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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

March 7, 2007

The Honorable Barbara Masekela
Ambassador of the Republic of South Africa
3051 Massachusetts Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Ambassador Masekela:

I am writing to request your assistance in ensuring that an upcoming technical meeting between agricultural officials from both our countries resolves a longstanding market access issue involving the export of apples from the Pacific Northwest states of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.

As you are aware, last fall representatives of your government visited production areas in my congressional district. This visit and subsequent technical meetings with US Department of Agriculture officials addressed a variety of issues pertaining to Pacific Northwest apple exports to South Africa. Next month, technical talks will resume in Cape Town, and it is my firm hope that a market access agreement will be concluded at that time.

One way to help ensure a successful meeting is for the Republic of South Africa to provide the US Government with a narrowed draft pest risk assessment prior to the meeting. This would enable both sides to better understand each other's positions before meeting and to prepare data needed to resolve remaining issues. It is also my hope the revised pest risk assessment will take into account information obtained during the fall 2006 visit and subsequent USDA submissions, and that any recommended mitigation measures are based on sound, internationally-affirmed science.

I respectfully request your assistance in achieving a successful outcome to this meeting and would appreciate an update on when a draft pest risk assessment may be expected.

Thank you for your attention to this request. I and the Pacific Northwest apple industry remain hopeful that an agreement will be finalized prior to the fall 2007 season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Doc Hastings".

Doc Hastings
Member of Congress