

Tester invites Trump to Montana to talk wheat after disparaging remarks

By TOM LUTEY | August 21, 2019



Sen. Jon Tester shuts the door to his tractor while working on the farm in August 2018. Thom Bridge, Independent Record

After President Donald Trump’s disparaging remarks about the wheat sales to Japan, U.S. Sen. Jon Tester is inviting the president to a sit-down meeting with Montana farmers.

Tester, who is home harvesting crops over the Senate’s August recess, made the offer in a letter written to President Trump on Wednesday.

“Montana farmers rely heavily on Asian Pacific countries for trade, and Japan plays a particularly important role as the largest importer of Montana’s wheat,” Tester wrote. “This is not a market we can replace and our relationship should be celebrated, not mocked.”

Speaking at a Pennsylvania chemical plant Aug. 13, Trump said [Japan only bought U.S. wheat to make America feel good](#). The president described Japan-U.S. trade relations as lopsided, with wheat being the only U.S. product Japan buys, which isn’t true.

“They send us thousands and thousands, millions of cars, we send them wheat. Wheat. That’s not a good deal,” Trump said. “And they don’t even want our wheat. They do it

because they want us to at least feel that we're OK, you know, they do it to make us feel good."

[Politifact rated the president's quote mostly false](#); Trump had the car numbers mostly right, but misrepresented the U.S. wheat trade with Japan and the business between the two countries overall. Farmers and politicians in Montana responded negatively. Tester said a visit to talk with the state's farmers would help the president understand what's at stake in a state Trump won easily.

"I would be happy to host you on my family farm or tour a different operation at your request. I believe direct conversations with Montana agriculture producers would benefit everyone. I stand ready to assist you in visiting my fellow farmers."

The United States and Japan expect to announce a new bilateral trade agreement this fall.



[Trump wheat remarks chafe Montana farmers](#)

Montana farmers and politicians are feeling chafed by President Donald Trump's dismissive remarks about U.S. sales to Japan, a major market for the state.

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United States Senate

August 20, 2019

The Honorable Donald Trump
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

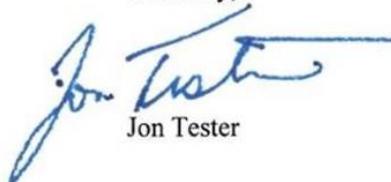
I am writing you today relaying concerns I have heard from my fellow Montana wheat farmers regarding your comments that downplayed the importance of this commodity to our economy. My neighbors and I are currently in our fields for harvest experiencing depressed prices and uncertainty we haven't felt in years. Your recent comments suggesting that American wheat exports to Japan are not valuable sting in rural America. I am inviting you to Montana to meet with fellow wheat producers and learn directly from them the role trade plays to our economy and their pocketbook.

Montana farmers rely heavily on Asian Pacific countries for trade, and Japan plays a particularly important role as the largest importer of Montana's wheat. This is not a market we can replace and our relationship should be celebrated, not mocked. I believe this would be abundantly clear if you toured rural Montana and heard directly from impacted producers.

I appreciate your interest in making sure Americans are treated fairly in trade deals. It is an important goal and one that previous Republican and Democratic presidents have failed to fully meet. Unfortunately, things have only gotten worse over the last two and a half years. I do not believe this is the intention of your Administration, but this is the reality for farmers selling their grain at the elevator.

I would be happy to host you on my family farm or tour a different operation at your request. I believe direct conversations with Montana agriculture producers would benefit everyone. I stand ready to assist you in visiting with my fellow farmers.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester

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