

For Immediate Release

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Ag Groups Urge Congress To Pass Trade Deals

WASHINGTON, D.C., Feb 20, 2007 – The Agriculture Coalition for Latin American Trade, which includes the National Pork Producers Council and 44 other food and agricultural organizations, today sent a letter to Congress urging lawmakers to approve Free Trade Agreements with Colombia and Peru. If approved, the trade deals will give U.S. food and agriculture producers access to more than 71 million consumers. The letter appears below.

February 20, 2007

Dear Member of Congress:

The undersigned food and agriculture organizations, representing the vast majority of U.S. farmers, ranchers, food processors and exporters, wish to express their strong support for the free trade agreements (FTA) recently concluded and signed with Colombia and Peru. We urge prompt congressional consideration and passage of both of these agreements.

Both of these FTAs provide important new market access benefits that will stimulate U.S. exports, create U.S. jobs and strengthen rural economies. Indeed, the Colombia and Peru Trade Promotion Agreements are widely viewed as being the best ever negotiated on behalf of U.S. agriculture. Many U.S. food and agricultural products will become eligible for duty-free treatment in these countries immediately upon entry into force of the agreements, and virtually all will receive duty-free treatment over specified phase-in periods. For example:

- Under the Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement, U.S. food and agricultural products that will receive immediate duty-free treatment include beef, cotton, wheat, soybeans, soybean meal, high-quality whey products, apples, pears, peaches, cherries and many processed food products. Products that will benefit from improved market access right away include corn, poultry, fruits and vegetables and dairy products. In addition, Colombia will eliminate its “price-band” system, which limits several agricultural imports.
- The United States can expect to see improved prospects for a wide range of commodities and high-value U.S. food products under the Peru Trade Promotion Agreement, including wheat, feed grains, cotton, oilseeds and products, rice, dairy products, meats, poultry, processed foods, pet foods, apples and other fruits, juices, distilled spirits and wine. Over 90 percent of current trade will become eligible for free access immediately and, as part of the Agreement, Peru will eliminate its “price-band” system, which limits imports of several commodities.

In addition, both of these countries has taken important steps to eliminate key sanitary and phytosanitary barriers to U.S. exports, including lifting meat inspection barriers to our beef, pork

and poultry products, which are tremendously important on their own but also have a strong carryover into high-value processed products.

These FTAs will also correct an inequity that U.S. exporters of farm products encounter in most markets around the world—U.S. tariffs are much lower than those our products face in other countries. Indeed, as a result of the Generalized System of Preferences and the Andean Trade Preference and Drug Eradication Act, 90 percent of products exported by Colombia to the United States already enter duty free. For Peru the number is 98 percent.

We urge the Congress to provide to U.S. food and agriculture the same trade benefits it already has extended to farmers and ranchers in Colombia and Peru. The preferential trade deals are one-way trade deals that provide no direct benefits to our farmers and ranchers. The bilateral FTAs provide reciprocal trade benefits and generate U.S. exports, create U.S. jobs and enhance the economic well-being of U.S. farming communities.

We urge you to move forward as soon as possible to approve the implementing bills for the FTAs with Colombia and Peru under the TPA process.

Sincerely,

American Bakers Association
American Cotton Shippers Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Feed Industry Association
American Frozen Food Institute
American Meat Institute
American Soybean Association
Animal Health Institute
Blue Diamond Growers
Commodity Markets Council
Corn Refiners Association
Distilled Spirits Council of the United States
GMA/FPA
International Dairy Foods Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Chicken Council
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Grain and Feed Association
National Grange
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
National Sorghum Producers
National Turkey Federation
North American Equipment Dealers Association

North American Export Grain Association
North American Millers' Association
Northwest Horticultural Council
Pet Food Institute
Sweetener Users Association
U.S. Apple Association
U.S. Dairy Export Council
U.S. Livestock Genetics Export, Inc.
United Egg Association
United Egg Producers
US Hides, Skins and Leather Association
US Wheat Associates
USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council
USA Poultry & Egg Export Council
USA Rice Federation
WineAmerica