

November 10, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

As representatives of America's corn growers and corn refiners, we again write to emphasize the severe impacts of a potential freight rail work stoppage. We respectfully urge you to take every action necessary to avoid critical economic damage to U.S. agricultural production and supply chains. As the last-minute negotiations in September showed, slowdowns in anticipation of a strike directly impact agricultural production. Should freight rail service be disrupted for even a single day, the consequences would be immediate, global, and critically harmful.

The National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) represents nearly 40,000 corn growers and the interests of more than 300,000 farmers. The Corn Refiners Association (CRA) is the national trade association representing the corn refining industry of the United States, whose members have an annual economic impact of \$47.5 billion. Corn is an essential input for the American economy, including food, fuel, animal feed, and a range of consumer and industrial products.

Corn growers and refiners depend heavily on an efficient, reliable, and affordable rail transportation network to transport their products. Railroads originate 24% of U.S. grain shipments, of which approximately half (691,000 carloads) is corn, and that demand is likely to go up in the short-term as record-low water levels continue to hinder grain transportation on the Mississippi River. This will force farmers who rely on barges to get their crops to port for export to seek freight rail alternatives at the very moment the rails cannot support them.

In preparation for a potential work stoppage in September, Class I railroads halted shipments of some grains and ingredients essential to fertilizer production a week in advance of the deadline. More than half of the fertilizer shipped in the U.S. moves by rail. With other key fertilizer-producing countries crippled by the war in Ukraine, a fertilizer shortage will have far-reaching global effects at a moment when the world relies more than ever on America's ability to address food insecurity.

At home, corn refining plants and other agricultural processors are already stretched to their limit, operating at full capacity and struggling with railroads' inability to deliver inputs or ship finished products. In the event of a rail strike that would completely shut down the supply chain for these facilities, there would simply be no capacity to recover lost production. Food price inflation, expected to increase throughout the rest of this year, would be significantly exacerbated and particularly devastating for American families that can least afford it.

It is imperative that the Administration and Congress prepare to take the actions necessary to prevent a freight rail stoppage of any length. Continuous rail service is essential to the American economy and our country's ability to help feed the world. We appreciate your attention to this serious issue.

Sincerely,

John Bode
President and CEO
Corn Refiners Association

Jon Doggett
CEO
National Corn Growers Association

Cc: The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
The Honorable Marty Walsh, Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor
The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation