

Dairy farmers applaud USTR for USMCA enforcement measures

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Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative is applauding Trade Representative Katherine Tai for challenging Canada over its allocation of tariff-related quotas for dairy products.

Tai yesterday said the U.S. has requested and established a dispute settlement panel under the USMCA to review measures adopted by Canada that are said to undermine the ability of American dairy exporters to sell products to Canadian consumers. The measures allow Canada to impose higher tariffs on imports over a certain quantity for milk, cheese, skim milk powders and other dairy products.

“A top priority for the Biden-Harris administration is fully enforcing the USMCA and ensuring that it benefits American workers,” Tai said in a statement. “Launching the first panel request under the agreement will ensure our dairy industry and its workers can seize new opportunities under the USMCA to market and sell U.S. products to Canadian consumers.”

Edge has aggressively pushed for the USTR’s enforcement action after the issue first arose last summer.

“International trade is key to economic growth and stability for our dairy farmers and processors. That’s why additional market access into Canada is an important part of USMCA,” said Edge President Brody Stapel, a Wisconsin dairy farmer. “Edge and our farmers appreciate USTR’s commitment to holding Canada to the agreement and giving the U.S. dairy community greater export opportunities as intended.”

Under the previous administration, the USTR took an initial enforcement step in December by seeking consultations, which did not resolve the issue. In the new action, Tai's office asked for the establishment of a dispute settlement panel, which is expected to issue a report later this year.

Edge was among a group of dairy organizations to raise the issue in a letter sent to USTR earlier this month. Last week, U.S. Rep. Ron Kind joined a bipartisan group that also wrote to USTR to enforce the USMCA in support of U.S. dairy farmers. The La Crosse Dem commended the administration for moving forward with enforcement measures.

"Trade agreements work best when they are fully enforced, which is why I spent years working with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to make sure USMCA is fully enforceable and Wisconsin dairy farmers are able to compete on an even playing field," Kind said in a release.

-By Stephanie Hoff

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