



MARITIME EXCHANGE

for the Delaware River and Bay

Leading the Way to Port Progress

John T. Reynolds, Chairman
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November 14, 2023

The Hon. Thomas Vilsack
Secretary, US Department of Agriculture
Jamie L. Whitten Building
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington DC, 20250

Re: Systems Approach for Chilean Table Grapes

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

On behalf of the members of the Maritime Exchange for the Delaware River and Bay, this letter expresses an urgent need for prompt publication of the final rule of the systems approach of Chilean table grapes. As information, the Maritime Exchange is a nonprofit association representing the Delaware, Southern New Jersey, and Southeastern Pennsylvania seaport business community.

The systems approach agreement resulted from a long process of science-based work between Chile and the U.S. It will allow for the export of table grapes to the U.S. without methyl bromide fumigation from specific areas of Chile with low pest presence that meet the requirements established by APHIS-USDA. That said, however, maintaining the ability for fumigation—and capability—when needed remains absolutely essential.

The timing for this important milestone is crucial given the start of the table grapes season in November. The new rule will benefit the entire U.S. supply chain, giving access to high-quality table grapes in counter-season and a boost to the U.S. economy, including ports, logistics operators, importers, retailers, and most importantly, consumers. Table grapes represent highest-volume U.S. import from Chile, approximately 70% of which comes primarily through the Delaware River port complex, which supports hundreds of family-sustaining jobs in the region.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our views. We appreciate your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Lisa B. Himber
President