

Speaker Ryan: Leads Wisconsin Delegation Letter to Address Milk Exports

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Contact: Ian Martorana

WASHINGTON – Today Wisconsin’s First District congressman and speaker of the House, Paul Ryan, sent a letter spearheaded along with Congressman Sean Duffy and cosigned by the entire Wisconsin Congressional delegation, to Commerce Secretary Ross, Acting U.S. Trade Representative Stephen Vaughn, and Acting U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Michael Young regarding concerns about recent actions by Canada that are restricting American milk exports to the Canadian market.

“Exports are critical to the viability of Wisconsin’s dairy farms. These families rely on them for their very livelihood. I am encouraged by this bipartisan effort and will continue to work with my colleagues and impacted stakeholders to break down these trade barriers and reach a practical solution,” said Congressman Ryan.

Text of the letter follows:

Dear Secretary Ross, Acting Trade Representative Vaughn, and Acting Secretary Young,

On behalf of Wisconsin’s dairy farmers, we are writing to raise our concerns about recent actions by Canada that are restricting American milk exports to the Canadian market. Dairy farmers in Wisconsin and across the country rely on exports to remain viable. Last year, the United States dairy industry exported roughly 15 percent of its milk production. In Wisconsin – America’s Dairyland – the dairy industry contributes more than \$43 billion on average to the economy each year.

Canada has recently taken steps to implement targeted milk pricing programs that have compromised the ability of Wisconsin dairy farmers to access the Canadian market under existing trade agreements. These changes have caused the displacement of current imports from the United States, including ultra-filtered milk processed in Wisconsin. Canada traditionally used five classes to price its dairy products. In April 2016, Ontario province implemented its own additional sixth class, which has significantly restricted the exports of Wisconsin's dairy farmers into the Canadian market. Further exacerbating these trade barriers, Canada implemented a Class 7 National Ingredients Strategy, further displacing American exports and processors' ability to accept milk supplies. In addition, Canada's lack of transparency regarding these policies compounds the problem that our dairy industry is facing.

We are greatly concerned that these programs appear to violate Canada's existing trade obligations to the United States. Just last week, more than 75 Wisconsin dairy farmers were notified that the processor they sell to would no longer purchase their milk effective May 1, 2017, as a direct result of Canada's restrictive trade policies. This situation underscores how Canada's new pricing policies are not only undermining trade with the United States but are displacing fresh milk produced by hard-working dairy farmers in Wisconsin and around the country.

We urge you to take immediate action to address this dire situation where apparent unfair trade practices are putting Wisconsin dairy farmers' livelihoods at risk. We look forward to working with you to break down these trade barriers, enforce existing rules, and improve Canadian market access for our producers in any future trade negotiations.

Sincerely,

Speaker Paul D. Ryan
Congressman Sean Duffy
Governor Scott Walker
Senator Ron Johnson
Senator Tammy Baldwin
Congressman Mark Pocan
Congressman Ron Kind
Congresswoman Gwen Moore
Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner
Congressman Glenn Grothman

Congressman Mike Gallagher