Dear Secretary Vilsack and Ambassador Froman:

We would like to thank you for your continued efforts to expand opportunities around the world for the U.S. dairy industry. Right now, dairy exports account for the equivalent of one day’s milking every week. Foreign markets provide a critical home for milk produced by tens of thousands of U.S. dairy farms and an important growth avenue for food manufacturing facilities that process milk into finished products. This dynamic helps support good American jobs in rural areas all across the country.

As Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations move forward, we urge you to pursue an ambitious outcome on dairy trade, placing high priority on removing the various tariff and nontariff barriers that our dairy industry confronts when shipping to the European Union (EU).

Although both the U.S. and EU are major dairy producing and exporting regions, the U.S. has a $1.3 billion trade deficit with the EU for dairy products because of the burdens that the EU imposes on American companies trying to export their products to the EU. On average, EU dairy tariffs are three times those of the U.S., and while the EU enjoys a country-specific tariff-rate quota for dairy access into the U.S. market, the U.S. has no such similar preferential access to EU countries. Furthermore, while U.S. certification requirements for the vast majority of EU dairy imports are relatively nominal, EU certificate requirements for dairy products are more extensive, impeding U.S. access into the EU market. Resolving these imbalances would allow U.S. dairy products to compete on a more level playing field with European companies.

Dairy farmers and companies in our districts are also deeply concerned by the EU’s global efforts to impose restrictions on the use of many common food names under the guise of geographical indication regulations. The EU is taking a mechanism that was created to protect consumers against misleading information and instead using it to carve out exclusive market access for its own producers. The EU’s abuse of GIs threatens U.S. sales and exports of a number of U.S. agricultural products, but pose a particular concern to the use of dairy terms. This type of barrier to trade and commerce defies the fundamental goals of a trade agreement, and we urge you to work aggressively against the EU’s efforts in this respect in order to preserve both domestic and export opportunities for these products.

Trade discussions with the European Union offer a valuable opportunity to address the many barriers that hold back greater U.S. dairy sales to a market of 500 million consumers. We urge you to achieve a strong and beneficial outcome for the U.S. dairy industry in these trade negotiations.
Sincerely,

Reid J. Ribble
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

David G. Valadao
Member of Congress

Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

Thomas E. Petri
Member of Congress

Timothy J. Walz
Member of Congress

Bruce L. Braley
Member of Congress

Ron Kind
Member of Congress

Tom Reed
Member of Congress

Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress

Sean P. Duffy
Member of Congress

Sander M. Levin
Member of Congress

Dave Camp
Member of Congress

Collin C. Peterson
Member of Congress

Frank D. Lucas
Member of Congress

Charles B. Rangel
Member of Congress

Devin Nunes
Member of Congress
Mark E. Amodei  
Member of Congress

Michele Bachmann  
Member of Congress

Lou Barletta  
Member of Congress

Dan Benishek  
Member of Congress

Diane Black  
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress

Vern Buchanan  
Member of Congress

Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress

Ken Calvert  
Member of Congress

John Campbell  
Member of Congress

Matt Cartwright  
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver  
Member of Congress

Chris Collins  
Member of Congress

K. Michael Conaway  
Member of Congress

Jim Costa  
Member of Congress

Tom Cotton  
Member of Congress

Kevin Cramer  
Member of Congress

Eric A. "Rick" Crawford  
Member of Congress

Rodney Davis  
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio  
Member of Congress

John K. Delaney  
Member of Congress

Rosa L. DeLauro  
Member of Congress

Jeff Denham  
Member of Congress

Scott DesJarlais  
Member of Congress

Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress
Sean Patrick Maloney  
Member of Congress

Tom McClintock  
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

Jim Moran  
Member of Congress

Gloria Negrete McLeod  
Member of Congress

Richard M. Nolan  
Member of Congress

Stevan Pearce  
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress

Tom Marino  
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress

Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Member of Congress

Michael H. Michaud  
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

Randy Neugebauer  
Member of Congress

William L. Owens  
Member of Congress

Ed Perlmutter  
Member of Congress

Joseph R. Pitts  
Member of Congress

Kevin McCarthy  
Member of Congress

Jim McDermott  
Member of Congress

Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress

Candice S. Miller  
Member of Congress

Richard E. Neal  
Member of Congress

Kristi L. Noem  
Member of Congress

Erik Paulsen  
Member of Congress

Scott Perry  
Member of Congress

Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress