

## **The Colombia FTA: Impact on Food and Food Safety**

### **The World's Breadbasket Orders Out**

- In 2005, the United States, formerly known as “the world’s bread basket”, became a net food importer for the first time, with a food deficit of nearly \$370 million. 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, children’s toys 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. In fact, the FTA often considers safety precautions a “*barrier to trade*”, discouraging some procedures for inspecting beef, pork and poultry.
- Nearly \$65 billion in food is imported annually – almost double the value imported when NAFTA and the WTO went into effect. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the agency will conduct border inspections on only 0.6 percent of imported vegetables, fruit, seafood, dairy and animal feed in 2007.
- FDA data also makes clear that Americans are three times more likely to be exposed to dangerous pesticide residues on imported foods than on domestic foods.

### **There's No Such Thing as a “Free Trade” Lunch**

- There is a hidden safety cost to passing trade agreements. Language in the Colombia FTA replicates past limits on the safety standards the U.S. can require for imported food, and how much inspection is permitted.
- The lack of fairness in today’s trade agreements, which do not require our Colombian competitors to meet the same high production standards as those in the U.S., perpetuates a race to the bottom.
- Colombia, Peru and Panama are three of the world’s top 20 exporters of shrimp to the United States, and the proposed Colombia FTA is anticipated to increase seafood imports into the U.S.
- In 2006, the USDA inspected only 1.93 percent of seafood imports, and just 0.16 percent of the 859,357 shipments of seafood were refused entry.
- In the NAFTA-WTO era, seafood imports have increased 65 percent. Between 1995 and 2005, shrimp imports alone jumped 95 percent.
- The estimated annual incidence of infection with *Vibrio*, a diarrheal disease associated with seafood, increased 78 percent from 1996 to 2006.

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

- Fast track-enabled trade agreements mandate the U.S. to import food produced under horrific labor conditions, using pesticides banned here, while U.S. producers comply with high labor, environmental and health standards that far exceed our global competitors' standards.
- The current administration has used rural America as bait to help promote a trade policy that has decimated our nation's agriculture trade surplus in the last several years.
- 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 or who produces it.
- U.S. trade negotiators have demonstrated no restraint in trading away the interests of U.S. farmers and ranchers. They are being forced to compete with imported food products that are often of lower-quality and less expensive to produce. The way these trade agreements are written, U.S. farmers and ranchers will be locked into a competitive disadvantage.
- "We will continue to see an erosion of our rural communities that are dependent on the U.S. cattle industry because we will be systematically replacing domestic production with larger volumes of imported product," said Bill Bullard, CEO of the Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund.
- Currently, only 11 percent of imported beef, pork and chicken is inspected at the border by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).
- Not one U.S. consumer protection group, family farm organization, labor union, or environmental group has yet to endorse the Colombia FTA. They know companies are closing down and setting up shop overseas to take advantage of unregulated food safety conditions, sub-standard wages and labor laws, off shoring loopholes and fewer environmental constraints.
- The Colombia FTA text ignores limits on imported food safety and inspection, and still contains language requiring the United States to accept imported food that does not meet our safety standards.
- The Colombia FTA ignores calls to change foreign investor provisions that remain almost word-for-word identical to the language found in CAFTA and NAFTA.

## **Sugar: Attempts to Sweeten the Deal Leave a Bitter Taste**

- Under a tariff-rate quota (TRQ), countries may ship specified quantities of a product into the United States at zero duty. Imports above the quota are subject to a tariff.
- Colombia sought significantly more access to the U.S. sugar market, while asking for continued protections for its own rice, poultry and other agricultural products.
- The United States gave Colombia 50,000 tons of additional access to the U.S. sugar market. In comparison, the Peru FTA only gave an additional access of 11,000 metric tons of sugar to that country.
- There were several such disagreements over staple commodities such as chicken legs, beef, rice and beans, all of which were considered sensitive in the original negotiations.