

The Florida Tomato Exchange has welcomed efforts by the U.S. Department of Commerce to construct a new Tomato Suspension Agreement with Mexico.

Commerce said it has been working diligently in consultation with interested parties, including representatives of the Mexican and U.S. tomato industries toward reaching a consensus on a new suspension agreement.

It has decided to maintain its proposal for inspections of all incoming loads of Mexican tomatoes, saying this procedure would be "practical and straightforward" and not involve an additional process or administrative burden.

Commerce also significantly changed the scope of the adjustment provisions related to destination inspections at receivers' facilities by excluding quality defects.

The optional secondary inspection that may be requested by the buyer and the accompanying provisions for adjustments, therefore, remain focused on the condition of the tomatoes after entry, it said.

In a statement on Tuesday, the Florida Tomato Exchange said it appreciated Commerce's efforts to form a new agreement that would "protect domestic farmers from dumped Mexican tomatoes".

"The Department's July 17 proposal is a good starting point to resume negotiations with the Mexican industry," it said.

"The proposal moves negotiations forward on a constructive basis by recognizing the need for a more enforceable agreement. A robust and enforceable structure is the only way the domestic industry will be able to support a new suspension agreement."

Commerce says it will be contacting interested parties to schedule consultation meetings this month, with the goal of reaching a final draft agreement by July 31.

The U.S. [withdrew from the 2013 tomato suspension agreement in early May](#), implementing a 17.5% tariff on Mexican tomato imports and resuming an anti-dumping investigating, the results of which are expected at the end of the year.