

September 14, 2011

Attn: Agriculture and Trade Legislative Assistants

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the undersigned organizations representing family farmers, fishers and ranchers, along with faith-based and community allies, write to share our concerns with the pending Korea, Panama and Colombia Free Trade Agreements (FTA). As Congress will soon be voting on these agreements under the fast track procedures with an up or down vote, we urge you to oppose passage of each of these agreements as written. We believe these agreements serve to concentrate their benefits to large-scale traders, processors, and exporters of certain food products while failing to ensure fair prices for farmers, equity for workers, human rights, food security and environmental protection.

Proponents have singled out these agreements' potential for economic growth in the agricultural sector as a net benefit for all Americans. We contest these claims, and argue that these trade agreements must be evaluated for their effects on family-scale, independent producers, rather than the benefits they afford to select corporate agribusinesses, meat processors and grain refiners. Passing more free trade agreements will only accelerate the economic disasters in agriculture we have already seen: industrial farms that depend on massive amounts of petroleum-based inputs, low paying, exploitative jobs in processing and packing plants, and increased consolidation throughout the agricultural supply chain. Concentrating on export growth in agriculture destroys the kind of family supporting, fair wage paying jobs that Americans desperately need.

One need only look at the effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement to realize the falsehood of past claims of job creation as a result of free trade agreements. Almost 700,000 U.S. jobs have been lost or displaced since 1994 as a result of the U.S. trade deficit with Mexico, according to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI). Workers in all 50 states lost their jobs, and the promised trade surplus did not materialize. EPI estimates that free trade agreements with Colombia and South Korea alone are likely to increase the already exploding U.S. trade deficit by \$16.8 billion and eliminate or displace 214,000 additional U.S. jobs. Add up the numbers, and it is plain to see that these FTAs are an economic disaster that will only add to the economic recession.

Just as U.S. farmers, fishers and ranchers will not see benefits from these agreements, living conditions and livelihoods for peasants and rural farmworkers in all three countries will be harmed irreparably. According to the Korean Peasants League, implementation of the Korea FTA would mean that South Korean agricultural

production will decrease by 45 percent and *roughly half of Korea's farmers will lose their livelihoods*. Not only is this a moral-ethical issue, it will alienate our country's valuable allies.

Proponents of the Korea FTA promise significant gains for agriculture because of tariff reduction. However, currency manipulation could completely negate these cuts, thus eliminating any gains for producers. This was the case with Mexico after NAFTA was implemented. The projected tariff cut benefits for producers were wiped out when Mexico devalued the peso by 50 percent soon after NAFTA went into effect. Now, with Korea as one of the only three countries ever placed on the Treasury Department's list of currency manipulators, history may repeat itself once more. The Korean won is not currently undervalued, and the pending FTA provides no options that limit or discipline currency manipulation.

While agricultural programs are on the chopping block at home, U.S. companies incorporated in Panama have been dodging the taxes that this country desperately needs to balance its budget. Although the U.S. and Panama have signed a Tax Information Exchange Agreement, it remains to be seen how influential this will be at curbing the behavior of one of the world's historically worst tax havens. This FTA could deprive the U.S. government of much-needed revenue and unfairly saddle other sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, with a disproportionate share of the cost-cutting burden.

Farmers in Colombia would suffer with the passage of an agreement; Witness for Peace estimates that 400,000 small farmers would have their land and livelihoods threatened by corporate agricultural development projects under the FTA. Furthermore, Colombia remains the most deadly country of which to be a member of a trade union and passage of the Colombia FTA would only further undermine the rights of that country's Afro-Colombian and indigenous workers. The Obama administration's "Labor Action Plan", supposed to remedy the human rights abuses in Colombia, is a mostly unenforceable set of guidelines that will not curb violence against laborers.

Without question, these agreements will push more farm families off the land and place our food system in a precarious and unsustainable position. At home and abroad, the ability of local producers to feed their families and their communities, now and for generations to come, will be compromised by this misguided legislation. We urge you to consider these long-term repercussions and stand up for food sovereignty by opposing these free trade agreements. This country needs principles of fair trade, not free trade, as the basis of our agricultural system.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Missions, Inc
American Raw Milk Producers Pricing Association
Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake Counties Farmers Union (Ohio)
Border Agricultural Workers
California Dairy Campaign
California Farmers Union
Center for Media and Democracy
Colorado Independent CattleGrowers Association
Columbian Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Common Good City Farm (District of Columbia)
Community Alliance for Global Justice (Washington)
Community to Community Development (Washington)
Crawford Stewardship Project (WI)
Dakota Resource Council (North Dakota)
Dakota Rural Action (South Dakota)
Family Farm Defenders
Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance
Farmworker Association of Florida
Federation of Southern Cooperatives
Food and Water Watch
Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy
Food for Maine's Future
Grassroots International
Idaho Rural Council
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
Land Loss Prevention Project
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Medical Missions Sisters Alliance for Justice
Midwest Organic Dairy Producers Association
Mississippi Association of Cooperatives
Missouri Rural Crisis Center
Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative
National Association of Korean Americans
National Family Farm Coalition
National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Trade Association
Northern Plains Resource Council (Montana)
Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance
Ohio Conference on Fair Trade
Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project, Inc.
Organic Consumers Association
Other Worlds
Powder River Basin Resource Council (Wyoming)
Presbyterian Church USA, Office of Public Witness
Progressive Agriculture
R-CALF USA
Rural Advancement Fund (South Carolina)
Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural
Rural Vermont

South Central Farmers
South Dakota Stockgrowers Association
Washington Peace Center
Western Organization of Resource Councils
WhyHunger
Wisconsin Fair Trade Coalition
Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice
Witness for Peace

For more information or to reach individual organizations, please contact the National Family Farm Coalition at (202) 543-5675 or nffc@nffc.net.