

February 7, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

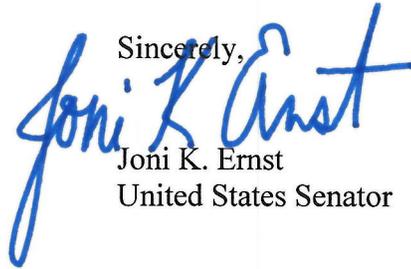
I am writing today about working with you and your administration to help grow our country's economy and support American jobs across this great nation. I want to highlight the prospect of continuing to increase our trade surplus in a segment of the economy that is vital to our heartland: food and agriculture. Your upcoming meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe provides a timely opportunity to engage in a dialogue that will strengthen our bilateral trade and investment relationship with Japan.

The American farmer has proven time and again to be the envy of the world, producing more food, fiber and fuel than any other country. As a consequence of this astonishing productivity and consistent surplus in commodities, exports are necessary to keep this sector strong. For decades, we have run a trade surplus in food and agricultural exports. These exports add significant value to the bottom line of our nation's farmers and ranchers, particularly those who raise livestock.

My home state of Iowa leads the nation in pork production, raising more of this safe, nutritious meat than the next two states combined. One out of every three pounds of bacon, ham or sausage in the U.S. comes from the Hawkeye state. As it would happen, Japan is the second largest market for U.S. pork exports by volume and the largest in terms of value. All of this despite significant import protections Japan imposes through a gate price system. I ask that you do everything in your power to negotiate outright elimination of all barriers for pork and pork products in any bilateral trade deal with Japan.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention our nation's vibrant beef industry, which produces over 24 billion pounds per year. The value of U.S. beef exports in 2015 was over \$6 billion, or \$325 per head. Our top export market is Japan, but international competitors are chipping away at our market share. The bilateral Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement gives Australia a 10 percent tariff rate advantage over U.S. beef. I would ask that your administration move quickly to negotiate an elimination of all trade barriers to ensure a level playing field for our farmers and ranchers.

Now is the time to begin these conversations with Japan in earnest, as every moment we delay means dollars that would otherwise be going into the pockets of America's farmers are enriching our foreign competitors instead. The timing is critical given the void left by our withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, as other countries will undoubtedly move to consolidate economic power in the region. I look forward to working with you and the new administration to build upon our existing food and agriculture trade surplus, and continue to strengthen our position globally.

Sincerely,

Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator