



December 20, 2022

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

I am writing to urge you to consider America's farmers in your ongoing negotiations with Mexico over its decision to transition away from genetically modified (GM) corn and the herbicide glyphosate. Mexico enacted its original ban in order to protect the health of its citizens and increase opportunities for its farmers, and we are concerned that the U.S. is missing a chance to do the same.

There is a growing body of evidence connecting glyphosate exposure with [negative health outcomes](#). Mexico's President Obrador [has noted](#) that "if Mexico has to decide between trade and health, Mexico will opt for health." Just as importantly, Mexico's decree protects another subset of constituents: its farmers. Many [Mexican farmers](#) have pushed for this ban as they strive to maintain and breed native varieties, which [require less water and are more resistant to pests](#), having been bred over generations to thrive in localized regions.

Back in 2020, when Mexico first issued its decree phasing out GM corn and glyphosate, the USDA failed to see this for what it was: a tremendous opportunity. With a strong market in sight for non-GM corn, the USDA could have begun transitioning our farmers toward non-GM corn production, simultaneously providing much-needed support for our existing non-GM farmers.

There is already a market for U.S. farmers who have chosen to produce non-GM corn; whether they are motivated by environmental or public health concerns, these farmers have also experienced other benefits, including [higher premiums](#) and overall higher [profits per acre](#). Mexico's decree presented an opportunity for more farmers to transition to non-GM corn and enter this premium market. Had the USDA begun building support and infrastructure at this time, we would be in a very different position today — one in which U.S. farmers had growing access to a more competitive, more resilient market.

Unfortunately, instead of defending America's farmers, we have seen the USDA using its hefty weight to side with the multinational seed and agrochemical conglomerates who stand to lose the most if this decree is put into effect.

Mexico is not the first country to stand up to multinational agribusiness interests and push back against GM products — nor will it be the last. With that said, we urge you to consider Mexico's proposal and begin work immediately to support and lift up alternative production models.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joe Maxwell". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Joe Maxwell
President
Farm Action