

FAMILY FARMERS PRAISE INTRODUCTION OF TRADE BILL THAT HELPS ADDRESS GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS

U.S. and United Nations Continue to Promote Catastrophic Free Trade Agenda

Washington D.C. (June 4, 2008) -The National Family Farm Coalition today praised the introduction of the TRADE Act in the House and Senate which offers urgent and necessary reforms to our deeply flawed trade agreements. Much of the world is grappling with a growing global food crisis. Much of the crisis has been precipitated by free trade policies that have made developing countries reliant on imported food at the expense of domestic local production. Farmers from Haiti to Indonesia to Mexico have been driven off their land due to trade agreements that dismantled tariff protections and domestic state support for local farmers. This allowed U.S. agribusinesses to dump cheap commodities into overseas markets, forcing countries to be at the mercy of global markets for their food security instead of relying on local family farmers. With commodity prices now skyrocketing, governments are no longer able to provide food for their citizens.

The TRADE Act offers positive steps to help countries practice food sovereignty instead of "free trade." Ben Burkett, President of the National Family Farm Coalition and a Mississippi farmer said, "We applaud the introduction of the TRADE act. The legislation is clear that fair trade begins with farmers being able to earn fair prices reflecting cost of production, fair treatment of farm labor, and limitations against unfair dumping practices. It allows for countries who are part of a trade agreement to establish strategic food and energy reserves, an important policy that must be reinstated to address the global food crisis."

The TRADE Act comes at an opportune time to begin addressing the global food crisis, as world leaders gather this week in Rome at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization conference. NFFC is deeply disappointed that USDA Secretary Ed Schafer and U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon continue to advocate for more free trade policies and advancing the Doha Round as a solution to address high food prices. "It is outrageous for our leaders to continue their disastrous trade liberalization policies, ignoring that free trade has caused the instability threatening our food security. Family farmers around the world have been devastated by below-cost dumping from agribusinesses as a result of the WTO and free trade. Countries have surrendered their food sovereignty to the likes of Cargill and Wall Street," said NFFC Vice-President Dena Hoff, who is at the UN FAO meeting as a civil society participant with Via Campesina.

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National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC), founded in 1986, unites and strengthens the voices and actions of its diverse grassroots members to demand viable livelihoods for family farmers, safe and healthy food for everyone, and economically and environmentally sound rural communities.

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