

# Unlocking Opportunities: NDA Director Vinton Joins Trade Mission to Mexico

In November of 2025, Nebraska Department of Agriculture Director Sherry Vinton was honored to be a part of a landmark diplomatic effort as she joined the largest-ever agribusiness trade mission to Mexico. The mission was attended by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Brooke Rollins, Undersecretary of Agriculture for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs Luke J. Lindberg, Undersecretary of Marketing and Regulatory Program Dudley

Hoskins, 41 U.S. businesses, 33 cooperators and agriculture advocacy groups and five other state departments of agriculture. Additionally, there were 150 participants that conducted more than 500 business-to-business meetings during the trade mission. This timely trade mission created vital opportunities for American business, farmers and ranchers, furthering trade ties with Mexico prior to the United States-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement (USMCA) review in 2026.



Photo Courtesy of Hannah Smallhouse

On her first day in Mexico City, Director Vinton visited Walmart Toreo, a major Mexican Supermarket, where she familiarized herself with the different U.S. products sold in the local markets and ways to incorporate hands-on participation in ongoing U.S. product promotions. She ended the day with a networking event where she met with representatives from various Mexican agriculture, food and beverage sectors. Mexico continues to be a top market for U.S. agricultural exports with the trade of both goods and services reaching one trillion dollars a year making it the largest trading relationship in the history of the world. Other consumer-oriented products, including meat and meat products, dairy, processed food, fruits, and beverages, constitute nearly 50 percent of that trade, with a value of \$14.6 billion. Bulk commodity exports to Mexico accounted for one-third of all agricultural shipments, valued at \$10.0 billion, led by corn, soybeans, wheat, rice, and pulses.



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More tours continued the following day, this time at Central De Abasto which is Mexico City's main wholesale market for produce and other food products. It is a central hub of commerce, serving as a meeting place for producers, wholesalers, retailers and consumers across the entire country. The market is the largest of its kind in the world and handles over 30,000 tons of merchandise daily. Afterwards, Director Vinton and other delegates met with scientists to observe field trials at the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT). The field trials were to test different potential improvements to corn and wheat productivity through crop breeding, which lead to the importance of rules-based trade using a foundation of sound science as outlined by USMCA.

To end the day, she met with the team at Mexico's National Service of Agro-Alimentary Health, Safety and Quality (SENASICA) at their Headquarters where Director Vinton gave the opening remarks to the discussion of New World Screwworm (NWS) and its threat to the United States border. SENASICA showcased bilateral efforts to combat the spread of NWS in Mexico, thus halting its further reach to the United States.

Back in May of 2025, the USDA suspended all live cattle, horse and bison imports from Mexico to prevent the spread of New World Screwworm to U.S. cattle. NWS larvae (*Cochliomyia hominivorax*) infest the tissue or flesh of

warm-blooded animals. Wounds will attract these flies, which is where they will lay their eggs. The larvae will then eat the flesh of the animal making wounds larger as more eggs hatch. This can lead to the death of the animal and proves a threat to both Mexican and American livestock.

As these flies drew closer to the Mexico-Texas border, elimination efforts began through the sterile insect technique, which releases sterile male flies into NWS populated areas. These sterile flies eliminate reproduction and were previously used in 1966 when the infestation was eradicated in America. While a small infestation was reported in Florida in 2016 it was quickly resolved using the same technique.

Director Vinton shared her thoughts on what it would take for the United States to resume importing cattle from Mexico. "They are getting the sterile fly operation up and running again and at some point and time the border will open again. It's still going to be some time, but they are making a good effort and cooperating with USDA on the ground."



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When speaking about her meeting with SENASICA she stated, "They are taking this very seriously and have a very detailed plan they have crafted. They have a 'war room' where they can look in real time at detections. And they've got staff in the field that are properly identifying and diagnosing the screwworm. They are making a sincere effort to get a handle on this. The commitment to joint protocols and harmonized treatment for New World Screwworm is a continued effort in Infrastructure, Tracking, Trapping and Tracing."

Director Vinton and the delegation attended a special celebration at U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Ron Johnson's residence. They were joined by Mexico Agriculture Minister Julio Berdegue and USDA Secretary Rollins. "I thank President Sheinbaum for welcoming me to the Presidential Palace where we had a productive and positive conversation about how we will continue to work closely together to eradicate the NWS which is negatively impacting both our economies, including conducting a comprehensive joint review of our NWS response and efforts to ensure enforcement of our joint responsibilities in the 1944 water treaty," said Secretary Rollins at the celebration. "This week was an incredible opportunity to connect buyers and sellers with over 500 meetings over three days, pushing for American exports into Mexico's ethanol market, and discuss the upcoming review of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement."

Nearing the end of her trip, Vinton had the privilege of touring Grupo Bimbo- the world's largest bakery company and owner of 71 baking facilities in the U.S. This tour offered an insight into Mexico's agricultural supply chain and showcased how U.S. agricultural exports are distributed through the market. They imported nearly \$400 million worth of U.S. ingredients in 2024, including wheat, dairy, eggs, potatoes and nuts.

"This mission was about turning challenges into opportunities." Director Vinton shared her final thoughts on the trade mission, "This is about safeguarding our biosecurity, especially for our herds and unlocking markets for our producers."



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