

DARRELL ISSA
48TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE,
SPACE AND TECHNOLOGY

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0550

WASHINGTON OFFICE
2108 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-5672

ESCONDIDO DISTRICT OFFICE
221 W. CREST ST., STE. 110
ESCONDIDO, CA 92025
(760) 304-7575

TEMECULA DISTRICT OFFICE
41000 MAIN ST.
TEMECULA, CA 92590
(760) 304-7575

March 25, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins:

Congratulations on your recent confirmation. As Members of the California delegation, we are eager to work with you on California's agricultural and rural priorities.

Our Districts represent some of the largest avocado producers in the country, and California's avocado industry includes 3,000 domestic growers generating \$1.5 billion in annual economic value. Unfortunately, our growers are facing an invasion of pests from Mexico that was worsened by the Biden Administration's 2024 decision to remove critical safeguards previously enforced by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS). We ask for your immediate reversal of this order.

As background, in 1997, the California Avocado Commission (Commission) representing all avocado growers in the State negotiated an agreement with USDA that (1) allowed avocados grown in Mexico to be imported into the United States so long as APHIS inspected the avocado orchards in Mexico which produced the avocados to be imported; and then (2) these avocados are inspected at packing facilities in Mexico to ensure they are free of extremely destructive stem weevil, seed weevil, and seed moth.

This system, paid for by the Mexican avocado industry – not U.S. taxpayers – worked to substantially reduce pests for nearly thirty years. In late 2024, APHIS, without advance notice, unilaterally removed all USDA inspectors from the Mexican avocado orchards because of ongoing physical threats to their safety by Mexican cartels. As a direct result of threats, USDA-certified inspections were canceled and replaced by Mexican independent review.

America retreated in the face of cartel threats, and as a result, almost immediately following this change, greater numbers of destructive weevils were detected at packing facilities which evidenced a breakdown in the inspection process and an increase in the likelihood of pest infested avocados slipping through the system and crossing into the United States.

The threat of invasive threats to California's avocado orchards cannot be understated. California is the leading state for avocado production, making the threat to orchards highly concentrated. As avocado trees take between 5 to 13 years to bear fruit, replacement is expensive, extremely time consuming, and often unworkable.

As such, over 700 avocado growers have written to USDA and their Congressional representatives requesting that this action be reversed and the past high standards in place for thirty years be restored to maintain safe importation.

To be clear, we are not opposed to importation writ large. In fact, it is necessary to meet growing domestic demand for avocados, and a robust supply is healthy for all in the market. Rather, it is our obligation to ensure imports meet high safety standards to prevent catastrophic damage to domestic growers.

While our previous outreach to the Biden Administration on this topic went unaddressed, we know that your team is committed to timely review of Congressional communications and engagement with Capitol Hill for solutions. We are also aware of President Trump's and your commitment to putting America first. The President has already shown great resolve in taking on cartel threats and damages, and we believe this issue is aligned with this effort.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request and we look forward to your response.

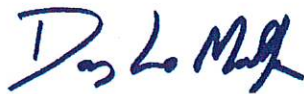
Sincerely,



Darrell Issa
Member of Congress



Ken Calvert
Member of Congress



Doug La Malfa
Member of Congress



David Valadao
Member of Congress



Young Kim
Member of Congress