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Subject: April - 2025 USA Report

USDA & USTR Cabinet Level Leadership:

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA):

Secretary of Agriculture – Brooke Rollins (confirmed by U.S. Senate on February 13)

Deputy Secretary – Stephen Vaden (nominated on January 17 & awaiting U.S. Senate confirmation)

Under-Secretary for Marketing & Regulatory Programs – Dudley Hoskins (nominated on January 17 & awaiting U.S. Senate confirmation - will head the Animal & Plant Inspection Service/APHIS and the Agricultural Marketing Service/AMS)

Under-Secretary for Trade & Foreign Agricultural Affairs – Luke Lindberg (nominated on January 17 & awaiting U.S. Senate confirmation - responsible for managing the Foreign Agricultural Service/FAS)

U.S. Trade Representative (USTR):

Ambassador U.S. Trade Representative – Greer Jamison (confirmed by the U.S. Senate on February 27)

USTR Chief Agricultural Negotiator – Doug Hoelscher is expected to be nominated by the Trump Administration within the next week. He is a member of the “America First” think tank policy group founded by current USDA Secretary Rollins. Mr. Hoelscher is from Iowa and has served previously under the George W. Bush and the first Trump Administrations as a Deputy Director for White House Inter-governmental Affairs.

U.S. Department of State:

Secretary of State – Marco Rubio (confirmed by the U.S. Senate on January 21)

U.S. Ambassador to South Africa – Leo Brent Bozell III has been nominated by the Trump Administration as the new Ambassador to South Africa. Mr. Bozell is a conservative media critic and writer. Mr. Bozell is also the founder of the Media Research Center; an organization whose purpose is to identify liberal media bias. He will likely be confirmed expeditiously by the U.S. Senate to take on an increasingly critical bilateral relationship.

U.S. Ambassador to Botswana: Ambassador Howard Van Vranken: Career Ambassador Van Vranken remains in his position with no indication to date that the new Administration will replace him.

South Africa Embassy to the United States:

New South Africa Agricultural Counselor- Dr. Julian Jaftha was a very welcome addition to the Embassy in Washington, D.C. as he arrived in late March to assume his new role. I had an introductory meeting with Dr. Jaftha during the month to discuss mutual areas of cooperation including the current status of a number of issues, especially the Trump Administration's hectic tariff rollout. He and the Embassy trade staff were extremely helpful in helping address a number of CGA tariff questions through the U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) office in Washington, D.C. Dr. Jaftha is replacing former Agricultural Counselor Jenetha Mahlangu and Trade Counselor Malose Letsoalo. The position had been vacant for over 2 years.

Communication with USDA - Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS):

General: I met with the APHIS Director of the Plant Protection & Quarantine (PPQ), Sanitary/Phytosanitary (SPS) Trade Office who informed that APHIS has been decimated by personnel reductions throughout the agency with over 1,000 personnel slots being eliminated. More staff reductions are expected within the next several months. Personnel are either being fired or offered early "buy outs" or retirement packages to reduce staffing. The Director for APHIS-Plant Protection & Quarantine unit has agreed to an early retirement within the next week or so while the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) is also strongly considering leaving her post early. In addition, the long-standing South Africa PPQ-SPS Trade Director and his Assistant have been fired or will be taking the "buyout" package in May.

My APHIS contact also reported that the 2 critical Under/Secretary nominees have still not been confirmed by the U.S. Senate which remains an impediment for APHIS not being able to meet with foreign counterparts or make any technical decisions regarding SPS trade issues of mutual importance. The Secretary's Office has instructed that no meetings or detailed discussions take place without special approval. The 2 Under/Secretary positions are responsible for leading APHIS, the Agricultural Marketing Service (citrus quality grading), and the Foreign Agriculture Service.

South Africa Citrus Black Spot (CBS) Rule: No surprise but there has not been any movement or discussion regarding the CBS rule. The CBS pending rule remains linked with improved access for U.S. pork, poultry, and beef. My connections within the U.S. pork and poultry industries have informed that they may take advantage of the tariff threat and expected Congressional discussions regarding future AGOA renewal as leverage to overcome current phytosanitary irritants and expand market access into South Africa.

