

U.S. Reps. Kind, Smucker, Harder, and Marshall: Lead bipartisan letter urging swift negotiations with Japan to not leave dairy farmers behind

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La Crosse, WI— Today, **Reps. Ron Kind (D-WI), Lloyd Smucker (R-PA), Josh Harder (D-CA), Roger Marshall, M.D. (R-KS)** and 46 of their colleagues sent a bipartisan letter to United States Trade Representative (USTR) Robert Lighthizer and United States Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue urging their offices to work swiftly on a comprehensive Phase Two trade agreement with Japan.

Due to depressed milk prices and a suffering rural economy, dairy farmers are facing tough conditions and struggling to stay afloat. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports that 6,000 dairy farms have gone out of business over the last two years, underscoring the need for trade agreements that can expand overseas markets for the dairy industry and bolster jobs. Japan is one of the top five overseas markets for Made-in-America dairy products, and demand from both Japanese food producers and consumers is only increasing, creating a key opportunity for the American dairy industry to meet this need.

While the recent Phase One agreement with Japan made progress on several issues of importance, our farmers and processors still remain at a disadvantage to our competitors due to the preferential access granted by the Japan-European Union and Comprehensive Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership agreements. That's why Rep. Kind and his colleagues are urging USTR Lighthizer and USDA Secretary Perdue to maximize opportunities for dairy farmers by

addressing these remaining gaps and inequalities in market access in a Phase Two agreement.

“If Wisconsin dairy farmers are given the opportunity to compete on a level playing field, they’ll succeed,” said **Rep. Ron Kind**. “To that end, it’s critical that the Office of the USTR and USDA prioritize the Phase Two trade agreement with Japan and seize this valuable opportunity to improve and expand market access for our family farmers. It is not acceptable for our dairy farmers to have less access to the Japanese dairy market than we would have received in the previously negotiated TPP. I look forward to working together to advance this agreement and ensuring our farmers get the access they need.”

“I’m thankful that 50 of my colleagues are joining me in calling for President Trump’s administration to continue to make dairy market access a top priority in ongoing trade negotiations with Japan. Representing the number one agriculture producing district in Pennsylvania, I know that our dairy farmers are struggling with low prices. By making dairy market access a top priority in our Phase Two negotiations with Japan, we can provide additional opportunities for our hardworking dairy farmers across the nation to succeed. President Trump and his administration have already made great efforts to support the dairy industry with the USMCA, and I am hopeful they will continue to make our dairy farmers a top priority in these ongoing negotiations,” said **Rep. Lloyd Smucker**.

“Central Valley dairymen and women have been facing depressed milk prices and tough market conditions for years. We made some decent progress in the first phase of the deal, but there’s a lot left to do,” said **Rep. Josh Harder**. “We buy a lot of commodities from Japan, and they should buy ours at fair rates and with fair market access. If we get this deal right we’re talking about potentially doubling our \$100 million annual California exports to Japan. We need more jobs and export capacity now more than ever – we have to get a good deal for our dairy industry.”

“Already one of our top trading partners, Japan knows well the high quality products American farmers and ranchers produce,” said **Rep. Roger Marshall, M.D.**. “I was honored to join and support President Trump and Ambassador Lighthizer for the signing of the Phase One Agreement and look forward to continuing to build off of

that success creating more market access for our producers, in the next round of negotiations.”

“Japan is one of our top dairy export markets, clocking in at over \$280 million in dairy purchasing from the U.S. last year and it continues to grow. American dairy farmers and processors value the progress that’s been made to date on dairy exports with Japan yet are eager to see work resume to secure a comprehensive trade agreement that positions Japan’s best customer, the United States, most favorably vs. other dairy competitors in that market. The National Milk Producers Federation and the U.S. Dairy Export Council appreciate the leadership shown by Congressmen Kind, Smucker, Harder and Marshall in driving home the importance of full competitive parity with our major dairy suppliers, greater market access gains in key areas, and robust non-tariff provisions such as preservations for common cheese names,” said **Jaime Castaneda, Sr. Vice President for Policy and International Trade, NMPF and USDEC.**

Rep. Kind is a senior member of the House Ways and Means Committee’s Subcommittee on Trade and the co-chair of the New Democrat Coalitions’ Trade Task Force. The Ways and Means Committee is the most powerful – and the oldest – committee in the House of Representatives.

Read the bipartisan letter [here](#).