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Wyden Statement at Finance Committee Hearing to Consider USTR Chief Agricultural Negotiator Nominee *As Prepared for Delivery*

The committee meets this morning to discuss the nomination of Mr. Doug McKalip to serve as the Chief Agricultural Negotiator within the Office of the United States Trade Representative.

Mr. McKalip brings nearly 30 years of federal public service to his nomination, including in a variety of roles focused on ag policy and the well-being of rural communities in America. He's currently a top advisor to Agriculture Secretary Vilsack on trade, ag safety, national security and a host of other issues. He's served in several other leadership positions at the Department of Agriculture and with the Domestic Policy Council. He's got a lot of fans on both sides of this committee, and his nomination comes at an absolutely critical time.

Across America, families are paying more for groceries but getting less. Farmers and ranchers are being oppressed by drought and hammered by increased costs.

Across the world, people are desperate at the prospect of widespread hunger as crops fail and basic food items are in short supply. War and climate change, compounded by shortsighted trade policies and supply chain disruptions, have created fears about a 21st century hunger catastrophe.

The Finance Committee has authority over one important solution to this crisis – a smart trade policy that promotes affordable, abundant food here at home and abroad.

This policy must support our farmers and ranchers and allow for maximum production by busting through trade barriers and lowering costs for key inputs, like fertilizer. It must also focus on opening and expanding export markets to ensure our farmers can continue to do what they do best: keeping the world fed.

USTR's Ag Negotiator is the key position that will insist on the elimination of foreign regulations that hamper food distribution wherever it takes place because that is what is needed to reduce hunger.

The USTR Ag Negotiator also has much broader responsibilities for ensuring American interests in trade agreements are met. To that point,

the Trump administration rushed the new USMCA into effect, and Canada and Mexico are failing to live up to key commitments. Canada is propping up barriers to our dairy products. Mexico is unfairly blocking American-grown corn and soybeans.

It's a similar story with China. The Trump administration grabbed a whole lot of headlines with a flashy new trade deal, but it failed to set up real enforcement and let many of the Chinese government's key trade rip-offs go unaddressed. China has failed to meet its commitments to import American ag products, only buying 58 percent of the total goods and services it agreed to buy in 2021. That's less than it was buying before the Trump trade war began.

US farmers are telling us they do not want handouts; they want real opportunities to sell their products around the world, which can only happen if there is a level playing field.

To that end, the Committee is also interested in discussing how our farmers and ranchers can benefit from the new Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. If confirmed, Mr. McKalip will play a key role in these issues, and more.

I want to thank Mr. McKalip for joining us and for his willingness to continue his career in public service fighting on behalf of our farmers and ranchers.

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