



September 23, 2024

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Re: Importation of Mexican Avocados Into the United States

Dear Mr. Secretary,

On behalf of the California Avocado Commission and the nearly 2,000 commercial growers we represent, we are writing to express our opposition to recent action by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) in substantially modifying the Mexican avocado import program.

We first learned on Wednesday, September 18, 2024, from a Mexico News Daily article that the Mexican government announced that APHIS had agreed that pest inspections of avocado orchards in Mexico will no longer be conducted by APHIS inspectors in Mexico but rather will be conducted by inspectors of Mexico's Agriculture and Rural Development Ministry (SADER). This action reverses the long-established inspection process designed to prevent invasions of known pests in Mexico that would devastate our industry. This process was the foundation for the initial decision allowing the importation of avocados from Mexico into the United States.

We expected and believe we are entitled to better treatment from APHIS. After all, we are California growers, not Mexican growers, who have everything to lose if, what appears to be a politically driven decision, does not work. The pest prevention program adopted by APHIS decades ago has worked in large measure because APHIS inspectors have been directly involved in all significant aspects of the program's operation beginning with orchard certification. It is well known that their physical presence greatly reduces the opportunity of others to "game the system".

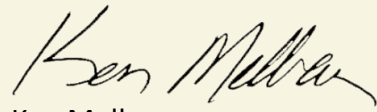
What assurances can APHIS provide us that its unilateral reversal of the process will be equal to or better than what has protected us? Understand, we do not treat your reversal as a simple administrative matter. We are looking for specifics as to why you have concluded that substituting APHIS inspectors with Mexican government inspectors is in our best interest?

Discontent with your decision and disregard of our industry is growing by the hour. We need your response as soon as possible along with your availability for an in-person meeting.

Sincerely,



Jason Cole, Chair



Ken Melban  
Vice President, Industry Affairs & Operations

Cc: Karen Ross, Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture  
Rep. Julia Brownley, California District 26  
Rep. Salud Carbajal, California District 24  
Rep. Ken Calvert, California District 41  
Rep. Jim Costa, California District 21  
Rep. Darrel Issa, California District 48  
Rep. Mike Levin, California District 49  
Rep. Jimmy Panetta, California District 19  
Rep. Katie Porter, California District 47  
Rep. David Valadao, California District 22  
Michael Watson, Ph.D., APHIS Administrator