

For Immediate Release

April 6, 2011

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USGC Pleased with Progress on US, Colombia Free Trade Deal

WASHINGTON, D.C., April 6, 2011 – After years of negotiations and advocacy for the passage of a free trade agreement (FTA) between the United States and Colombia, the [U.S. Grains Council](#) learned early Wednesday morning that a deal has been struck on labor, clearing the way for liberating the flow of trade between the United States and this strategic trading partner in Latin America.

“The U.S. Grains Council compliments the Administration and Congress for their support of U.S. producers and for constantly keeping the issue of free trade on the table over these last several months,” USGC Chairman Terry Vinduska, said. “We are also grateful for the cooperation the Colombian government has provided the Council in helping U.S. lawmakers understand the importance of free trade agreements between the United States and these two countries.”

The Council has been extremely active in advocating the need to ratify the agreement. Earlier this year, the Council coordinated briefings with representatives of the Colombian feed milling, swine and wheat industries to the Senate Finance Committee, House Ways and Means Committee and House and Senate Agriculture Committees. They explained that while the United States has been a reliable supplier, duty preferences afforded to Argentina and Brazil have eroded the competitiveness of U.S. commodities.

In March, USGC President and CEO Thomas C. Dorr testified in front of the U.S. House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade, emphasizing the benefits of a ratified Colombia-U.S. FTA as well as other pending FTAs the United States has with various countries. He explained how the growing middle class in South and Central America posed ripe opportunities for U.S. producers and how trade competition was tightening in the region as both countries pursued FTAs with other nations.

Speaking at the U.S. Grains Council’s 50th Annual Board of Delegates Meeting last July, Ambassador Islam A. Siddiqui, chief agriculture negotiator for the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, reassured participants of the efforts trade officials were making to ratify pending bilateral agreements.

Dorr said he is pleased with the cooperation coming from Colombian and U.S. politicians in continuing efforts to make the pending FTA a reality. “In light of today’s good news, I am hopeful Congress will be able to ratify this much needed agreement with Colombia in the near term. The Council, U.S. producers and agribusinesses look forward to a strong trade relationship with Colombia,” he said.

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The U.S. Grains Council is a private, non-profit partnership of farmers and agribusinesses committed to building and expanding international markets for U.S. barley, corn, grain sorghum and their products. The Council is headquartered in Washington, D.C., and has 10 international offices that oversee programs in more than 50 countries. Financial support from our private industry members, including state checkoffs, agribusinesses, state entities and others, triggers federal matching funds from the USDA resulting in a combined program value of more than \$28.3 million.

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