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## **Leading Minnesota Agribusinesses and Trade Associations Call for Swift Ratification of USMCA Trade Agreement**

St. Paul, MN – a coalition of premier Minnesota agribusinesses and food processors, lead by Minnesota AgriGrowth, called on Congress to ratify the United States-Mexico-Canada-Agreement (USMCA).

In a letter to the ten members of Minnesota’s congressional delegation, a collection of Minnesota’s leading agribusinesses and ag related trade associations called on the delegation to ratify the United States Mexico Canada Agreement (USMCA) to support food producers and processors and the state’s economy.

“Minnesota’s economy depends on our ag and food sector, which is our state’s 2<sup>nd</sup> largest economic driver,” said Glenn Stolt, CEO of Christensen Farms and AgriGrowth board member, “With all markets now global, we rely on international customers to buy our products, and our customers demand our high quality pork for their families.”

The organizations also stressed the tremendous benefits to the Minnesota economy, which in turn will benefit all Minnesotans.

“USMCA represents an important step in the right direction for dairy farmers anxious to emerge from a prolonged economic drought, now in its fifth year,” said Sheryl Meshke, Co-President and CEO of Associated Milk Producers, Inc. “The agreement preserves market access with Mexico, the U.S. dairy industry’s top customer. We are hopeful positive progress can continue to be made as Mexican retaliatory tariffs on U.S. cheeses levied in response to U.S. tariffs on Mexican steel continue to hang over the market, creating a drag on farmers’ prices.”

Other members of the coalition weighed in with their thoughts and suggestions of encouragement for the members of the congressional delegation.

“Mexico and Canada make up the largest, most reliable market for corn growers in our state and nationwide,” said Minnesota Corn Growers Association President Brian Thalmann, “As corn producers continue to endure the strong economic headwinds that have greatly impacted our

rural economy, the ratification of the USMCA trade agreement is needed now. Any further delay would be devastating to Minnesota farmers.”

“Beef exports account for \$325 of value per animal,” said Mike Landuyt, President of the Minnesota Cattleman’s Association. “USMCA provides unrestricted duty-free access to Canada and Mexico, our third and fifth largest export markets for U.S. beef. We ask for swift ratification of USMCA to continue our unrestrained access to these markets.”

“Cooperative Network strongly supports Congressional ratification of the United States-Mexico-Canada-Agreement (USMCA),” said Dan Smith, President and CEO of the Cooperative Network. “Agriculture infuses billions of dollars each year into Minnesota’s economy and employs hundreds of thousands of workers. Unquestionably, we need access to consumers in Canadian and Mexican markets to sustain and grow our agricultural economy.”

“The section 232 tariffs on steel and aluminum have been devastating to the canned food industry which includes meat, poultry and vegetable products, all areas in which Minnesota is a leader,” said Nick George, President of the Midwest Food Products Association. “In some cases, the tariffs have made canned products uncompetitive and have allowed foreign products to take market share. Once market share is lost, it is hard to regain. We urge the administration to remove the section 232 tariffs on steel and aluminum and congress to ratify the USMCA.”

“For Minnesota’s turkey, chicken and egg farmers, USMCA is an important agreement to solidify our trade relationship with Mexico, which ranks as our largest export market, and improves our access to Canada’s consumers,” said Steve Olson, Executive Director of Minnesota Turkey Growers Association and Chicken & Egg Association of Minnesota.

“Swift ratification of the United States Mexico Canada Agreement is critically important for our state, our food producers and processors and all those businesses that have a connection to the second largest economic driver in the state,” said Tamara Nelsen, Executive Director for AgriGrowth, “The number of impressive groups and individuals who have spoke out in this letter is all the proof or congressional delegation needs to realize the significance of USMCA.”

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Minnesota AgriGrowth Council is a non-partisan, non-profit member organization representing the agriculture and food systems industry. AgriGrowth’s strategic approach to policy development, issues management, collaboration and awareness fosters long-term sustainability, competitiveness and business growth. The organization’s diverse membership provides an informed and respected perspective for key influencers and consumers. AgriGrowth’s industry-wide perspective is essential in a state where agriculture and food is the second largest economic driver. More information can be found at [agrigrowth.org](http://agrigrowth.org) or by following AgriGrowth’s Twitter account at [@mn\\_agrigrowth](https://twitter.com/mn_agrigrowth).