



National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
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November 19, 2024

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Members of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) and their counterparts from Canada, as well as federal representatives from Mexico have concluded a meeting of the 33rd Tri-National Agricultural Accord. The Tri-National Agricultural Accord represents a longstanding commitment among the senior state and provincial agricultural officials of Canada, the United States, and Mexico to work together collaboratively on agricultural trade and development issues. The resulting communiqué from this dialogue is enclosed.

The delegates were unanimous in our call for the renewal of the USMCA trade agreement when it comes up for review in 2026. We fully recognize that there are challenges that need to be addressed in specific sectors, but these can and should be attended to in a way that does not jeopardize the strength and vitality of our North American trade relationship.

Delegates focused considerable attention on preparation and planning for the introduction of foreign animal disease. While we appreciate that there have been numerous exercises involving select participants, USDA has not held exercises directly involving all state and provincial agricultural leaders across the three nations. We strongly urge USDA and your federal partners from Canada and Mexico to organize and fund periodic exercises involving federal, state, and industry partners to ensure coordination, communication, and capacity to prevent, detect, and respond appropriately to a foreign animal disease incursion.

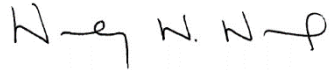
Another highlight was an examination of international agricultural extension programs. Delegates discussed efforts to promote and expand extension programming for the benefit of Canadian, Mexican, and U.S. rural, indigenous, and minority stakeholders and encouraged each respective federal government to continue seeking opportunities to expand information sharing among our nations.

On a final note, the success of the Accord meetings could not be possible without the generous assistance of the staff from the Foreign Agricultural Service, and the Animal and Plant Health

Enhance American food and agricultural communities through policy, partnerships and public engagement.

Inspection Service. We truly value this collaborative and productive relationship and thank you for your leadership that ensures USDA's active and thoughtful participation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wes Ward". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "W" and a long horizontal stroke.

Wes Ward
Secretary
Arkansas Department of Agriculture

President
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture

cc: Alexis Taylor, Under Secretary, Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs
Jenny Moffitt, Under Secretary, Marketing and Regulatory Programs
Daniel Whitley, Administrator, Foreign Agricultural Service
Dr. Michael Watson, Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service



TRI-NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL ACCORD ACUERDO AGROPECUARIO TRI-NACIONAL ACCORD TRINATIONAL SUR L'AGRICULTURE

33rd Annual Tri-National Agricultural Accord Communiqué

Provincial and state agricultural leaders from Canada and the United States (U.S.) met in Arlington, Virginia, U.S. for the 33rd meeting of the Tri-National Agricultural Accord. Delegates were warmly welcomed to the United States by Wes Ward, Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture.

The Canadian and U.S. delegations are disappointed that Mexican states were not represented at this year's Accord. Meaningful dialogue requires active, trilateral participation. As state and provincial agricultural leaders, we recognize that the strength of our relationship can drive improvement in agricultural trade within the North American agriculture sector. As we move forward, we are confident that the Accord will include active and collaborative participation between all three countries.

Delegates gathered in-person to discuss agricultural topics of mutual importance including animal disease, water and soil management, sustainable agriculture production, agriculture technology, and global trade policies, among others. Delegates highlighted the importance of agricultural outreach programs and encourage jurisdictions to seek opportunities for cross-border collaboration to leverage resources to better reach rural, indigenous and minority communities. Additional discussions addressed the need for further inclusion of underrepresented groups in agriculture; regulatory harmonization across North America; growing trade between states and provinces; transportation improvement; and the importance of predictable, science-based and evidence-based agricultural policies.

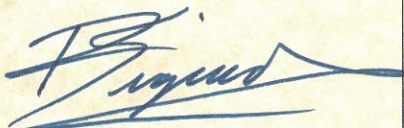
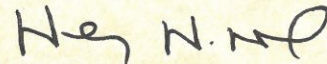
Delegates recognized the benefits of USMCA/CUSMA/T-MEC to enhance North American trade in agricultural products and emphasized the importance of the Agreement's 2026 review to further promote free trade across North America. This Accord also welcomed the participation of industry representatives from the agriculture and agri-food sector across North America. Representatives shared their perspectives and insights on current issues and barriers in the region, agricultural trade opportunities and challenges, as well as recommendations to ensure timely and effective cross-border trade and collaboration.

Delegates advocate that the three federal governments organize, fund, and conduct the first in a series of trilateral tabletop exercises in 2025 focused on the cross-border communication among federal, state and provincial agricultural leaders designed to mitigate untoward trade impacts in a scenario of an African Swine Fever outbreak as well as a scenario of a Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak. Delegates recognize that involvement of states, provinces, and industry in planning and execution of these exercises is critical.

Federal officials addressing delegates included Patrick Packnett, Acting Associate Administrator, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Michelle Cooper, Director General, Market Access Secretariat, International Affairs Branch, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada from Canada; and Carlos Vázquez, Minister for Agricultural Affairs, Embassy of Mexico.

The Accord has been a prominent agricultural assembly that cultivates strong and resilient relationships between states and provinces, and between industry representatives and the respective federal governments. The attached joint statement was agreed to by the Canadian and U.S. delegations.

In recognition of the importance of the Accord for the future and to continue strengthening our relationships, Mexican Association of Secretaries of Agriculture Development extended an invitation to the U.S. and Canada to attend the 34th meeting of the Tri-National Agricultural Accord in Morelia, Michoacán.

	
Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation RJ Sigurdson Alberta	Secretary of Agriculture Wes Ward Arkansas