Botswana Citrus Market Access – Draft Pest Risk Assessment (PRA): The APHIS review and consolidation of the draft PRA has not moved because the technical staff has been decimated with dismissals. Thus far, 6 risk assessors have been eliminated. My APHIS contact stated that the remaining staff were being reorganized with work priorities being evaluated by the Secretary's office. My contact could not provide an answer regarding a possible timeline for finalizing the PRA (quarantine pest list) or Risk Mitigation Document after consultations with the Botswana National Plant Protection Service (NPPO). As you may recall, APHIS had received 17 basic public comments and was in the process of official response including reaching out to the NPPO. The draft PRA included the following pests:

- Fruit Flies/Tephritidae—*Ceratitis cosyra* (Marula or Mango fruit fly), *Ceratitis rosa* (Natal fruit fly), *Ceratitis capitata* (Mediterranean fruit fly), *Bactrocera dorsalis* (Oriental fruit fly), & *Dacus ciliatus* (Lesser Pumpkin fruit fly)
- Moth/Lepidoptera—*Thaumatotibia leucotreta* (False Codling Moth)
- Fungi/Botryosphaerales—*Phyllosticta citricarpa* (Citrus Black Spot)

While the USDA comment period was open for 90 days that stretched from October through January, the Citrus Research Institute and the Botswana NPPO had submitted scientific information challenging the inclusion of both *Ceratitis cosyra* and *Dacus ciliatus* as true quarantine pests of commercial citrus.

US Africa Trade Desk (USATD) & U.S. Department of State (DoS) - Botswana Cooperation: I have been collaborating with the USATD office in Orlando, Florida for the past several months to help expedite the APHIS regulatory approval process for Botswana citrus access. As a result, USATD established a video conference call with DoS officials in Washington, D.C. to determine if under the new Administration, DoS support for Botswana access remained a priority. The call went well with DoS first reaffirming that the U.S.-Botswana bilateral relationship was still completely aligned via democratic, regional security, and trade policies. They also referred to a successful meeting that took place between President Boko and DoS Secretary Rubio in Washington, D.C. on March 7.

DoS then reaffirmed their support for citrus and have continued to work closely with USDA to complete the regulatory approval process. When we broached the idea of establishing a meeting between DoS and USDA to help facilitate final approval, the DoS team respectfully declined stating that they would leave USDA to manage.

USDA-National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Releases April 2025 Report- U.S. Citrus Forecast for 2024/25 Season:

General: On April 10, NASS released the monthly report that demonstrated that production was generally positive in three of the four citrus producing states. Texas was the only state that experienced a decrease in their all-orange and grapefruit production counts. Florida grapefruit and tangerine-mandarin crops climbed 8% and 14%, respectively. The Florida grapefruit crop increased by 100,000 boxes, to 1.3 million boxes while their tangerine-mandarin crop rose by 50,000 boxes, to 400,000 boxes. However, compared to last season, all-orange production remains a whopping 36% less than the 2023-24 season.

California showed solid gains for the majority of their varieties while Arizona lemon production increased slightly. Texas all-orange production dipped marginally while the grapefruit production suffered a 200,000-box loss.

Florida

- All-Orange: Production remained unchanged from March at 11.6 million boxes. This compares with 18 million boxes harvested last season. 15.8 million boxes were packed in the 2022/23 season.
- Non-Valencia: Unchanged from March at 4.6 million boxes. 6.7 million were packed in 2023/24 and 6.1 million in 2022/23.
- Valencia: Unchanged from March at 7 million boxes compared to 11.3 million in 2023/24 and 9.6 million in 2022/23.

