

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 28, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump,

We appreciate your continued commitment to our nation's farmers by promising to provide relief for the agricultural economy and holding China accountable for its trade practices.¹ As you prepare to meet with President Xi Jinping to address trade and agricultural issues, we urge you to prioritize the needs of our flue-cured tobacco growers.

American flue-cured tobacco is world-renowned for its high quality, traceability, and compliant production. Foreign countries are willing to pay a premium for tobacco grown in the U.S. due to its superior quality, which is why growers have relied heavily on access to export markets since before the Revolutionary War. China serves as the single largest buyer—purchasing 60–65 million pounds of green tobacco annually.

Farmers were recently informed that China will not purchase flue-cured tobacco from the 2025 crop, a decision made by the Chinese Communist Party to gain leverage in ongoing trade negotiations with the United States. This decision leaves approximately 65 million pounds of tobacco, into which farmers have already invested substantial time and money, without a buyer, erasing \$220 million in export value.² Further, Chinese buyers have delayed or refused to pay for purchased 2024 tobacco leaf, including the refusal of shipments from earlier this year. The impact on rural communities will be devastating, forcing growers out of tobacco production and threatening the stability of other crops, which depend on tobacco revenues to keep production going. Global competitors such as Brazil and India will quickly fill the gap, displacing U.S. farmers. We urge you to remedy China's trade practices and ensure our growers maintain this important market.

In 2017, the U.S. exported more than 62 million pounds of flue-cured tobacco to China. By 2019, that number collapsed to 513,000 pounds.³ When access to foreign markets disappears, relief programs become the only lifeline on which farmers can rely on. While your administration provided necessary trade relief for major crops and specialty crops during this disruption, tobacco growers—despite suffering equal harm—were barred from relief until special action was taken by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Our rural communities deserve fair compensation commensurate with the aid provided to other crops. If this does not occur, the rural communities that rely on tobacco production throughout the Southeast could be left behind without any way to recover. Therefore, we encourage you to work with your administration to ensure flue-cured tobacco growers are eligible for any upcoming trade relief program.

In addition to facing challenges with relief, tobacco growers must also compete against cheap, unsafe tobacco imported from Brazil. Additionally, restrictions to international market access caused by the broad

¹ Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), TRUTH SOCIAL, <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/115300187189696754> (posted Oct. 28, 2025).

² A.P. Dillon, NC Tobacco Farmers Face Uncertainty as China Cancels Contracts, NORTH STATE JOURNAL (Aug. 21, 2025), <https://nsjonline.com/article/2025/08/nc-tobacco-farmers-face-uncertainty-as-china-cancels-contracts/>.

³ N.C. State Univ. Extension, 2020 Flue-Cured Tobacco Guide, https://tobacco.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2020-flue-cured_full-copy.pdf?fwd=no.

interpretation of the Doggett Amendment are another major obstacle. This provision, which has been in place since 1997, uniquely bars U.S. funding from being used to advocate for tobacco sales in international markets. Over the years, the guidance has become so broadly interpreted that most U.S. ambassadors and embassy staff will not discuss any matters related to tobacco leaf. No other agricultural commodity faces this restriction. The influx of cheap, foreign-grown tobacco, coupled with the misguided interpretation of the Doggett Amendment, has dealt a serious blow to our farm economy. Addressing these ongoing disadvantages is essential to ensuring fair treatment for American tobacco farmers.

Mr. President, rural America overwhelmingly supported you for many reasons, including your promise to stand with farmers and rural businesses against unfair trade practices. We respectfully ask that you deliver certainty for tobacco farmers by:

1. Ensuring flue-cured tobacco receives fair treatment in trade negotiations with China and all other countries;
2. Guaranteeing that any future relief includes flexibility to provide assistance for tobacco growers;
3. Minimizing the importation of cheap, foreign-grown tobacco that undermines our farmers; and
4. Working with your administration to ensure tobacco leaf is promoted to the fullest extent allowed by the Doggett Amendment.

Tobacco farming is the cornerstone of many family operations, stabilizing entire farms and supporting the production of other crops critical to feeding America. North Carolina alone is home to 822 tobacco farms, and its tobacco industry sustains more than 200,000 jobs.⁴ In 2023, the farmgate value of tobacco production in North Carolina was over \$541 million. In 2024, despite a devastating growing season marked by historic droughts and excessive rainfall, it was \$470 million. Other states, like Virginia and South Carolina, rely heavily on their flue-cured tobacco growers to support their economy. Virginia has 173 tobacco farms in production, which generate more than \$180 million in annual revenue.⁵ South Carolina has 6,500 acres in tobacco production and generates over \$30 million in gross revenue across the most rural parts of the state.

Our tobacco farmers produce a premium, traceable, and compliant crop that is respected worldwide. However, these farmers cannot survive without fair access to global markets and equal support from the U.S. government as other major crops receive. As you prepare to meet with President Xi Jinping, we urge you to elevate the priorities of American tobacco farmers and ensure our tobacco farm families receive fair treatment in trade negotiations, just as you did during your first term and have promised to continue to do for all of American agriculture.

Sincerely,

⁴ Will Snell, Census Reveals Tobacco Farms Disappearing from Southern Agriculture, SOUTHERN AG TODAY (Mar. 27, 2024), <https://southernagtoday.org/2024/03/27/census-reveals-tobacco-farms-disappearing-from-southern-agriculture/>.

⁵ Virginia Dep't of Agric. & Consumer Servs., Agriculture Facts & Figures, <https://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/markets-and-finance-agriculture-facts-and-figures.shtml>.



Ted Budd
United States Senator



David Rouzer
Member of Congress



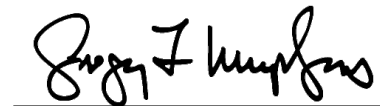
Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Donald G. Davis
Member of Congress



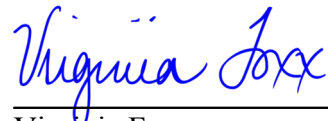
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Chuck Edwards
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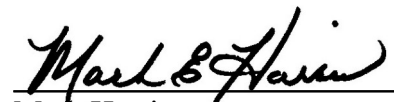
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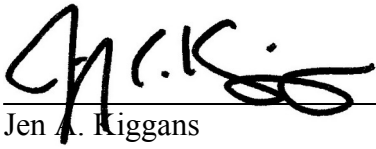
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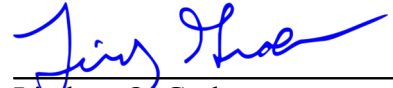
Jen A. Riggans
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H. Morgan Griffith
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Ben Cline
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Lindsey O. Graham
United States Senator



Russell Fry
Member of Congress



Tim Scott
United States Senator

cc: U.S. Department of Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent
U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins
U.S. Trade Representative Ambassador Jamieson Greer
U.S. Department of Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick
U.S. Department of State Secretary Marco Rubio
U.S. Ambassador to the People's Republic of China David Purdue