost of production and NAFTA/USMCA allows for this unfair trade practice!

For the past 15 years, Congress has recognized that seasonal and perishable sectors need improved anti-dumping and countervailing duty laws to address their special circumstances. The 2015 Trade Promotion Authority Act (TPAA) expressly calls on all new US Trade deals to "eliminate practices that adversely affect trade in perishable or cyclical products," while "improving import relief

mechanisms to recognize the unique characteristics of perishable and cyclical agriculture.” The Trump Administration expressly called for this provision in the new USMCA deal but unfortunately it was not agreed to by all parties. USMCA as it is now drafted fails to accomplish these vital reforms for the southeastern produce grower.

Georgia and Southeastern produce growers must have some relief. We must have a level playing field to produce and compete. We ask for your help or we will lose the produce industry in the Southeast.

U.S. Congressmen Vern Buchanan (R-FL) and Al Lawson (D-FL) have introduced “The Defending Domestic Produce Production Act” (H.R. 101) to correct this USMCA omission and ensure that U.S. import relief mechanisms recognize the unique characteristics of seasonal and perishable agriculture as mandated by TPAA. U.S. Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) has introduced a companion bill in the Senate (S.16). This legislation would give our industry the relief we need to address Mexico’s unfair produce shipments that continue to trend upward. This will continue as the new President of Mexico has announced his near-term intention to invest substantially more “seed capital” in the produce sector and a goal of planting one million more hectares (2.5 million acres) in fruit and timber. As a comparison, Georgia has only 35,000 – 38,000 acres in blueberry production which produces 80-90 million pounds in a good year.

This letter is to make two requests,

1. Our Georgia fruit and vegetable growers call on you to please join Congressmen Buchanan and Lawson as a co-sponsor to the ‘The Defending Domestic Produce Production Act’ – H.R. 101.
2. If this legislation does not pass, and if the Administration does not have a solution to our seasonal and perishable agriculture issues, we ask you to VOTE NO on the USMCA agreement.

Thank you for your support of Georgia farmers and our produce industry. Should you have questions please let us know.

Kindest Regards,

***Aries Haygood***

Aries Haygood, President

***Charles Hall***

Charles Hall, Executive Director

Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association  
P.O. Box 2948  
LaGrange, GA 30241  
706-845-8200  
[www.gfvga.org](http://www.gfvga.org)