

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 6, 2026

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins,

On behalf of shellfish growers nationwide, we respectfully request that you implement a program similar to the 2020 Seafood Trade Relief Program with expanded assistance for all farmed shellfish, or direct additional aid from USDA so our nation's shellfish growers can continue to serve as anchors of our local economies. The Pacific Northwest is one of the leading producers of shellfish, and 90% of harvested geoduck is exported to China.¹ We are concerned that the shellfish industry has been hit hard by tariffs and rising costs without recognition or assistance from the Administration.

Tariffs and retaliatory tariffs have led to higher consumer prices, altered supply chains, reduced availability, higher equipment costs, and market instability for farmers of all kinds, including shellfish growers. In 2024, U.S. fish and seafood exports, including shellfish, totaled over \$2 billion to China and Canada.² In the last year, our strongest trade partners have launched retaliatory tariffs against the United States, causing uncertainty and hurting geoduck, oyster, and other shellfish industries many of our communities rely on as lifelines.

While we appreciate the Administration's Farmer Bridge Assistance Program, which pays special attention to row crops and has promised to reserve \$1 billion for specialty crops, we are concerned that there has not been any recognition of impacts the shellfish industry has faced over the last year of back-and-forth negotiations. In the President's first term, USDA supported the U.S. seafood industry by providing \$530 million to fishermen impacted by retaliatory tariffs.³ These same growers are experiencing similar turmoil of market uncertainty and lower export sales and would greatly benefit from aid once again.

We've heard personal stories from local shellfish growers in our districts. In Washington state, Chinese retaliatory tariffs have particularly troubled tribal geoduck exports, leading them to conduct more dives to make up for loss of net revenue. As a result of this trade dispute, Canada is now the leading exporter of geoduck to China, hurting the industry here at home.⁴ In coastal communities nationwide, many small, family oyster farms have experienced downward trends in overseas sales compared to 2024 rates and now

¹https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/document/2020/Aug/WA%20Responses_Seafood%20Trade%20Strategy%20Taskforce_Final.pdf, <https://www.oregonlive.com/pacific-northwest-news/2025/05/trump-trade-war-slams-pnw-divers-who-hand-harvest-these-unusual-mollusks.html>

² [https://www.fas.usda.gov/data/commodities/fish-and-seafood#:~:text=Table_title:%20U.S.%20Fish%20and%20Seafood%20Exports%20in,%7C%20Total%20Value%20\(USD\).%20\\$567.89%20Million%20%7C](https://www.fas.usda.gov/data/commodities/fish-and-seafood#:~:text=Table_title:%20U.S.%20Fish%20and%20Seafood%20Exports%20in,%7C%20Total%20Value%20(USD).%20$567.89%20Million%20%7C)

³ <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-events/news/09-10-2020/usda-supports-us-seafood-industry-impacted-retaliatory-tariffs-2>

⁴ <https://apnews.com/article/geoducks-china-us-tariffs-economy-849c8052fd0e679fa421c48d32ed1bc7>

must make the hard decision to reduce prices in order to remain competitive. U.S. products used to be considered high demand, but premium pricing is not possible in this current environment.

We also ask that you work quickly to fill the new seafood liaison position within USDA created by the November 2025 Continuing Resolution. For many communities, aquaculture is a way of life, providing nutrient rich diets, strengthening tribal treaty rights, creating jobs, and boosting economic and food security. Please give these hardworking growers the certainty they need so their products and businesses can continue to thrive.

Sincerely,



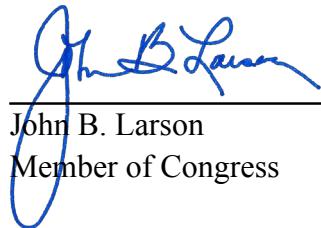
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