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U.S.-China Trade War Still Hurting Ohio Family-Owned Business

Down-lite pays tariffs on Chinese feathers to stuff bedding, but China can export many of these products to the U.S. tariff-free

By

Josh Zumbrun

/ Photographs by Haiyun Jiang for The Wall Street Journal

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WASHINGTON—The Biden administration’s [long-awaited review of tariff policy](#) can’t come soon enough for an Ohio bedding maker, which says it is being pummeled by U.S. levies on imported Chinese feathers.

The family-owned business, Down-lite International Inc., won an exclusion from import tariffs last spring after arguing that there are few other places besides China where it can get the feathers it needs to stuff its quilts, comforters and other bedding.

The exclusions that were granted to Down-lite and thousands of other U.S. companies expired by late last year, however, and the U.S. Trade Representative’s

Office says [it won't consider granting new exclusions](#) until it completes a top-to-bottom review of tariffs on these and other Chinese imports imposed by the Trump administration.

Meanwhile, no tariffs were ever imposed on many of the finished bedding products from China—such as down-filled comforters and quilts, mattress pads, feather beds and sleeping bags—putting Down-lite at a disadvantage to its Chinese competitors in many of the company's key products.

“It's basically just helping the Chinese right now while hurting U.S. manufacturing,” said Josh Werthaiser, president of Down-lite's feather and down division.