



AMERICAN SPICE TRADE ASSOCIATION, INC.

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August 12, 2025

The Honorable Howard W. Lutnick
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

The Honorable Jamieson Greer
United States Trade Representative
600 17th St, NW
Washington, D.C. 20508

Dear Secretary Lutnick and Ambassador Greer,

On behalf of the American Spice Trade Association (ASTA), I am writing to request that consideration be extended to agricultural commodities, such as spices, that cannot be grown in the United States as trade policy advances, including ongoing bilateral negotiations.

We commend the President's commitment to rebalancing trade relationships and addressing inequities that disadvantage American businesses and consumers. As the trade association that represents the American spice industry (including growers, manufacturers, and traders), ASTA shares the Administration's goals of strengthening the U.S. economy and supporting American manufacturing and agriculture. However, tariffs on unavailable natural resources, including spices that cannot be grown commercially in the United States, cause harm to American businesses and increase costs for American consumers.

The U.S. spice industry is a critical part of the American food system, supplying essential ingredients to food manufacturers, restaurants, and consumers. Spices naturally add flavor to healthful foods that nourish American families on a daily basis and are essential inputs to the \$9.4 trillion dollar American food industry, which employs millions of American citizens. Last year, the U.S. imported more than \$2 billion of spices from more than 50 origin countries. The importation of spices directly supports approximately 50,000 U.S. jobs across processing, quality assurance, distribution, and product development.

Most spices, including black pepper, cinnamon, turmeric, ginger, nutmeg, vanilla, and cloves, require tropical conditions and cannot be cultivated on a commercial scale within the United States due to climate and geographical limitations. Because most spices cannot be grown domestically, the industry relies on global sourcing. ASTA shared a list of tariff codes of specific spices that are not grown in the



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U.S., and which countries they are sourced from, with the Office of the United States Trade Representative (see attached letters).

We greatly appreciate Secretary Lutnick's June testimony before the House Appropriations Committee hearing on June 5, during which he referenced spices as an example of imported commodities that are unavailable natural resources and suggested that such products would not be subject to additional tariffs. We strongly support this approach and urge the Administration to continue distinguishing between products that can be produced domestically versus those, such as many spices, which cannot.

We are also encouraged by language within the U.S.-Indonesia Framework for an Agreement on Reciprocal Trade, under which the countries may identify certain commodities not naturally available or domestically produced in the U.S. for a further reduction in the reciprocal tariff rate. This framework is a promising step forward and reflects a practical understanding of the supply challenges faced by industries that depend on imported agricultural products. Indonesia is a critical supplier of spices such as cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, and pepper, which are not grown in the U.S.

We respectfully urge the Administration to treat spices not commercially produced in the U.S. as distinct from other commodities in any tariff decisions and reciprocal trade actions. Applying this principle in trade policy will help avoid unintended harm to U.S. food manufacturers, restaurants, and consumers who depend on the availability and affordability of these unique imported agricultural ingredients.

We remain committed to working closely with the Administration and relevant agencies to advance trade policies that support American workers, preserve access to essential imported goods, and protect the interests of U.S. businesses and families, alike.

We would be happy to provide any additional information that may be relevant in trade and tariff discussions. Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Laura Shumow". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Laura Shumow
Executive Director
American Spice Trade Association