Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 9, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington D.C. 20250

The Honorable Gregory Ibach
Under Sec. Marketing and Regulatory Programs
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington D.C. 20250

The Honorable Ted McKinney
Under Sec. for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue, Under Secretary Ibach and Under Secretary McKinney:

We write to ask the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to accelerate efforts to gain market access to China for California Hass Avocados. California's 2000 avocado farmers produce over 90 percent of the total U.S. avocado crop, including 100 percent of all U.S. Hass avocado production worth an average farm-gate value of $400 million, yet they have not gained the same level of access to China as competing countries. Equal access is an essential component of free trade, so we respectfully ask that you work with our producers to establish greater access to the Chinese market.

In 2005, the California Avocado Commission (Commission) initiated a China market access request with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). For the last fourteen years, the Commission has worked diligently to provide APHIS with timely information to assist in the process. Over that same period, Mexico, Chile and Peru – all major exporters of Hass avocados to the U.S. – have secured market access to China. During that same time period, competition in the U.S. avocado market has continued to intensify. As there is no established commercial avocado production in China, the demand for avocados in China is experiencing tremendous growth. It is imperative that California avocado farmers be afforded the same trade opportunities as their competitors.

In May 2016, the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) of the People's Republic of China sent a team of officials for a Technical Inspection visit of California avocado groves and packing facilities. Since that visit, APHIS and China Customs (formerly AQSIQ) have been working to finalize a Pest Risk Analysis (PRA). Once a PRA agreement is reached, a work plan for market access would be the next step and shipments of California avocados could begin.

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It is our understanding the Administration is planning to send an agricultural trade delegation to China this month to discuss improving the balance of trade in U.S. fruits and vegetables. While increasing sales of existing U.S. agricultural exports is important, new market access for other commodities must also be pursued. We are not aware of any scientific or phytosanitary reasons for China to delay a market agreement for California avocados. A California avocado trade agreement with China should be made a priority in all trade negotiations with China.

On behalf of California's avocado farmers and the thousands of workers they employ, we thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this important trade issue. Please let us know if there are opportunities for us to provide support to the Administration's efforts to achieve California avocado market access into China.

Sincerely,

DIANNE FEINSTEIN
U.S. Senator

JULIA BROWNLEY
Member of Congress

KEN CALVERT
Member of Congress

SALUD O. CARBAJAL
Member of Congress

JIM COSTA
Member of Congress

TJ COX
Member of Congress

DUNCAN HUNTER
Member of Congress

DEVIN NUNES
Member of Congress

JIMMY PANETTA
Member of Congress