Minnesota farmers express concern over trade war with China

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Minnesota is a major player in U.S. agriculture, ranking sixth in production. However, an ongoing trade war has some farmers worried about selling in the years to come.

A panel of speakers gathered in Lakeville Saturday, including U.S. Rep. Angie Craig and Thom Petersen, Minnesota's Commissioner of Agriculture.

The panel was part of the Free Trade Motorcade, a 14-state, 2,500-mile tour across the United States that aims to amplify farmer voices calling for open markets and reduced trade barriers in the country.

The topic of discussion, which dominated Saturday's event in Minnesota, was soybeans and tariffs on China.

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Overseas, China is one of the largest purchasers of Minnesota soybeans. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture data, China purchased 27 million metric tons of American soybeans last year.

However, the same Department of Agriculture Data shows that not a single bean pod has been purchased since May, following a Chinese boycott in response to tariffs placed on China by the United States.

"Our own soy beans, as we know, in this country, this year the American farmer is doing best to produce a good crop," Mike Peterson, a farmer from Northfield, said. "That crop needs a home."

There are other options for Minnesotans.

Besides China, Canada and Mexico are among the state's top trading partners.

However, China has historically been one of the largest buyers of Minnesota's soybeans, reportedly having purchased over half of the state's soybean exports just last year.

"Over 50% of our soybean exports in particular went to China," Rep. Craig said.

On the other side of the coin, Trump suggests that some of the money raised by tariffs could be used to help struggling farmers.

Others argue, however, that the tariffs will do more harm than good for farmers in the long run.

Gov. Tim Walz expressed a similar sentiment earlier this week, during a meeting Tuesday morning with DNC officials. The Minnesota governor expressed concern that China's boycott might be never-ending after the country made a decades-long deal with Argentina.