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USTR NOMINEE KATHERINE TAI MUST RECALIBRATE US TRADE POLICY

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy calls on Biden's USTR pick to focus on transparency, multilateralism and overhauling the corporate free trade model

MINNEAPOLIS—Last week, President-elect Joe Biden nominated Katherine Tai as the next United States Trade Representative (USTR). As the United States faces significant global challenges, including the climate crisis, the role of USTR must be integrated in the Biden-Harris administration's strategic response to these challenges, according to the [Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy](https://www.iatp.org) (IATP).

"For too long the culture at USTR has been to isolate itself from other branches of government and from other areas of U.S. multilateral obligations," says IATP Executive Director Sophia Murphy. "Trade is an area of critical importance for the public interest. It's long past time to make way for a national conversation on how we want these critically important international relationships to support our commitment to ending economic exclusion and protecting the planet for our children."

Tai needs to break with Trump's erratic approach to trade. She must also break with the corporate free trade model supported by the Obama and Clinton administrations. U.S. trade policy needs a dramatic overhaul starting with increased transparency before, during and after trade negotiations and avenues for greater public participation.

Trade deals should not be made to benefit global corporations alone. As USTR, Tai should look to remove special corporate rights provisions like Investor State Dispute System and instead ensure public interests are protected. The restoration of mandatory Country of Origin Labeling for meat would build stronger connections between farmers and consumers, challenging the oligopoly power of global meat companies. Global agribusiness dominates U.S. trade and farm policy agenda as well as the trade and farm policy agendas of our trade partners. The result has been a race to the bottom, squeezing farm profits and starving rural communities of capital in the U.S. and globally. Governments have committed at the United Nations to protect food security, double small-scale producer incomes and strengthen environmental sustainability. Fair trade policy is vital to make good on that promise.

The U.S. must reengage with the world to solve the pressing issues of the pandemic, growing inequality and climate change. When it comes to the climate crisis, Tai must recognize the role that trade deals play in driving climate change and potentially undermining the Paris Agreement. Each of these issues requires global solutions, supported by trade rules that make fair and innovative solutions possible. It is time for a serious rethinking of the web of bilateral trade deals, as well as the World Trade Organization, so that they support international solutions for fair, healthy and sustainable economies.

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Based in Minneapolis with offices in Washington, D.C., and Berlin, Germany, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. To learn more, visit: www.iatp.org.