

April 7, 2008

Ambassador Susan C. Schwab
United State Trade Representative
600 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20508

Re: The Continuing Tariff on Mustard

Dear Ambassador Schwab,

In the latter days of the Clinton administration, our government imposed a 100% duty on most European mustards. This punitive measure was in response to a dispute involving the European community's unwillingness to accept certain American beef products. Mustard was not in any way involved in the dispute and a few other products were similarly targeted.

When President Bush took office in 2001, mustard lovers hoped that the retaliatory mustard tariff would end. It did not. Most informed observers believed that, if the dispute over beef exports remained and tariffs were still the preferred method of leverage, that the tariff would shift to other products. A carousel mechanism, if you will. No one ever believed that the mustard tariff would continue into 2008.

The tariff has unfortunately continued, seemingly forgotten by all those in Washington but not by the men and women so devastated by it. As curator of the Mount Horeb Mustard Museum, home of the world's largest collection of mustards and mustard memorabilia, the tariff has worked a tremendous hardship on me; selling mustards, both domestic and foreign, is how we stay in business. But others – other American citizens – have also disproportionately borne the burden of this trade dispute that they did not start. I refer to the American importers, distributors, and direct sellers of foreign mustards. The number of European mustards coming into the United States has diminished and Americans buying them have had to pay almost double for them.

Why has mustard continued to be the object of this burdensome tariff? Mustard is a healthy condiment, recommended as a substitute for fat-laden mayonnaise by many heart specialists to their patients. Mustard has a long and treasured history. Shakespeare wrote about mustard in several of his plays. Ironically, his most famous mention of mustard comes in *Taming of the Shrew*, when Grumio asks Katarina: "What say you to a piece of beef and mustard?"

If the theory behind the tariff was to pressure the European mustard seed growers to pressure their elected officials, then the tariff was doomed from the beginning. Most of the seed processed by European mustard makers was and still is grown in Canada or in countries not directly subject to the tariff. The European mustard processors themselves are often small companies, with little or no political clout.

I have worked in government and understand that change does not always come quickly. (Before starting the Mustard Museum I was an appellate prosecutor for the State of Wisconsin.) But change can occur if good people like yourself listen to the legitimate concerns of the people and resolve to do the right thing.

On behalf of the millions of mustard lovers in America and those who earn their livelihood from the sale of imported mustards, I implore you, Ambassador Schwab, to act as quickly as possible and lift this oppressive and unnecessary trade barrier, this tariff on European mustard. European mustard has long been a worthy companion of American food, especially beef, and now deserves to be treated fairly.

Condimentally yours,

Barry Levenson, Curator
Mount Horeb Mustard Museum

cc: Senator Russ Feingold
Senator Herb Kohl
Representative Tammy Baldwin