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## **USDA officials: Soybean groups 'not ripe' for mediation**

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The U.S. Department of Agriculture sees no reason to ask a federal mediator to help the American Soybean Association (ASA) and United Soybean Board (USB) find common ground on checkoff-related issues until both groups are willing to engage in “meaningful dialogue.”

In a letter to ASA and USB obtained by *Agri-Pulse*, Under Secretaries of Agriculture Jim Miller and Edward Avalos said it’s doubtful the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) would set up a process for discussion between two parties when “there is skepticism or reluctance to enter into mediation by one of the parties.”

ASA had agreed to enter into mediation but USB had not, citing a request for more information.

“It therefore appears that the issues separating the parties are not ripe for mediation at this time,” the USDA officials wrote.

Miller, on behalf of USDA, offered on August 25, to facilitate a request to the FMCS because “it is apparent that there are significant problems in the relationship between ASA and USB.”

In the letter, Miller and Avalos argued that USDA and the soybean industry would be in a stronger position if there were a unified voice seeking to expand domestic and international marketing of U.S. soybeans and soybean products.

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