

FAMILY FARMERS PLEAD FOR NO NEW DOHA ROUND

Support India and Developing Countries' Need to Protect Food Security

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washington D.C. (September 4, 2009) – As trade ministers meet in New Delhi, India today to revive the WTO Doha Round, the National Family Farm Coalition today denounced efforts to further liberalize agricultural markets. Ben Burkett, a Mississippi farmer and NFFC president, said, “We need more food sovereignty, not more free trade. Millions of Mexican farmers have been driven off their land due to the below-cost dumping of corn by U.S. agribusinesses. Now they are working as farmworkers here in the U.S., often working in intolerable conditions.” Burkett also rejected the U.S. government’s demand for more “market access” to developing countries: “Market access is simply a poisonous code for gutting local food systems and family farmers. Countries will now be flooded with imported processed food made from genetically modified commodities. Thanks to the WTO, many countries’ food security is now dependent on highly speculative global markets. This was the root cause of many of the food riots in 2008.”

NFFC also expressed support for India’s attempts to include a special safeguard mechanism to protect their farmers and consumers from a flood of cheap imported food. Bob St. Peter, director of Food for Maine’s Future and a farmworker, said, “As the trade ministers attempt to once again revive their failed free trade agenda, it is important for U.S. farmers and farmworkers to show their solidarity with farmers around the world. NFFC rejects the WTO’s policies that allow corporate agribusinesses to profit handsomely by pitting farmers around the world against each other in a race to the bottom. We fully support the right of India to exercise agricultural safeguards and call on the Obama Administration to stop opposing India’s right to food sovereignty.

Dena Hoff, NFFC vice-chair and a Montana farmer said, “The perils of having a globalized, centralized food system controlled by multinational corporations has been exposed. Tainted pet food from China has killed our animals and salmonella-tainted peppers from Mexico have sickened Americans across the country. NFFC believes instead of following the WTO model for agriculture, we need another global solution to the food crisis that supports family farmers, pays workers a living wage, sustains our ecological resources and fosters true democracy.”

La Via Campesina International also issued its own letter to trade ministers criticizing the renewed attempts to launch the Doha Round. NFFC is a member of Via Campesina. The release can be found here:

http://www.viacampesina.org/main_en/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=780&Itemid=1

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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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