



The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

30 September 2024

Dear Mr President,

The Southern Hemisphere Association of Fresh Fruit Exporters (SHAFFE) represents the leading fresh fruit production and export associations in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, New Zealand, Peru, South Africa, Uruguay and Zimbabwe. Together, our member countries export nearly 12 million tonnes of fresh fruits per year for a total value of over USD 15 billion, thereby accounting for roughly 15 percent of the global trade in fresh fruits.

Our members are united by their joint vision to create environmentally, socially and economically sustainable value chains for fresh fruits from the Southern Hemisphere, bringing a myriad of benefits to consumers worldwide.

We are writing to you to express significant concern about the looming strike by maritime workers in container ports along the East and Gulf coasts of the United States of America, planned for October 1st.

A disruption in cargo movements as a result of the strike would have profound consequences for the supply of fresh fruits from the Southern Hemisphere into the United States of America, as well as Canada. For example, Delaware's Port Wilmington is the country's leading gateway for imports of fresh fruits, including grapes, stonefruit, apples, pears, cherries and berries from Chile; citrus fruits from South Africa; apples and pears from Argentina; kiwifruit from New Zealand; and grapes from Peru and Brazil. Other important entry points for our fruits include the Port of Philadelphia and the Port of New York and New Jersey, both of which risk being shut down as a result of the strike.

Our fruits and vegetables do not stop growing, and cannot be held in cold storage for extended periods of time. Produce will spoil if left on the docks for too long, or become more expensive given the delays and additional refrigeration requirements. Likewise, rerouting via West Coast ports such as Los Angeles and then trucking produce across the country will result in a significant increase in the cost of fruits and vegetables for consumers in major swaths of the country. Consumers in Canada also risk being affected, as a significant share of the produce consumed in Canada flows through ports in the United States.

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The fruit industry in the Southern Hemisphere suffered greatly from the supply chain disruptions caused by COVID-19 and the spike in production and transportation costs that followed from these disruptions. While the industry may have addressed some of those issues, we continue to face other challenges, most notably the ongoing Houthi attacks on commercial vessels impacting transit through the Red Sea and Suez Canal, as well as the Panama Canal's still-reduced capacity. Combined with these issues, the strike on the East and Gulf Coasts would effectively choke off major arteries of global trade in fruits and vegetables.

With the fruit industry in the Southern Hemisphere gearing up for the start of the new export season, it is imperative that the United States administration engage with the International Longshoremen's Association and the United States Maritime Alliance to ensure that they quickly negotiate a new deal or agree to continue negotiations while keeping ports open and cargo flowing.

Yours sincerely,

Marta Bentancur
President, Southern Hemisphere Association of Fresh Fruit Exporters

For:

Argentina	Association of Blueberry Producers of Mesopotamia, Argentina (APAMA) Argentine Citrus Federation (Federcitrus)
Australia	Australian Mango Industry Association (AMIA) Australian Table Grape Association (ATGA) Avocados Australia Citrus Australia Summerfruit Australia
Brazil	Brazilian Association of Producers and Exporters of Fruits and Fruit Products (Abrafrutas)
Chile	Chilean Fruit Exporters Association (ASOEX)
New Zealand	New Zealand Apples and Pears
Peru	Association of Agricultural Producers Guilds of Peru (AGAP) Peru Citrus Growers' Association (ProCitrus)
South Africa	Berries South Africa Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) Fruit South Africa Fresh Produce Exporters' Forum South Africa (FPEF) Hortgro SA Subtropical Growers' Association (Subtrop) South African Table Grape Industry (SATI)
Uruguay	Union of Fruit Producers and Exporters of Uruguay (UPEFRUY)
Zimbabwe	Horticultural Development Council

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CC:

The Honorable Julie Su, Acting Secretary, Department of Labor
The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary, Department of Transportation
The Honorable Gina Raimondo, Secretary, Department of Commerce
The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary, Department of Agriculture
The Honorable Lael Brainard, Director, National Economic Council
Mr. Harold Daggett, President, International Longshoremen's Association
Mr. David Adam, President, United States Maritime Alliance

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