

Coalition urges de-escalation of tariff war with China

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

Led by the National Retail Federation, more than 150 organizations are urging the Trump administration to put the brakes on proposed tariffs on an additional \$200 billion of Chinese goods.

“Continuing the tit-for-tat escalation with China only serves to expand the harm to more U.S. economic interest including farmers, families, businesses and workers,” the coalition said in a letter to U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer.

The multi-industry coalition, which includes Farmers for Free Trade and Americans for Farmers and Families, said it agrees that solutions are needed for longstanding issues with China.

But tariffs are counterproductive and so far have only produced increased costs for U.S. businesses, farmers, im-



Port of Seattle

A container ship departs the Port of Seattle. A coalition of U.S. businesses, including agricultural groups, has sent a letter to the Trump administration urging it to stop raising tariffs on Chinese imports. They fear China will continue to raise its tariffs on U.S. crops and goods.

porters, exporters and consumers, they said.

The U.S. has already imposed tariffs on \$50 billion of Chinese goods, drawing retaliatory tariffs, and the Chinese government has promised further retaliation if additional

U.S. tariffs are imposed.

Although the administration continues to argue that it will escalate tariff actions until China alters its behavior, there has been no indication of that nation changing course, the groups said.

“Applying these high levels of tariffs on Chinese products will continue to miss the mark. And once the tariffs go into effect, taking them down may not happen anytime soon, as both sides harden their position,” they said.

Undermining the competitiveness of U.S. companies through tariffs will not result in the elimination of China’s acts, policies and practices but will instead strengthen China’s competitive position globally, they said.

Tariffs are quickly closing world markets to U.S. farmers and ranchers and giving an advantage to foreign competitors, Brian Kuehl, executive director of Farmers for Free Trade, said in a statement.

“If the administration wants to stand up for the agriculture industry, it should end the trade war and work to forge new opportunities to sell American commodities in overseas markets,” he said.

Should the \$200 billion list of products be subject to a 10 or 25 percent tariff, U.S. manufacturers, farmers, ranchers, fishermen and others will soon face tariffs on all their imports from and exports to China, the coalition said.

On the import side, im-

posing a 25 percent tariff on a total of \$250 billion of Chinese goods would result in \$62.5 billion in tariff costs for U.S. businesses and consumers each year. By contrast, the U.S. government collected only \$33 billion in total tariffs on all global imports in 2017, the coalition said.

On the export side, each retaliatory action by China further closes the world’s second-largest economy to the U.S., they said.

The groups also expressed concern over the administration’s suggestion that the U.S. might impose tariffs on all Chinese imports.

The groups are requesting that every effort be undertaken to initiate meaningful negotiations expeditiously.

“We recommend no further tariff actions be taken until those negotiations have a chance to produce significant and verifiable results,” they said.

18-year-old producer grows his sheep operation

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

Caleb Pirc, 18, has built his Katahdin hair sheep flock into a sizable and sustainable operation that has room to grow.

He operates his Good Shepherd Farm from his parents’ home in southwest Meridian, Idaho, and several grazing sites he leases nearby.

“Some of the people are a little surprised it’s me they’ve been talking to,” Pirc said. “But a lot of farmers have been really supportive. Customers and other sheep breeders with the same goals have been really helpful.”

He owns all of Good Shepherd’s livestock. He manages the animals as well as a lambing operation and three leased pastures.

“Caleb is incredible,” said Matt Brechwald of Kuna, an ag broadcaster and owner of Off-Farm Income. “He has done an incredible job of developing niche markets and leasing property from neighbors to grow his farming enterprise.”

Pirc’s parents, Tony and Jodi Pirc, aren’t farmers or livestock producers. They moved to a rural setting about seven years ago. Caleb and his twin sister, Hannah, started raising sheep a year later.

“I always loved animals,” Caleb Pirc said.

He finished buying out his sister’s share of the livestock in 2014.

Pirc has funded the business from personal savings, which include wages from working as an Idaho House of Representatives page during the 2018 legislative session. His parents have helped with a barn, fencing and other infrastructure at their home, where lambing and some grazing occur.

Challenges include reduced land availability and increased costs in the growing Boise area.

Pirc says he tries to make sure his flock maintains the best possible genetics and that the operation runs as efficiently as possible.

“Nice, even grazing and rotations,” and making sure sheep get the most nutrition



Brad Carlson/Capital Press

Caleb Pirc of Good Shepherd Farm near Meridian, Idaho.

out of each unit of plant material they consume are among operational goals, he said.

Pasture health and sustainability are critical, he says.

At his parents’ 1.4-acre property, pasture quality is excellent and the small barn is sufficient for a lambing operation that still has room to grow, he said. Lambing is done around in April and

May. The breed can lamb outside a set season but is most productive in April.

Online
<https://www.good-shepherd-farm.com/>

In addition to a 5-acre parcel, 1.5 acres nearby is all pasture and contains multiple plant species from which the sheep can choose, including some with deeper roots, Pirc said.

A separate parcel of around 2 acres in southwest Meridian consists of “good, productive grass with thick stand,” Pirc said, and is similar in pasture quality to his parents’ property.

The flock has about 25 ewes — each producing an average of two lambs annually — and three rams. Katahdin are more prolific than many sheep breeds, he said.

Good Shepherd Farm raises the sheep for meat and breeding stock, emphasizing sustainable agriculture and all-natural production.

“We typically grow 10 to 30 percent per year,” he said. Headcount increases typically hinge on the quality of the ewe lambs born in a given year.

A university animal scientist mentored Pirc, who said the experience has been key to his own focus on animal and pasture health.

Pirc, who was home schooled and graduated from high school this year, said he is a year to 18 months away from completing a bachelor’s degree in business administration, emphasizing entrepreneurship and communications, from Liberty University.

Bean harvest a mixed bag after summer heat

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

Dry and garden bean yields could be at or below average this year in southern Idaho, depending on variety, following the prolonged high heat of mid-summer.

Idaho Bean Commission board member Don Tolmie, production manager with Treasure Valley Seed in Wilder, said large-seeded beans such as dark red kidney, light kidney and cranberry “suffered with the heat of July and August.” Small-seeded beans such as small whites, navies, blacks, pintos and Great Northerns “did well even through the heat.” His company handles dry beans grown mostly for seed.

Harvest in southwest Idaho is 10 days to two weeks ahead of normal and 65 to 70 percent completed, he said Sept. 11. He expects harvest to be mostly done in the area around Sept. 25.



Idaho Bean Commission

Most Idaho beans are grown for seed. This year’s harvest is ahead of schedule in parts of the state.

on lower acreage, just before prices for wheat, corn and soy started slipping, he said. Bean prices fell over the subsequent two years as acreage increased.

South-central Idaho’s bean harvest as of Sept. 11 looked to be on schedule, at around halfway completed, said Idaho Bean Commission board member John Dean, who owns Idaho Seed Bean Co. in Twin Falls.

“Our consistently hot weather this summer probably didn’t do our beans any favors,” he said. “Yields are probably go-

ing to be average at best.”

But beans in south-central Idaho fields have looked fine, helped by a lack of adverse weather, Dean said.

“Other than the heat during the growing season, we have had good weather,” he said.

Idaho Bean Commission Executive Director Andi Woolf-Weibye said there are about 500 to 600 growers in the state each year. Most of the beans grown are for seed. Growers of beans, a rotation crop, must go through an annual certification process.

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