

## **The Colombia FTA: Background on Agriculture**

### **Lessons Learned from NAFTA: Selling Out the Family Farm**

- U.S. trade negotiators have demonstrated no restraint in trading away the interests of U.S. farmers and ranchers. Every agreement since the early 1990's has resulted in opening our borders to lower- quality imported food, without regard to how it is produced or who produces it, forcing our farmers to compete with lower-quality imported food products.
- Fast track-enabled trade agreements do not allow America to halt imports of food produced under horrific labor conditions, or with pesticides banned here, while U.S. producers comply with quality labor, environmental and health standards that our consumers demand and our laws require.
- The way trade agreements are written, U.S. farmers and ranchers are locked into a competitive disadvantage. Recent trade agreements, such as NAFTA and CAFTA, have been destructive and intensely unpopular with family farmers and ranchers across the country.
- As best put by NFU President Tom Buis, "America's family farmers and ranchers produce the safest, most abundant most affordable food supply in the world. Trade agreements should level the playing field by requiring our trading partners to meet the same high labor, environmental, health and safety standards that American producers must follow."
- As a result, the United States, formerly known as "the world's bread basket", became a net food importer for the first time in 2005, with a food deficit of nearly \$370 million.

### **Food Safety: The World's Breadbasket Orders Out for Lunch**

- Nearly \$65 billion in food is imported annually – almost double the value imported when NAFTA and the WTO went into effect. This means an increasing amount of food on our dinner plates is now imported, and a vast majority of that food is unexamined and untested.
- This year alone, the United States has received imports of contaminated sea food, pet food, livestock feed, human food, toothpaste and more. Unchecked food imports and inadequate import inspection systems jeopardize consumer confidence in the quality and safety of imported products.
- Just like NAFTA, the Colombia agreement prioritizes increasing the volume of traded food over the safety of that food. Under these rules, certain U.S. safety precautions can be challenged as "barriers to trade." The FTA does not allow imported beef, pork, poultry, seafood or produce to be inspected at higher rates than domestically produced food.
- FDA data also makes it clear that Americans are three times more likely to be exposed to dangerous pesticide residues on imported foods than on domestic foods.