

China Warns U.S. Protectionist Policies Threaten Farm Trade Relations

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China has cautioned that rising U.S. protectionism is straining agricultural cooperation, with officials warning the measures could further disrupt farm exports and weaken a long-standing area of trade between the two economies. Speaking on Sunday, China's ambassador to Washington, Xie Feng, said the United States' escalating tariffs and restrictions are

creating unnecessary pressure on farmers and undermining a sector that has historically provided stability amid broader political tensions.

Xie described current U.S. policies as “rampant protectionism” and urged that agriculture remain separate from political disputes. He said both American and Chinese farmers share similar values, calling them “hardworking and humble,” and should not be forced to absorb the consequences of trade conflicts. The ambassador highlighted the complementary strengths of both countries, with the United States leading in large-scale mechanized grain production and China excelling in labor-intensive agriculture. According to Xie, these strengths should make the relationship mutually beneficial rather than adversarial.

His comments follow months of heightened trade tensions. The United States earlier this year imposed new tariffs of 10 percent on Chinese goods, later raising them to 20 percent. China responded with duties of 10 to 15 percent on U.S. agricultural products, hitting key commodities including soybeans and corn. Data shows the impact has been substantial: U.S. farm exports to China fell by more than 50 percent in the first half of 2025, with soybean shipments down by 51 percent compared to the previous year.

Xie also pushed back against security-driven restrictions, such as proposed limits on foreign ownership of American farmland and the dismissal of foreign researchers from agricultural programs. He dismissed these measures as politically motivated, pointing out that Chinese investors hold less than 0.03 percent of U.S. farmland. He argued that portraying such a small stake as a security concern is unjustified and risks politicizing an industry that should focus on production and trade.

Industry experts say the fallout is already being felt across U.S. farming communities. Chinese buyers, once a major market for American products, are shifting toward suppliers in South America, particularly Brazil, to meet demand. Analysts warn that this redirection could lead to lasting market share losses for U.S. farmers, potentially costing billions in revenue. Agricultural groups have voiced frustration, saying that trade disputes are eroding relationships and damaging the country's competitive edge.

The current standoff reflects the wider geopolitical and economic tension between the two nations. While Washington frames its trade policies as necessary for national security and fair competition, Beijing insists that targeting agriculture undermines a critical area of cooperation. Xie's remarks reinforce China's call to keep farming out of political disputes, but with tariffs already in place and trade volumes sharply down, analysts caution that rebuilding trust will take time.

For now, farmers on both sides face an uncertain outlook as the dispute continues. The loss of agricultural trade not only impacts rural economies but also adds another layer of complexity to a relationship already strained by competing policies and strategic interests.