- Grapefruit: A slight uptick from March at 1.3 million boxes versus 1.2 million in March. During the 2023/24 season, 1.79 million boxes were harvested with 1.81 million in 2022/23.
- Tangerines & Mandarins: Another minor increase in April at 400,000 boxes versus 350,000 in March. This is a decrease in production from the 2022/23 and 22023/24 seasons where 450,000 and 480,000 boxes were harvested, respectively.
- Lemons: Unchanged from March at 600,000 boxes. No lemons were cultivated during the past 2 seasons.

California

- All-Orange: An overall production increase in April of 1 million boxes to 47.5 million versus 46.5 million in March. During the 2023/24 season, 45.4 million boxes were packed while in 2022/23, 44.6 million were harvested.
- Non-Valencia: Another increase of 1 million boxes harvested in April to 40 million. 38.3 million were harvested in 2023/24 & 36 million during the 2022/23 season.
- Valencia: Unchanged from March at 7 million boxes in April. 7.1 million boxes were produced in 2023/24 and 8.6 million during 2022/23.
- Grapefruit: An Increase of 600,000 boxes in April to 4.3 million versus 3.7 million in March. This compares with 3.9 million in 2023/24 & 4.5 million during 2022/23.
- Tangerines & Mandarins: Solid Increase of 1 million boxes in April to 26 million. 27.2 million were packed in 2023/24 & 23.5 million during 2022/23.
- Lemons: An increase of 1 million boxes in April to 27 million. In comparison, 24.5 million were harvested during 2023/24 & 25.8 million in 2022/23.

Texas

- All-Orange: Experienced a slight loss of 20,000 boxes in April to 880,000. In 2023/24, Texas produced 1.18 million boxes and 1.13 million during the 2022/23 season.
- Non-Valencia: A loss of 70,000 boxes in April to 530,000. Texas produced 690,000 boxes last season & 570,000 in 2022/23.
- Valencia: Texas increased production by 50,000 boxes in April to 350,000. In comparison, Texas harvested 490,000 boxes in 2023/24 & 560,000 during 2022/23.
- Grapefruit: Experienced a drop of 200,000 boxes to 2.3 million. In 2023/24, production was 2.4 million & during the 2022/23 season totaled 2.25 million boxes.

Arizona

- Lemons: Demonstrated an increase of 50,000 boxes to 950,000. In comparison, Arizona produced the exact amount last season and 1.4 million boxes in 2022/23.

USDA Secretary Rollins Emphasizes Role to Expand Market Access for American Agricultural Exports:

The Secretary has affirmed a commitment to aggressively expand market access abroad and balance trade deficits by visiting 6 international markets within 6 months of her term in office. Her USDA press release stated, “At a time when the agricultural trade deficit is at nearly \$50 billion following the previous administration’s little to no action in the international marketplace, USDA is working to diversify global markets, strengthen existing markets, and hold existing trading partners accountable for their end of the deal.” She added, “USDA remains committed to expanding market access around the

world. I am going abroad to sell the bounty of American agriculture and to ensure the prosperity of our hard-working agricultural producers. Everything is on the table to get more markets for our products.”

The Secretary will focus on the initial markets to include, Vietnam, Japan, India, Peru, Brazil, and the U.K. Other trade missions that she will lead at a later time will focus on Hong Kong, the Dominican Republic, Taiwan, Cote d’Ivoire, and Mexico.

India: The 6th-largest supplier of agricultural products where the U.S. has a \$1.3 billion trade deficit.

Brazil: The U.S. has a \$7 billion trade deficit with Brazil.

U.K.: The U.K. is the U.S.’ 14th-largest agricultural export market. U.S. agricultural exporters face high tariffs and small tariff rate quota volumes.

Japan: Japan is a top 5 market for many U.S. commodities such as corn, beef, pork, wheat, rice, and soybeans. However, the U.S. faces stiff competition from other countries for these products.

Vietnam: Vietnam is the U.S.’ 10th-largest export market but has no trade agreement in place, while major competitors like China do.

Peru: Peru is the U.S.’ 3rd-largest market for agricultural exports to South America and the 2nd-largest agricultural supplier. New targets for U.S. exports are ethanol, dairy, meat, tree nuts, and pulses.

