

Groups representing two different sectors of the U.S. blueberry industry testified on Tuesday at a hearing before the U.S. International Trade Commission, as part of its probe into whether foreign trading partners are seriously harming domestic growers.

The [Blueberry Coalition for Progress and Health](#), which was announced last week, maintains that imports haven't hurt domestic farmers and have in fact helped to grow the market to the benefit of all.

The [American Blueberry Growers Alliance \(ABGA\)](#) meanwhile claimed rising Latin American imports in the spring and fall were responsible for a sharp decline in prices over recent years.

The trade commission reportedly heard the conflicting testimony, as well as dueling legal and economic analyses, [Capital Press](#) reported.

Growers alliance chairman, Georgia farmer Jerome Crosby, was quoted as describing the claim that imports aren't dragging down prices as "comical."

"The world I live in, it's a problem," he was quoted as saying.

The Blueberry Coalition, representing U.S.-based companies that grow or buy blueberries in other countries, pinned the blame for low prices on U.S. farmers competing with each other.

"Prices crater in the summer months when domestic production saturates the market," Soren Bjorn, president of the Americas for Driscoll's, was quoted as saying.

In a release sent after the hearing, Jerome Crosby, Chairman of the ABGA Board of Directors, said: "Because of booming domestic demand, we should be enjoying a market in which there is room for both domestic and foreign growers to profit."

"However, foreign government policies targeting the United States market and large corporate import interests have combined to bring massive volumes of blueberries into our market, increasingly during periods that in the past provided growers with the bulk of their revenues and often all of their profits for the year."

The Fresh Produce Association of the Americas (FPAA), which is part of the Blueberry Coalition, said in a release that it commends Senators and Representatives reading a bipartisan, bicameral letter raising significant concerns with the Trump Administration's Section 201 investigation on imported blueberries.

It also praised their opposition to Section 332 investigations of imported strawberries, bell peppers, squash, and cucumbers.

“The support of this Congressional letter is hugely important for American companies involved in trade, especially with the knowledge that the trade investigations being launched undermine the new USMCA,” said FPAA President Lance Jungmeyer.

“In 2021, if we create trade friction with Mexico, our neighbor and largest trading partner, it will devastate the many businesses that rely on the robust two-way agriculture trade with Mexico.”

If the ITC investigation is affirmative, it is required to complete all its deliberations and provide a report containing its findings and recommendations to the president no later than 180 days after it began its investigation. After that, the president has 60 days to decide what actions to take.