

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 18, 2020

The Honorable Robert Lighthizer  
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative  
Washington, D.C. 20508

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer:

Thank you for your dedication to the American farmer and worker. The August hearings conducted by your office on seasonal perishable fruit and vegetable imports was the first official opportunity for Georgia growers to convey their first-hand accounts of the dramatically unfair environment they face. As you know, Georgia farmers testified at length on the matter and we believe that meaningful progress will be made with your office's support. We write to you today with regards to your letter to the United States International Trade Commission requesting an investigation on imported strawberries and bell peppers. We believe the inclusion of other commodities, such as cucumbers and squash, in the Section 332 request may be necessary.

In August 2020, Georgia and Florida growers testified in the two USTR virtual hearings regarding seasonal and perishable produce. These fruit and vegetable imports from Mexico continue to dramatically impact U.S. markets and threaten the future of domestic farm production of perishable produce.

In the last twelve months, we have seen further growth in imports across several vegetable products. For example, cucumbers' import value is currently \$894 million, which is a 10% increase from September 2019 and August 2020. Squash's import value is currently \$473 million representing a 27% increase during that same time period. Year to date load totals from Mexico for cucumbers and bell peppers have more than doubled from the same period in 2019. Squash appears to be the next crop to follow suit with over 100 additional loads having arrived at U.S. markets so far this year, just as southeastern growers have begun their squash harvests.

Prices have followed supply, and growers are now reporting tumbling prices across the board for vegetables. Prices are now well below U.S. production costs for several of these commodities and appear to correlate directly with increasing fall shipments from Mexico. Unfortunately, data and pricing available for national markets appears to be in direct conflict to the actual prices growers are receiving.

We appreciate your efforts on behalf of Southeastern fruit and vegetable growers. These market changes occur quickly and can make or break a grower's season in a matter of days if import increases and the resulting price decreases coincide with harvest. For this reason, we urge you to consider requesting a Section 332 investigation for cucumbers and squash in order to determine the impact of these seasonal imports on Southeastern markets.

Sincerely,



David A. Perdue  
United States Senator



Kelly Loeffler  
United States Senator