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May 30, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary, United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We write to you on behalf of the U.S. tart cherry industry to express our sincere gratitude for the \$15 million purchase of dried cherries. This purchase came at a critical time as the cherry industry currently has a surplus of cherries on the market which has depressed grower prices to a 20-year low.

The tart cherry industry has worked hard to expand demand for U.S.-grown tart cherries only to see cheap imports benefit from the industry's investment. The tart cherry industry remains committed to expanding markets both domestically and internationally. Today, in addition to a robust U.S. marketing program, the cherry industry also utilizes MAP funding to grow their markets abroad.

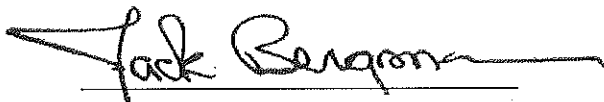
On April 23, 2019, the U.S. tart cherry dryers filed a countervailing duty and dumping case against Turkey, which has been a major threat to the U.S. cherry juice and dried cherry markets. This is a very expensive endeavor for an industry this size. In the past three years, the volume of dried cherries imported into the U.S. has doubled each year. As this plays out in the courts, we understand that should USDA use its authority to purchase additional U.S.-grown tart cherries, it would help remove the surplus inventory from the free market and stabilize the industry.

Michigan produces 75 percent of the U.S. tart cherry crop annually. Given the large projected size of the 2019 tart cherry crop, grower prices may be lowered even further. An additional concern is an invasive pest that arrived three years ago in Michigan called Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD). This new pest from Asia has driven up the cost of production for Michigan's cherry farmers, while grower prices have dropped below the cost of production. We are very concerned that both the reduced grower prices and rising production cost will force Michigan tart cherry growers out of business.

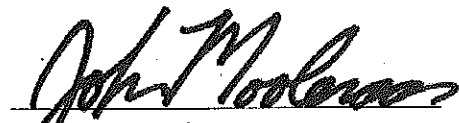
We urge you to use your appropriate authorities to consider buying as much surplus inventory as soon as possible to aid this industry and the people behind it who have worked very hard to help themselves.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter, and we look forward to working with you. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



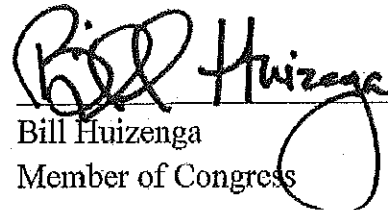
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