

National Farmers Union – 2008 Special Order of Business Trade

WHEREAS, the free trade agenda of the United States has decimated our nation's agriculture trade surplus in the past decade. Each trade agreement since the early 1990's has resulted in opening our borders to cheaper, lower-quality imported food without regard to how it is produced and under which conditions it is produced. Competitive imports are quickly outpacing exports as a result of the unlevel playing field in agriculture, with American producers required to meet stringent labor, health, environmental and safety standards while our competitors do not; and

WHEREAS, the current Doha round of trade negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO) is entering its eighth year; while U.S. negotiators continue to willfully offer to reduce the safety net for American agricultural producers. NFU maintains its long-standing conviction that the nation's agriculture policy should be written by the Congress of the United States and not negotiators at the WTO. Repeatedly, agriculture has been used as trade bait to entice other countries into global trade agreements. Any announcements made as a result of this current round of talks fly in the face of what is right for the economic wellbeing of America's family farmers, ranchers and rural communities; and

WHEREAS, Pending free trade agreements (FTA) with Colombia, Panama and South Korea serve only to further the failed North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) model and will not benefit the American agricultural economy. Like NAFTA, these agreements promote a race to the bottom of who can produce the cheapest goods using the lowest labor, health and environmental standards; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has undertaken actions which put the United States at risk of an outbreak of livestock disease. In November the U.S.-Canadian border was reopened to cattle born after March 1, 1999. Canada has continued to report new cases of BSE in animals born after March 1, 1999, highlighting the threat to American agriculture and consumers resulting from reduced restrictions on imports. USDA has also put forth a dangerous proposal to allow imports of ruminants and ruminant products from certain areas of Argentina despite that country's history of foot and mouth disease, a highly contagious and economically devastating livestock disease; and

WHEREAS, China continues to pose a threat to American consumers and agriculture markets. The Chinese food inspection system seems to be in name only, with product after product found to be unsafe once it reaches an American port. China has taken only minimal action to comply with U.S. food safety standards or enforce standards of any sort on Chinese exporters. Further, China is manipulating its currency to gain an unfair trade advantage at the expense of American producers.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, NFU calls upon the administration to pursue a new trade agenda that prioritizes the interests of American agriculture, rather than use it as bait for an agreement. Budget scoring of

domestic farm policy should not be based upon World Trade Organization methodology. Trade agreements should level the playing field for all producers by ensuring that our trading partners:

Adhere to all U.S. food safety and production standards including health, environmental, labor and human rights standards;

Enforce all aspects of a trade agreement before the agreement goes into effect. It is not acceptable to require high standards of production but fail to enforce such standards. It is the responsibility of the U.S. government to ensure that our trade partners come into compliance with, and continue to uphold all provisions of a trade agreement;

Do not discriminate against American products by using unfounded food safety claims.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, NFU urges the United States to enact trade rules that will protect American agriculture from foreign diseases. The introduction into the United States of livestock diseases such as BSE and FMD would devastate the agriculture economy; all necessary actions must be taken to ensure our borders are secure from the threat of FMD and BSE. It is not acceptable to allow animals and products into the United States which pose a risk to American agriculture. The health and safety of domestic agriculture production must come before the profits of multinational corporations who would benefit from increased livestock imports.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, NFU opposes continuing the status quo in trade relations with China. We urge Congress and consumers to reevaluate the U.S.-Chinese trade relationship and necessary take actions to correct the current trade imbalances with China.