



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

The Honorable Marie-Claude Bibeau  
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food

June 20, 2023

The Honourable Mary Ng  
Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development

**RE: Canada Should Withdraw from CUSMA Trade Dispute Over Mexican Corn Importation Ban**

Dear Minister Bibeau and Minister Ng,

We are writing to share concerns expressed by the National Farmers Union (NFU), Canada's national farm organization comprised of Canadian farm families, regarding Canada's participation in the United States-led trade dispute under the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) concerning Mexico's recent importation measures for genetically engineered corn for human consumption. In February 2023, as part of updating its national food security policy, the government of Mexico announced new measures prohibiting the importation of genetically engineered corn for use in products for human consumption. Mexico has justified these measures as necessary to uphold its food sovereignty, including the traditional Indigenous farming practice known as milpa.

The NFU is strongly opposed to Canada's continued participation in this trade dispute and believes that Canada should respect Mexico's sovereign decision to prohibit imports of genetically engineered corn for human consumption. We share the NFU's concerns and join them urging you to withdraw Canada from participating further in dispute settlement consultations and any subsequent trade dispute actions over Mexico's new corn importation measures, for the following reasons:

*1. As Mexico's new measures are grounded in protecting Indigenous traditions, Canada's participation in a trade dispute over them is inconsistent with UNDRIP.*

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted by resolution of the United Nations General Assembly in 2007, upholds the rights that form the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of Indigenous peoples of the world. Mexico voted in favour of UNDRIP in the UN General Assembly. Mexico's new corn importation measures are significantly informed by its desire to take necessary preventative actions to prevent loss or degradation of Indigenous traditions and genetic and cultural heritage. Corn as we know it today was developed by Indigenous farmers and traditional agricultural practices. Milpa is an ancient traditional farming practice for growing corn developed and maintained by Indigenous peoples in Mexico, and this practice would be put in jeopardy by importation of genetically engineered corn.

Further, Canada's UNDRIP Act implementing the Declaration within Canadian law came into force in June 2021. Its purpose is to "affirm the Declaration as an international human rights instrument that can help interpret and apply Canadian law [and provide] a framework to advance implementation of the Declaration at the federal level." Canada's participation in a trade dispute that seeks to challenge Mexico's right to protect the traditional agricultural practices and heritage of Indigenous peoples of Mexico is incompatible with the spirit of Canada's UNDRIP Act and the principles of UNDRIP.

*2. Mexico's new measures will have no direct impact on Canada's corn exports.*

Mexico's new measures prohibiting the importation of genetically engineered corn strictly for use in products for human consumption are not expected to impact trade or imports of corn by Mexico, nor Canada's corn exports. Mexico is more than self-sufficient with respect to its corn requirements through its production of non-genetically engineered white corn, and Canada's trade statistics reveal that there have been no exports of corn to Mexico, whether genetically engineered or otherwise, for many years.

*3. Ratification of the Biodiversity Convention supports Mexico's new measures and Canada's nonparticipation in any trade disputes over them.*

Canada was the first industrialized country to sign the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (Biodiversity Convention) in 1992, which has since been ratified by 196 nations, including Mexico. As signatories to this international legal instrument, Canada and Mexico committed to promote sustainable development and preserve biological diversity in order to ensure humans' basic needs, such as food security, medicines, fresh air and water, shelter and a clean and healthy environment. Commitments under the Biodiversity Convention directly inform Mexico's genetically engineered corn importation measures aimed at maintaining its food security and justify Canada's nonparticipation in any trade dispute regarding these measures. This includes commitments to:

- manage and control the risks associated with the use and release of modified organisms resulting from biotechnology;
- respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of Indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; and
- promote the wider application of Indigenous knowledge, innovations and practices with their approval and involvement.

Considering these facts, we join the NFU in urging you to respect Mexico's sovereign decision to prohibit importation of genetically engineered corn for human consumption by withdrawing Canada from any trade dispute actions against Mexico concerning these measures.

Sincerely,



Mike Morrice  
MP for Kitchener Centre



Elizabeth May, MP for Saanich-Gulf Islands  
Leader of the Green Party of Canada

Cc:  
MP Francis Drouin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food  
MP Arif Virani, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development  
MP Tim Louis, Kitchener—Conestoga  
Jenn Pfenning, President, National Farmers Union