

U.S. Farm Leader Denounces WTO in Korea; Speaks in front of thousands at rally in Seoul

Press Release, NFFC

September 9, 2005--Dena Hoff, Secretary of the National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC), spoke today in Seoul before tens of thousands of Korean farmers and workers at a rally to commemorate the second anniversary of Mr. Kyung-Hae Lee's public suicide protest against the World Trade Organization (WTO) on September 10, 2003. Mr. Lee, who was President of the Korean Advanced Farmers Federation, stabbed himself in the chest while wearing a banner reading "WTO Kills Farmers" at an anti-WTO protest in Cancun, Mexico.

Hoff, who farms in Montana and is chair of the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) and a Northern Plains Resource Council (NPRC) leader, serves as the NFFC representative on Via Campesina's International Coordinating Committee. Via Campesina is a farmer/peasant organization with millions of members worldwide, and unites those who are working to create global food sovereignty. Food sovereignty means that trade and farm policy should respect every country's right to establish policies based on needs and traditions for food security, conservation of natural resources, and distribution of economic opportunity; that all people have the right to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food and to food-producing resources and the ability to sustain themselves and their societies.

"As we commemorate the life of Mr. Lee, our friend and fellow farmer, we pledge that we won't let his sacrifice be in vain. We will continue, in the spirit of cooperation, to build a world based on food sovereignty," said Dena Hoff to the crowd. "That's the legacy Mr. Lee left us—to work and fight to make his dream—our dream—come true."

"Mr. Lee represented millions of peasants and farmers worldwide who are in desperate situations because of trade and farm policies that benefit multinational corporations instead of those who toil to grow food, and those who eat food," commented George Naylor, President of the NFFC, who was in Cancun in 2003 when Lee martyred himself. Naylor, who farms near Churdan, Iowa, is a member of Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement.

The National Family Farm Coalition will join other organizations this December in Hong Kong to protest the 6th World Trade Organization Ministerial meeting. The NFFC advocates international trade that is based on cooperation, fair prices for farmers, and no dumping; and demands that agricultural agreements be removed from the World Trade Organization agenda.

The National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) provides a voice for grassroots groups on farm, food, trade and rural economic issues to ensure fair prices for family farmers, safe and healthy food, and vibrant, environmentally sound rural communities here and around the world. The NFFC (founded in 1986) represents family farm and rural groups in 30 states whose members' face the challenge of the deepening economic recession in rural communities caused primarily by low farm prices and the increasing corporate control of agriculture. For further information about the organization, visit www.nffc.net