

C. SCOTT FRANKLIN
18TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

2301 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-1252

124 S. FLORIDA AVENUE, SUITE 304
LAKELAND, FL 33801

1069 US 27 NORTH, ROOM 116
LAKE PLACID, FL 33852

201 W. CENTRAL AVENUE
LAKE WALES, FL 33853

863-644-8215

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0915

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October 9, 2026

The Honorable Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Rollins and Secretary Lutnick:

I write to urge immediate, coordinated action to address the sulfur supply and cost crisis already forcing domestic phosphate fertilizer producers to curtail or idle production. This is no longer a potential supply chain vulnerability for this U.S. critical mineral. It is an active threat to American manufacturing, farm profitability and our nation's food security.

USDA's FIELDS Program and the interagency sulfur review following last month's request from members of Florida's congressional delegation recognize the importance of domestic fertilizer production. But those efforts have yet to deliver the relief producers need. Expanding fertilizer manufacturing capacity will accomplish little if existing facilities cannot obtain the sulfur necessary to operate. The Administration must move from reviewing this problem to resolving it.

Florida's phosphate industry depends on sulfuric acid to manufacture fertilizer, with no readily available substitute in the production process. When sulfur supplies become unavailable or prohibitively expensive, plants reduce output or shut down. That puts American jobs at risk, reduces fertilizer availability and adds pressure on farmers already struggling with high costs and weak margins.

The consequences extend beyond fertilizer plants. In Polk County and across Central Florida's \$5 billion phosphate industry, phosphate production supports equipment suppliers, machine shops, maintenance contractors, truckers and other local businesses. Prolonged production cuts threaten their orders, contract work and workers' paychecks, with ripple effects for the small businesses and communities that depend on that income. Continued delays put this entire industrial network at risk.

Sulfur prices delivered to Tampa have reached unprecedented levels this year, and domestic producers have already reduced operating rates and idled facilities. Meanwhile, 70 percent of respondents to an American Farm Bureau Federation survey reported that they could not afford all the fertilizer they needed. Further production cuts risk compounding that burden, forcing farmers to reduce fertilizer applications or absorb costs they cannot sustain. Either outcome threatens agricultural productivity and increases pressure on food prices.

Allowing American fertilizer production to decline because manufacturers cannot obtain an essential input at a competitive price undermines the Administration's stated goal of strengthening domestic industry. Replacing that production with imported fertilizer would deepen our exposure to foreign supply disruptions. Food security is national security, and sulfuric acid's importance to critical mineral processing adds another reason for a coordinated federal response.

I urge USDA and Commerce, working with the Departments of Energy, the Interior and Transportation and other relevant agencies, to take the following actions:

- Establish clear leadership and deadlines. Designate a senior official to coordinate the federal response and serve as a single point of contact for Congress and industry. Within 14 days of this letter, provide the status of the interagency review and an action plan identifying immediate measures, responsible agencies and implementation deadlines. Actions available under existing authorities should proceed without waiting for the review to be concluded.
- Increase supplies available to domestic producers. Convene sulfur suppliers, fertilizer manufacturers and transportation providers to identify supplies that can reach U.S. facilities quickly and resolve transportation, storage and handling constraints. Work with Canada and other reliable trading partners to secure additional supplies.
- Remove federal barriers that compound the crisis. Identify tariffs, trade restrictions, US exports to foreign state-owned enterprises, and transportation policies that unnecessarily increase sulfur costs or limit availability and promptly pursue targeted relief consistent with existing law. The Administration should ensure its own policies are not undermining domestic fertilizer production.
- Accelerate practical capacity improvements. Prioritize eligible projects under existing programs that can quickly expand sulfur recovery, storage and transportation capacity or restore curtailed fertilizer production. Identify opportunities to expedite permitting and agency decisions for those projects.
- Identify and use appropriate emergency authorities. Determine whether the Defense Production Act or other existing authorities can address sulfur supply vulnerabilities affecting fertilizer production and critical mineral processing. Specify any additional authorities or appropriations Congress must provide, along with the actions they would enable.

I am also developing the Securing United States Leadership in Fertilizer Use and Resilience (SULFUR) Act to strengthen long-term supply security, including through a Strategic Agricultural Sulfur Reserve. Those reforms must complement an immediate response. Producers, farmers and the businesses supporting this industry cannot wait for legislation while domestic facilities reduce output.

I request a phone call or response as soon as possible detailing the actions underway, the relief producers can expect and the timeline for delivery. Continued delay risks further production losses, greater dependence on foreign fertilizer and mounting economic harm across Central Florida. Immediate action is necessary to protect American farmers, workers and the domestic production capacity we already have.

Sincerely,



C. Scott Franklin
Member of Congress