

June 11, 2013

**Joint Statement of National Farmers Union (USA) and JA Zenchu (Japan) regarding the Trans-Pacific Partnership Negotiations**

As leaders of organizations representing family farmers in Japan and the United States, we strongly urge Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiators to fully consider the potentially damaging effects brought about by an unbalanced trade agreement. Agriculture must be treated differently from other economic sectors in a trade agreement, due to the critical significance of food security, viable rural economies, and cultural considerations. Both countries have sensitive agricultural products that must be respected and protected.

Nations in the trans-Pacific region are exposed to diverse agricultural production conditions. In spite of these vast differences, all products are currently on the negotiation table at the TPP talks. TPP principles aimed at reaching comprehensive and high-level agreements may conflict with the interests and the requirements of farmers in Japan and the U.S.

On November 12, 2011, leaders of the nine Trans-Pacific Partnership countries discussed "Outlines of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement." The talks included a call for the "elimination of tariffs and other barriers to goods and services trade and investment" as one of the key features as a part of a landmark, 21<sup>st</sup> century trade agreement. This broad framework seems to lack any effort toward supporting farmers and minimizing the adverse effects inflicted upon them. Tariff adjustments should be at an appropriate level and serve as a fair and justifiable measure to provide balance. It is both unfair and unacceptable to put the interests of multinational corporations above those of farmers who are forced to sell at a minimal farm-gate price.

Moreover, critical issues such as food safety, food security, country-of-origin labeling, intellectual property, and animal and plant welfare should be discussed in the TPP from a holistic perspective. Agricultural terms of any trade agreement must be aimed toward improving quality of life for farmers, protecting consumer interests, and ensuring food and energy security for all.

Our organizations support affordable and accessible universal health care systems as a fundamental human right. In this context, the TPP should not dismantle or damage any form of existing health care programs in participating countries.

Greater transparency in the negotiating process and in-depth study of the possible impact of the TPP are called for. As long as the TPP negotiations are conducted under the current framework of secrecy, the daunting fear of the damage imposed upon family farmers will continue to grow.



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