

January 24, 2014

Ambassador Michael Froman
United States Trade Representative
Washington, DC

Dear Ambassador Froman,

We are writing to express our concerns over possible measures in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) that could undermine our efforts to rebuild local food systems that are healthy, fair and sustainable. Our organizations promote Farm to School, Farm to Hospital and other initiatives aimed at sourcing healthy, local and regional foods into institutions as a way of enhancing nutritional and other health outcomes for consumers, supporting local economies, and improving farm profitability. We oppose any provisions in TTIP that would limit preferences in public procurement programs for healthy, locally grown foods.

Many state and local governments use public procurement contracts that include bidding criteria for healthy, locally produced foods. We are concerned that certain proposals being advanced in the TTIP negotiations could restrict or even eliminate criteria that favor local or regionally-grown foods as “localization” barriers to trade. We understand that the EU is pushing for procurement commitments in the trade agreement at all levels of government, including municipal, state and federal contracts. These commitments could open these publicly funded contracts to bids from EU firms, and could restrict the kinds of criteria that local communities deem important in making those decisions. The EU is insisting on procurement commitments that “go beyond” those already agreed to in the multilateral Government Procurement Agreement (GPA), which already includes 37 U.S. states. The EU requests additional commitments from those states, the inclusion of the remaining states, and the addition of 27 major U.S. cities.

While the U.S. excluded “procurement of any agricultural good made in furtherance of an agricultural support program or a human feeding program” from its commitments under the international Government Procurement Agreement, the EU has stated clearly that it would like to achieve new commitments in this agreement on goods and services not already covered in the GPA, as well as its goal to, “[e]nsure that rules on off-sets/set asides or domestic preferences such as, but not limited to, Buy America(n) and SME [Small and Medium Enterprise] policies, do not restrict procurement opportunities between the EU and the U.S.”

The fact that the U.S. and EU have refused to publish negotiating texts -- which is accepted practice at the World Trade Organization and other multilateral negotiations -- means that we are compelled to consider what might be at risk under this accord. We do not know which sectors might be included, whether bidding criteria designed to promote social, environmental, economic, health and other public goals could be threatened, or even how decisions would be made – or by whom – on whether states or cities are included in procurement commitments in the trade agreement. We urge you to immediately

publish negotiating texts on these and other important issues in the trade agreement to foster and informed public debate.

We would welcome opportunities to discuss these issues with you and hope for an open dialogue based on concrete information and inclusive of the broad range of stakeholders involved in rebuilding local and regional food systems.

Sincerely,

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

National Farm to School Network

School Food FOCUS National Office (New York, NY)

Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (NESAWG)

Farm to Institution New England

Addison County Relocalization Network (ACORN) (Middlebury, VT)

Cheshire County Conservation District (Walpole NH)

Educational Travel Service (South Burlington, VT)

Lamoille Economic Development Corporation (Morrisville, VT)

Sustainable Food Systems, LLC (Wallingford, CT)

Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund (Montpelier, VT)

Willing Hands (Lebanon, NH)

Yellow Wood Associates, Inc. (St. Albans, VT)

Members of the Maine Citizens Trade Policy Council

Rep Sharon Treat, Co-Chair, Maine Citizens Trade Policy Council

Senator Troy Jackson, Co-Chair, Maine Citizens Trade Policy Council

Senator John Patrick

Stephen Cole

Michael Herz

Jay Wadleigh