

Nation's Top Ag Exporters, Farm Groups Press USTR, DOC and USDA on Chinese Approvals of Biotech Traits

WASHINGTON (November 1, 2013) - In a letter today to U.S. Trade Representative Ambassador Michael Froman, Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, the American Farm Bureau Federation, American Soybean Association, National Corn Growers Association and U.S. Canola Association raised concerns regarding ongoing delays, lack of transparency and arbitrary decisions in China's process of approving new biotechnology traits. The letter comes as the three administration officials prepare for a meeting of the Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade (JCCT) with the nation's largest trading partner this December.

"China is now the largest export market for U.S. agricultural goods valued at over \$32 billion in 2012," wrote the groups. "However, in spite of our growing successful trade relationship, China's biotech approval process has gone from being slow but predictable to being even slower, unpredictable and non-transparent."

The groups maintain that China's position as a major buyer of U.S. commodities means that the current, arbitrary Chinese approval system is effectively preventing U.S. farmers from adopting the new technologies needed to increase yields, fight pests and weeds, enhance quality and improve environmental performance.

In the letter, the groups cited several key data points illustrating the complications of the approvals process, including a 19-month period in which no new soybean, corn, cotton or canola biotech traits had been approved. When the backlog of traits was addressed, China approved just over half of the applications. The groups say there are currently 15 biotech applications pending approval.

"Farmers in the United States and around the world want to help meet China's food security needs and our organizations have been working in partnership with the Chinese food, feed, livestock and textile industries for decades," they noted. "However, the ability to efficiently and consistently produce and increase production of our crops depends on commercializing new biotech traits that can increase yields, improve quality, and ultimately provide Chinese consumers with more affordable and healthy food and fiber."

A full copy of the letter is available by [clicking here](#).