



June 4, 2008

United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the family farmers and ranchers of National Farmers Union (NFU), I write in support of the Trade Reform, Accountability, Development and Employment (TRADE) Act. This legislation outlines priorities for United States trade policy, seeks to resolve problems that exist in current agreements and provides a foundation for future trade negotiations.

America's current trade policy does not prioritize the best interests of U.S. agriculture producers and has consistently used agriculture as the trade bait for other sectors of the U.S. economy to achieve favorable trade agreements. The deeply flawed free trade agenda has opened our markets to cheap, often low-quality food products, damaged our trade balance and encouraged a "race to the bottom" to see who can produce the cheapest food and fiber, regardless of how it is produced.

The free trade agenda has opened our borders to competitive food imports from countries that do not have to produce under the same high labor, environmental, and health and safety standards as U.S. producers. Allowing this to continue is un-acceptable. The United States produces the safest and most abundant food supply in the world but our ability to do so is being undercut by a trade agenda that fails to recognize the vital importance of maintaining a strong agriculture sector. Agriculture production should be a high priority in trade agreements and must not be used as a bargaining chip during trade negotiations. It is imperative that Congress re-evaluate the current trade policy and adopt a new trade agenda that recognizes the importance of agriculture production and provides a level playing field for all producers.

The TRADE Act takes positive steps to improve U.S. trade policy by outlining the goals a good trade agreement should achieve and providing a detailed inventory of the provisions that should be included in future agreements. This legislation will also require a review to address the failings of existing free trade agreements before any new agreements are considered or negotiated. Further, the bill proposes a plan to replace the flawed Fast-Track trade negotiating rules and restore Congress's constitutional authority to set the terms of trade.

Since the birth of this great nation, farmers and ranchers have played a significant role in our nation's security by providing a safe and abundant food supply. To risk this asset by continuing to pursue a free trade agenda would be a monumental mistake. NFU supports fair trade policies that allow agriculture producers to compete on a level playing field. The TRADE Act articulates the need for U.S. trade policy reform and defines a plan for how America can achieve a policy that promotes fair trade. I urge you to support this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Buis".

Tom Buis, President
National Farmers Union