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Family Farmer Response to Doha Suspension: A Food Sovereignty Solution

WASHINGTON, July 24, 2006: The collapse of the World Trade Organization talks in Geneva on Monday is welcome news for the National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC), an organization representing family farmers in the U.S. and a member of Via Campesina, an international coalition of family farmers, peasants, and farm workers.

"The house of cards called the WTO couldn't be propped up any longer with lies by the spokespersons for the multinational corporations that benefit from its free trade agenda.

The deregulation of agriculture resulting from countries bowing to the pressure of the WTO has decimated family farms and rural communities in both developed and developing countries-just the opposite of economic development," stated George Naylor, president of NFFC.

"The U.S. agribusiness lobby, represented by the big commodity organizations, has professed the benefits and obligations of free trade, while at the same time scheming to continue subsidy programs like in the 2002 Farm Bill to keep the US farm economy functioning in the face of disastrously low commodity prices," stated Naylor, an Iowa corn and soybean farmer. "The 2002 Farm Bill makes U.S. farmers take the rap as being subsidized, while it is actually the corporate buyers of cheap commodities that reap the benefits of the U.S. subsidy scheme and trade liberalization. The industry commodity groups demand more 'market access' so the multinational corporations can expand their markets with no benefit to farmers while damaging rural communities and the environment in the U.S. and other countries."

Dena Hoff, Montana farmer and NFFC Trade Chair stated, "This week's collapse at the WTO is a reflection of a global system dominated from the top down. Democracy and economic prosperity begin when farmers in every region of the world have rights to their own markets. We look forward to working for a global solution that supports family farmers, pays workers a living wage, protects the environment and fosters true democracy. What we need is trade cooperation, as in the Africa Group WTO proposal, so that multinational corporations pay fair prices for agricultural commodities and ensure food security and food sovereignty."

Food sovereignty, a bedrock principle of Via Campesina, respects the right of every country and region to establish food and farm policies based on needs and traditions for food security, conservation of natural resources, distribution of economic opportunity, and the right of producers to supply local markets at fair prices.

The NFFC believes the U.S. should take the lead in creating agricultural policy that supports sustainable family farms and a healthy environment for future generations by passing a new 2007 Farm Bill based on the principle of food sovereignty. The NFFC supports passage of the Food from Family Farms Act which will (1) create a fair price floor so that purchasers pay for commodities rather than taxpayers, (2) help create food security reserves so that bountiful crops foster a stable food supply rather than depressing prices, (3) implement conservation measures to prevent wasteful overproduction and destruction of our environment, and (4) join international supply management agreements as in the Africa Group proposal.

For more information on the Food from Family Farms Act and the principle of food sovereignty, see www.nffc.net.