Trump Administration Tariff Policy Currently Affecting U.S. Agricultural Exports to China (NBC News/April 27):

Farmers are getting are extremely worried that the clock is ticking on trade deals that the U.S. will need to strike with many nations, most notably China, to avoid what President Trump’s treasury secretary has described as an “unsustainable” tariffs war. But in the U.S. farming sector, the damage has already been done and the economic crisis already begun. The Trump Administration has levied tariffs against China of 145% while China has retaliated at a rate of 125%.

U.S. agriculture exporters say the global backlash to President Donald Trump’s tariffs is punishing them, especially a decline in China buying of U.S. farm products, leading to canceled export orders and layoffs. Peter Friedmann, executive director of the Agriculture Transportation Coaliti (AgTC), a leading export trade group for farmers, tells CNBC the number of canceled purchases of U.S. agriculture should not be described as approaching a crisis. “It is a full-blown crisis already,” he said.

Data released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on Thursday revealed China made its biggest cancellation of pork orders since 2020, halting a shipment of 12,000 tons of pork.

AgTC says “massive” financial losses are already being shared by its members as a result of the trade war, based on reports it is receiving from member companies.

A wood pulp and paperboard exporter reported to the trade group the immediate cancellation or hold of 6,400 metric tons in a warehouse and a hold of 15 railcars sitting in what is known in the supply chain

as “demurrage,” when fees are charged for delayed movement of goods. Meanwhile, the exporter said there are 9,000 metric tons “on the water” being shipped to China which is expected to arrive on May 13 and facing the threat of costly diversion to Chinese bonded warehouses or to other countries as Chinese buyers may refuse the cargo and abandon it at port.

One grass seed exporter told AgTC it received two weeks’ notice that eight loads were being canceled by Chinese customers despite vessels bookings already being in place.

At a recent stakeholder meeting at the Port of Oakland (California) headquarters regarding tariff impacts, Port of Oakland Executive Director Kristi McKenney warned that a tariff-induced downturn in the port’s cargo volume — whether from import slowdowns or retaliatory export losses — ultimately could jeopardize job stability and the region’s economic health.

McKenney cited retaliatory tariffs on U.S. agricultural products, as well as manufactured goods, as essential exports that move through Oakland. Exports include almonds, beef, pork, dairy, and recycled materials, much of which is destined for Asia. China ranks as the port’s top import trading partner and third export partner, representing 29% of Oakland’s total trade volume.

Unlike many U.S. ports that lean heavily on imports, Oakland is unique in maintaining a near 50/50 balance of imports and exports. That leaves Oakland concerned that tariff retaliation would directly impact its top export destinations — Japan, Taiwan, China, and South Korea — and could significantly erode California’s market share for perishable and high-value commodities.

The Port of Oakland is the No. 1 refrigerated export gateway in the U.S and nearly all containerized cargo moving through Northern California goes through the Port of Oakland.

“So many local, union jobs depend on the Port’s robust shipping operations including dockworkers, truck operators, and warehouse workers,” said Rep. Lateefah Simon, D-Calif. “I support smart trade policies that uplift workers and lower costs for Oakland’s working families — not an illogical and retaliatory trade war.”

Agricultural exporters are warning that there are no additional markets to quickly replace China’s demand and absorb the volume, and that is already affecting prices.

“We have diverted employees and production to other (less profitable) production and dramatically slowed down purchasing from independent vendors (loggers, truckers, sawmills),” one lumber exporter reported to AgTC. Some products have already declined 20% in market value, the lumber exporter reported, which it said will influence inventory planning and future investments. “The U.S. market was stable and improving, but now awash with inventory of former China products,” it added.

An exporter of forage such as hay and straw that is a big business for U.S. farms supplying overseas livestock operations reported 68 blanked sailings after Trump’s “Liberation Day,” limiting its ability to export forage goods, with vessel space for exports restricted on freight ships still calling on U.S. ports.

