



National Family Farm Coalition

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FAMILY FARMERS APPLAUD URGENTLY NEEDED TRADE ACT TO HELP FIX BROKEN FOOD SYSTEM

*Catastrophic Free Trade Agreements Harm Consumers, U.S. Farmers and Farmers
Abroad*

Washington D.C. (June 24, 2009) – The National Family Farm Coalition today applauded the introduction of the TRADE Act in the House which offers urgent and necessary reforms to trade agreements that have harmed family farmers around the world while allowing dangerous unsafe food into the United States. Trade agreements such as NAFTA and the Peru FTA are greatly responsible for our current broken industrial food system. The TRADE Act offers stricter standards for imported food and allows for countries to practice food sovereignty principles to ensure countries can have a thriving family farm sector. 106 House member were original co-sponsors of the TRADE Act.

NFFC President Ben Burkett, a Mississippi farmer, said, “Currently, only corporate agribusinesses benefit from these trade agreements by pitting farmers against each other in a race to the bottom. Under NAFTA, corporations such as Heinz and Vlasic chose to buy cucumbers from Mexico instead of from my cooperative. Meanwhile, grain traders such as Cargill and Archer Daniels Midland dumped cheap corn into Mexico and drove more than a million of their farmers off the land, all while U.S. corn farmers saw no benefit and had to be bailed out by taxpayer subsidies. The TRADE Act puts into place a new trade model for both American and international farmers so we can build our food systems around food sovereignty principles.”

Free trade agreements often encourage chemical intensive export-oriented agriculture instead of producing sustainable food for local markets. Recent food safety scares from salmonella Mexican tomatoes to Chinese melamine products have caused great concern among American consumers. NFFC Vice-President Dena Hoff, a Montana farmer, said, “Consumers are rejecting the idea of a globalized, industrial food supply controlled by a handful of corporations. The TRADE Act will ensure farmers will be able to earn fair prices reflecting their cost of production, fair treatment of farm labor and limitations against unfair dumping practices that favor those countries with the weakest environmental and labor standards.”

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The National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC), founded in 1986, 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. For further information about the organization, visit www.nffc.net.