

March 7, 2022

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20250

Via Electronic Mail Re: Fertilizer and Agriculture Sector Supply Chain Challenges

Dear Mr. President:

We respectfully request your assistance related to two specific supply chain disruptions that are impacting the agricultural sector, including the supply, cost, and availability of fertilizer¹, oats, and other essential commodities.

The U.S.-Canadian trade relationship is essential to our nations and the entire agricultural supply chain. For example, Canada accounts for 86% of America's potash fertilizer and approximately 90% of the oats milled in the U.S. are imported from Canada with 15% being trucked over the border. Among other commodities, Canada also receives fertilizer imports from the U.S. as well as a substantial amount of fresh produce.

Fertilizer markets, which are largely influenced by global factors, are already experiencing severe disruptions, which is impacting fertilizer supply, demand, and costs. As communicated by [Fertilizer Canada to the Canadian government](#), if the U.S. and Canadian governments allow the following supply chain disruptions to persist into the spring fertilizer season, the impacts to our industry and North American farmers could be devastating. Farmers already face challenges during these critical periods due to variable weather and logistical concerns. Impeding farmers' ability to access critical fertilizer inputs due to supply chain disruptions will have long-term consequences in terms of costs to farmers, and harm domestic and international food security. This will make inflation worse and drive up the cost and availability of food.

Unimpeded trade and cross-border mobility between Canada and the U.S. are essential, particularly for the agriculture and agri-food sector, due to the highly integrated nature of the supply chains.

CP Railway Labor Strike

There is a potential upcoming labor disruption at CP Railway, as the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference has recently voted 96.7% in favor of strike action. A strike could happen among its approximately 3,000 Canadian members as early as March 16, 2022. Continued mediation sessions are scheduled for March 11-16, 2022. This matter is most pressing and urgent.

Approximately 10-15% of CP's business is fertilizer. A CP railway strike would severely curtail fertilizer supply and shipments into the United States and would happen at the worst possible time as farmers are planting their 2022 crops. We appreciate your engagement with Canada during the recent protests that closed certain border traffic.

¹ Fertilizer is responsible for nearly one-half of the world's food supply <https://doi.org/10.2134/agronj2005.0001>.

Given the fragility of current supply chains, urgent attention and engagement with all parties is needed to avert a potential strike.

Cross-border Vaccine Mandate for Essential Commerce

In November and December 2021, the United States and [Canada](#) issued and revised ([Canada](#)) requirements for workers moving essential commerce across the border. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) states that [its border policy](#) will remain in effect through April 21, 2022, “unless amended or rescinded prior to that time.”

The fertilizer sector ships significant volumes of fertilizer by truck across the border each year, in particular over the months of March, April and May for peak fertilizer application seasons in the northern states. On an annual basis, over one million short tons of fertilizer is moved across the U.S.-Canada border by truck, through multiple border crossings. Fertilizer Canada’s members move approximately 65% of this fertilizer volume during these peak months.

The border policy has raised prices because it has constrained trucking capacity and made truck movements more expensive and less timely. We appreciate the ongoing engagement we have had with your administration since last December. We urge the U.S.-Canadian governments to consider: (1) enhanced governmental coordination; (2) an exemption for essential commerce/industry, such as truck drivers, reflecting closer alignment with OSHA’s ETS policy, which provided an exclusion for outdoor workers and truck drivers; and (3) ongoing review of the merits of a cross-border vaccine mandate given declining case rates and hospitalizations. Given the urgency of several supply-chain challenges, we urge revision or rescission of the border policy prior to April 21.

The undersigned organizations represent a diverse array of agricultural producers and agribusinesses who are also part of the Agricultural Transportation Working Group (ATWG). We respectfully request your help to (1) encourage and assist the Canadian government to avert a CP Railway labor strike and (2) work closely with the Canadian government to rescind and/or modify the cross-border vaccine mandate for workers moving essential commerce prior to April 21.

Thank you for your consideration and please feel free to call on us with any comments or questions.

Sincerely,

The Agricultural Transportation Working Group

Agricultural & Food Transporters Conference
Agricultural Retailers Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Feed Industry Association
American Soybean Association
American Sugar Alliance
Corn Refiners Association
National Barley Growers Association

National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Grain and Feed Association
National Potato Council
National Sorghum Producers
National Sunflower Association
North American Millers' Association
Pet Food Institute
The Fertilizer Institute
USA Rice
U.S. Canola Association
U.S. Rice Producers Association

Cc: Tom Vilsack, Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Pete Buttigieg, Secretary, U.S. Transportation Department
U.S. Surface Transportation Board
U.S. Congress