

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 2, 2016

Ambassador Michael Froman
United States Trade Representative
Office of the United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Ambassador Froman:

We write to express our concerns regarding the findings of a recent CBS News *60 Minutes* report on the pervasiveness of olive oil fraud. The segment, which aired on January 3, 2016, reported on an Italian anti-fraud policing agency, Carabinieri NAS, and its activities involving olive oil fraud, including a demonstration on how easily olive oil may be counterfeited and how widespread olive oil fraud is, both in and out of Italy. Experts in the segment stated that U.S. annual imports of tainted, adulterated, and fraudulent European olive oil could be as high as 75 to 80 percent. With Europe representing 80 to 90 percent of all olive oil imported into the United States, it is critical that USTR immediately address this problem before a food-borne illness occurs.

Claims made in the *60 Minutes* broadcast alluded to fraud occurring in massive volumes and indicated that up to 165,000 tons annually could be either mislabeled or harmful to human health for those with food allergies. The U.S. domestic industry has long communicated to Congress, the Administration and to the U.S. International Trade Commission (USITC) that the lack of standards in the United States for imported products negatively affects their ability to compete on a level playing field and results in immense price suppression. In fact, USITC issued a Section 332 report in mid-2013 highlighting that “broad and mostly unenforced standards lead to adulterated and mislabeled products, weakening the competitiveness of U.S. produced olive oil in the U.S. market.”

During the 2013 Farm Bill process, the domestic industry offered a solution for the importation of fraudulent olive oil. Unfortunately, Congress did not yet have the USITC Section 332 report as a resource to guide its decision and failed to implement a legislative answer to this problem. In 2014, however, as a part of the Farm Bill Manager’s Statement, Congress directed USTR and other agencies to study the Section 332 report and “take action to remove the obstacles that are preventing the U.S. olive oil industry from reaching its potential.” We would like to reiterate this charge to USTR to work with European trade officials to find a solution for domestic producers, and importers, and most importantly for U.S. consumers.

The lack of standards within the United States continues to result in rampant fraud plaguing domestic growers, retailers and consumers. While we understand that this objective could be solved as a part of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP), we cannot and should not wait to address the potential hazard that adulterated or tainted olive oil can have on consumers. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



David G. Valadao
Member of Congress



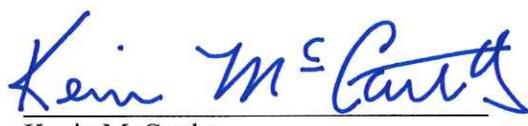
John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Ami Bera
Member of Congress



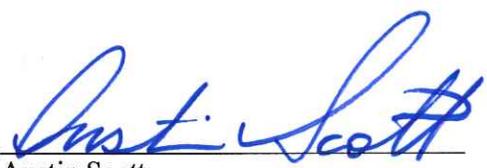
Jeff Denham
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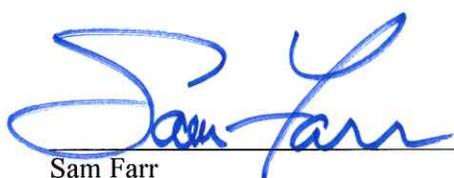
Devin Nunes
Member of Congress



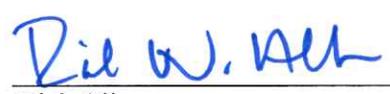
Ann Kirkpatrick
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