

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 24, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We appreciate your efforts helping our nation respond to the COVID-19 crisis and keeping our state and nation safe. We write today with concerns about the safety of agriculture inspectors, other individuals who are involved in the transport of produce across the southern border into Arizona, and our communities. As COVID-19 continues to spread in both Arizona and Mexico, we want to ensure steps are taken to protect against and limit potential exposure to the virus during produce inspections.

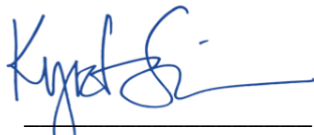
Cross-border trade of tomatoes is an economic driver in our state and supports jobs across the country. As you are aware, we are in the peak season for tomatoes imported from Mexico, resulting in a higher number of inspections. Given that recent requests to limit or suspend inspections during the ongoing pandemic have been denied by the USDA, we would like to better understand the steps you are taking to protect USDA employees, individuals involved in the transport of tomatoes, those with whom they interact at the ports of entry, and Arizona communities.

Please provide answers to the following questions by May 8, 2020.

1. What safety measures are being taken to protect staff at ports of entry, staff at agriculture warehouses, and drivers?
2. How can we ensure tomatoes and other produce continue to move through ports of entry expeditiously should there be staffing issues due to the pandemic?
3. Does the USDA have a plan in place should an inspector or other port agent test positive for COVID-19?

We look forward to your response and working with you on this important issue.

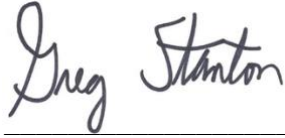
Sincerely,



Kyrsten Sinema
U.S. Senator



Martha McSally
U.S. Senator



Greg Stanton
U.S. Representative



David Schweikert
U.S. Representative



Ann Kirkpatrick
U.S. Representative



Tom O'Halleran
U.S. Representative



Debbie Lesko
U.S. Representative



Ruben Gallego
U.S. Representative