

The benefits of growing agricultural trade

One could be forgiven – given the current political rhetoric in the US – for thinking all Americans oppose the TPP. However, last month,

Agricultural Leaders of Michigan (ALM) released a letter detailing the benefits of trade for US agriculture and urging policymakers to be proactive in establishing new markets for agricultural products. Here is their letter.

WE BELIEVE trade is an important issue and an opportunity we shouldn't take for granted.

A commitment to international trade starts with strong relationships among North American nations and should extend to seizing new opportunities across the Pacific and Atlantic.

The strong trading relationship between Michigan and other countries in North America has fuelled farming and agribusiness to become our second-largest economic driver in the past 20 years. In fact, Michigan's agriculture sector exports at least \$3 billion of products every year.

Without trade, we would have a fundamental inability to sell what we grow. Domestic markets alone aren't sufficient for the rapidly expanding production of grain, dairy, processed food products,

able market for US agriculture, has been accused of violating its World Trade Organisation commitments in a filing made by the US Government.

Whether they're caused in Washington, Paris, Beijing or anywhere else, headwinds against open trade will have consequences for agriculture

and rural America. Agriculture is one of the only sectors of the US economy that produces a trade surplus, but our current trade opportunities only

stretch so far, especially as farmers become more productive, increasing the availability of Michigan products for sale at home and abroad.

Right now, there are many opportunities for expanded trade, and we should think carefully before letting them go by the wayside.

biofuels, fruits and vegetables we produce in Michigan. Agriculture, and rural Michigan communities, would be in far worse shape without the export opportunities we have today.

Nonetheless, it's a turbulent time for international trade. Both major party presidential candidates in the US and many in Congress have declared opposition to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and criticised the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that's been in place with Canada and Mexico since 1994.

Expanded trade negotiations with Europe are stagnant for the time being. Promising new markets, including Cuba and countries along the Pacific Rim, are stuck in political purgatory. And China, which has been a growing, albeit unpredict-



Agricultural Leaders of Michigan (ALM) are urging US policymakers to be proactive in establishing new markets for agricultural products.