

September 24, 2025

Erin Morris
Administrator
Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Administrator Morris,

The National Customs Brokers and Forwarders Association of America (NCBFAA) is concerned about the impact of a potential government shutdown on import/export trade processing – an important function of your agency and an important feature of the Trump Administration’s America First Trade Policy. NCBFAA represents customs brokers and freight forwarders, who are on the frontlines of import and export trade.

We all know safe and efficient trade supply chains are necessary to both the economic and physical security of this nation. Your agency plays a critical role to prevent unsafe products from entering the country and to keep legitimate trade flowing. The two go hand in hand: facilitating the movement of compliant product allows agencies to focus enforcement more sharply on noncompliant shipments.

That is why we need your agency to designate enough “excepted” employees to ensure that safe and effective import and export trade processing continues in the event of a prolonged government shutdown. More specifically:

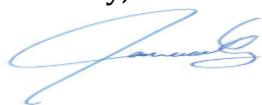
- **Frontline and Support Staff:** We are aware that AMS inspection services are user-fee funded and will continue to operate during a shutdown, as will CBP Agricultural inspectors, who will be considered “excepted” employees. Frontline staff at the ports are indeed critical. But just as important are staff in regional offices and headquarters to conduct document reviews, backstop automated systems and processes, and respond to issues relating to agriculture holds. In prior shutdowns, we saw many local issues, such as one port that was requiring any shipment with an agriculture hold to be re-exported. These problems at both headquarters and local ports created congestion at the ports, costly demurrage for the trade and inefficiencies in sorting through compliant versus noncompliant shipments. We urge you to provide sufficient staff to support these critical import and export processing functions.
- **Agency Contacts:** Provide points of contact for importers, exporters and customs brokers within each of your divisions during a government shutdown.
- **Website:** The AMS website is a necessary lifeline for the trade community, providing valuable resources and information. It is essential that staff is available to keep the website

up and running.

- **CBP War Room Presence:** Customs and Border Protection (CBP) stood up a “war room” during previous government shutdowns and we expect them to do so again. We urge AMS to be present in the war room. This is important for a coordinated and effective government effort to meet the trade processing challenges of a shutdown.
- **CBP Trade Calls:** CBP will conduct regular calls with the trade to report on developments as they occur and to learn of trouble spots from the trade. Your agency’s participation in these calls is important, as well as your willingness to troubleshoot problems.
- **Outreach to Trade:** Rapid communication with the trade during a shutdown is essential. NCBFAA can reach thousands of customs brokers/forwarders within minutes to provide guidance or other useful information that will in turn be spread to hundreds of thousands of importers/exporters. Please utilize NCBFAA as a resource to spread the word on specific procedures or policies for the trade.

We hope that a government shutdown can be averted. In the meantime, NCBFAA stands ready to work with your agency if a government shutdown does occur. Please let us know how we can best help you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jose D. Gonzalez".

Jose D. Gonzalez
President