



July 16, 2008

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of our nation's farmers and ranchers, I am writing to express deep concerns regarding next week's World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial in Geneva. Specifically, National Farmers Union (NFU) members are concerned with continued reports that the goal of simply achieving a deal is trumping the goal of getting a *good* deal for American agriculture.

While we recognize that agriculture must compete in the new global marketplace, it is imperative the competition be on a level playing field. Current Doha Round proposals do not address some of the biggest factors impacting America's family farmers and ranchers. Our producers are required to meet higher labor, environmental and health and safety standards than our international competitors. These requirements lock in a competitive cost of production advantage for other countries, and in return make it difficult for U.S. agricultural products to compete in the international marketplace. NFU cannot support an agreement that does not level the playing field by addressing labor, environmental and health and safety standards.

We also are concerned that the United States' trade negotiators continue to insist on farm policies that de-couple the domestic safety net from production. This ill-fated safety net has been tried in the past, 1996's Freedom-to-Farm law, and was the most devastating and expensive farm policy in our nation's history. To pursue de-coupled agriculture policies will jeopardize our ability to continue producing the safest and most abundant food supply in the world.

Finally, it is undeniable that the agriculture landscape has changed significantly since the Doha Round began in November 2001. However, the goal of the negotiations has not kept pace. The demand for food has increased and the cost to produce food has sky-rocketed. As a result, agriculture is in a new era that requires new thinking. Continuing the same failed trade policies only encourages a race to the bottom of commodity prices, pitting farmer-against-farmer and country-against-country, which benefits only a handful of international traders not farmers or consumers.

In summary, no deal is better than a bad deal. Trading away the interests of America's farmers and consumers is the worst possible deal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Buis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "T".

Tom Buis, President  
National Farmers Union