

--ORAL TESTIMONY--
U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means Committee
Russell Boening, President, Texas Farm Bureau
Wednesday, September 14, 2022
11:00 a.m.
1102 Longworth House Office Building

Chairman Neal, Ranking Member Brady, and members of the Committee:

My name is Russell Boening, and I appreciate the opportunity to testify today. My family and I live in Poth, Texas where we make our living farming and ranching.

I currently serve as President of the Texas Farm Bureau, the largest general farm organization in the state, representing over 535,000 member-families. I also serve on the American Farm Bureau Federation's Board of Directors.

Trade is critically important to the current security and future prosperity of U.S. farmers and ranchers. We depend on growing and stable export markets to be profitable and meet the needs of consumers.

Engagement in Taiwan, and the entire Indo-Pacific region, is critical for the continued growth of U.S. agricultural exports and the sustained economic health of America's farmers and ranchers. In fiscal year 2021, the U.S. exported \$3.94 billion of agricultural products to Taiwan, our sixth largest agricultural export market. Leading domestic exports include soybeans, beef, wheat, poultry, and fresh fruit. Agricultural imports from Taiwan during this same time were \$540 million.

Texas Farm Bureau continues to monitor the Administration's Proposed U.S.-Taiwan Initiative on 21st Century Trade. While we appreciate the formulation of ideas to strengthen our trade relationship with Taiwan, this initiative falls short of being a robust trade agreement. Texas Farm Bureau urges the administration to address existing barriers and enforce a modernized trade agreement with Taiwan.

It is important to address the existing 15 percent import tariff on agricultural imports and eliminate other obstacles. Several non-tariff barriers for exporting U.S. beef and pork to Taiwan should also be eliminated. For instance, Taiwan's existing zero tolerance policy for ractopamine is not backed by sound science. Although ractopamine use by U.S. beef and pork producers is not widespread, it is an option that is safe, acceptable, and approved by the FDA. We should work with Taiwan to reduce barriers, such as this, to strengthen our beef and pork export markets into Taiwan.

Further, U.S. agricultural competitiveness is dependent on having a level playing field regarding tariffs, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade and other essential provisions. Taiwan should also adhere to a science and evidence-based approach to regulatory matters, operate functioning programs to facilitate trade, and remove unwarranted restrictions.

In addition, at a time when China is dividing the market share across the world, the Asia Pacific region is looking for agricultural import opportunities from the U.S. The administration and Congress should take necessary steps that will increase trade with Taiwan and make them less dependent on China.

Most importantly, it is critical for the Administration to prioritize trade by working toward stronger, comprehensive, and enforceable trade agreements, not only in Taiwan, but across the world. I fear the administration is currently falling short of prioritizing international trade. For instance, there is enormous potential to reduce trade barriers and strengthen agreements with the countries involved in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework as well as China and the United Kingdom. However, again, we need enforceable trade agreement provisions that can only be achieved through direct negotiations.

Ideas and frameworks are always welcome; however, they must be put into action to strengthen international trade and ensure the U.S. gains market access into other countries. It is also critical to reauthorize Trade Promotion Authority if we want other countries to engage in serious negotiations. TPA is key to finalizing trade agreements that are enforceable and allow us to compete in the global markets.

Without continued work to strengthen and create new agreements, the U.S. will only fall behind and farm and ranch families will suffer the consequences. We depend on importing and exporting goods with other countries for stable commodity markets and to ensure we can continue providing food and fiber worldwide.

--END TESTIMONY--