

**Opening Statement of Luke J. Lindberg,
Nominee for Under Secretary of Trade & Foreign Agricultural Affairs,
U.S. Department of Agriculture
April 29, 2025**

Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Klobuchar, and distinguished members of this committee, I am humbled to come before you today as President Donald J. Trump's nominee for Under Secretary of Trade & Foreign Agricultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. I would also like to thank Secretary Rollins and my wife and kids, for supporting my nomination. My wife Brittany, has served this great country as a supportive family member most of her life. Her willingness to embark upon this next phase of civic engagement, alongside me, is inspiring and epitomizes the Godly woman she has become.

Should you confirm me for this position, this will not be my first time serving as an American diplomat. In President Trump's first administration, I served as Chief of Staff at the Export-Import Bank of the United States where I led key initiatives on the great power competition with China, liquified natural gas exports, and securing America's supply of critical minerals and rare earths. I also led EXIM's involvement in the execution of the historic and ground-breaking Abraham Accords, a series of bilateral agreements normalizing relations between countries in the Middle East.

Over the past several years, I have served as President & CEO of South Dakota Trade, the top diplomatic posting in my home state which is second in the nation in per capita agricultural exports. In this position, I led trade missions to Mexico, Japan, Taiwan, and Israel — generating millions in sales for South Dakota farmers and ranchers — and in so doing held bilateral meetings with President Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim of Taiwan, and Mexico's then-Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Victor Villalobos.

Throughout my career, I have conducted business on six continents and led teams of hundreds of staff overseas.

My journey, which has taken me across the world and back again, several times over, started like many of you, in a small town far from Washington, D.C. I have a distinct memory of standing in front of our brick, town hall in Norwich, Vermont, waving a campaign sign for my mother who was running for Town Treasurer and who is here with us today. That day was special to me, first because mom won her election, and second in that it was the day I realized that democratic, freedom-loving countries are only sustainable if people are willing to serve.

My college pastor, Matt Nichols, who is also here with us today, and who prayed over my family before this hearing, helped me to identify a 'life verse' that aligned with this calling to public service. Proverbs 31, verse 8 says "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute." I can think of no greater calling than to speak up on behalf of rural Americans at this moment in time.

Many of my friends and neighbors have asked what I hope to accomplish should I be confirmed to this role. My answer is simple: President Trump said it best when he nominated me, “Luke will make sure American Farmers and Ranchers get the smart Trade Deals that they deserve.”

America’s agricultural trade deficit, which is the worst in American history, is driven by a number of factors, but principally by the lack of an America First trade agenda that prioritizes market access for our farmers and ranchers. For too long, we have let other countries access our market and have not negotiated reciprocal access to theirs.

Recently, the office of the U.S. Trade Representative solicited public comment on unfair trade practices forced upon our great American producers by other nations. I read every submission that comments on agriculture.

In so doing, I was reminded that 75% of the seafood, over half of the fruit, and 35% of the vegetables we consume in America are imported.

Our ethanol producers are no longer competitive in Brazil because of Brazilian import tariffs.

Our hog famers cannot export pork to Brazil, India, Nigeria, Jamaica, Namibia, or Thailand.

Mexico has enjoyed a 557% increase in specialty crop imports into the United States in just the last decade.

Canada has rigged the USMCA agreement terms against our dairy and wheat farmers.

The European Union is responsible for roughly half of our overall trade deficit, \$23.6b, and yet it routinely shuts out our products at the alter of non-scientific based claims.

There is too much to say about China in this set of opening remarks, but a stark comment that stuck out to me came from representatives of American corn farmers who said that “U.S. corn growers can not rely on China as an export market.”

However, in the midst of all of the feedback, one story that lives in my memory is that of a family in Georgia, who captain a shrimp boat. The husband and wife commented that they have noticed a 70% reduction in shrimp trawlers due to a flood of imports from foreign nations that process their shrimp in unsanitary conditions that we would never allow in the U.S.

The Honorable Henry Kissinger once said, “America has no permanent enemies or friends, only interests”.

America’s agricultural trade deficit is not impacting just one region, political constituency, or segment of the agricultural economy. We all are impacted. And we all must work together to fix it.

In addition to helping farmers and ranchers navigate short term changes aimed at more fair trade deals, I stand ready to both explore new export markets and also hold our existing markets accountable to the deals they made with our family farms.

America has not lost our competitive edge in producing food, fuel and fiber. It has merely abdicated our leadership role in feeding the world by allowing others to rig the system against us.

You have my commitment that I will work together with you all in Congress, Secretary Rollins, our interagency partners at USTR, Commerce, and Treasury, and most importantly our agricultural producers to bolster America's food security.

I humbly ask you to support my nomination and for your ongoing partnership should you confirm me for this role.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.