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IDFA Applauds Progress on Colombia Free Trade Agreement, Urges Quick Action

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(Washington, D.C. - April 6, 2011) In a positive development for the future of U.S. dairy exports, President Barack Obama today announced an agreement with Colombia on an action plan to resolve outstanding issues that will clear the way for the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement to gain official approval from Congress. The agreement with Colombia was signed in 2006 under the Bush administration, but Congress has yet to vote on it. Until now, the Obama administration has refused to push for its approval, citing outstanding issues involving Colombian labor rights.

"IDFA thanks U.S. Trade Representative Ambassador Ron Kirk and the members of Congress who made the commitment to push for the resolution of the outstanding issues of this agreement," said Clay Hough, IDFA's senior group vice president. "IDFA considers the agreement to be a positive sign that the administration is committed to promoting the sound trade policy agenda that is needed if the U.S. is going to double exports by 2015 as outlined in President Obama's National Export Initiative."

The value of U.S. dairy exports to Colombia last year was \$6 million. The estimated benefit to the U.S. dairy industry over the first several years of an implemented agreement with Colombia would be an additional \$25 million in exports per year.

Once implemented, the U.S.-Colombia agreement is expected to boost U.S. dairy exports through immediate open and unlimited access for most whey and lactose products, as well as duty-free access for sizable amounts of cheese and skim milk powder, among other dairy products. The United States will achieve additional dairy market access in Colombia as tariffs are ultimately phased out completely.

The agreement will still need to be officially submitted to Congress and ratified for it to take effect.

IDFA has strongly supported passage of the this free trade agreement, along with the pending agreements with Korea and Panama. IDFA urges the administration and legislators to make passage of all three outstanding free trade agreements a top priority.

Read the "[U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement Benefits for Agriculture](#)" fact sheet, April 2011.

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The International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), Washington, DC, represents the nation's dairy manufacturing and marketing industries and their suppliers, with a membership of 550 companies representing a \$110-billion a year industry. IDFA is composed of three constituent organizations: the Milk Industry Foundation (MIF), the National Cheese Institute (NCI) and the International Ice Cream Association (IICA). IDFA's 220 dairy processing members run more than 600 plant operations, and range from large multi-national organizations to single-plant companies. Together they represent more than 85 percent of the milk, cultured products, cheese and frozen desserts produced and marketed in the United States. For more information, visit www.idfa.org.