

Citizens Trade Campaign

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 14, 2004

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U.S. House Votes to Outsource Cowboys, Family Farmers With Australia Trade Deal

“U.S.-Australia Free Trade Agreement” Would Also Block Medicine Reimportation

WASHINGTON - The U.S. House of Representatives voted today to approve the “U.S.-Australia Free Trade Agreement” which poses a threat to the livelihoods of thousands of U.S. family farmers and ranchers by immediately removing tariffs on some agricultural and livestock commodities and phasing out tariffs on others. The agreement would also undermine legislation to allow the reimportation of medicines into the U.S., and would raise the costs of medicines for Australian consumers by one-third. The House voted 314 to 109 to approve the measure. A Senate vote is expected before the August recess.

Passage of the Australia agreement may be the high point for the Administration’s trade agenda this year, since a vote on the “Central America Free Trade Agreement” would almost certainly be defeated were it to come up for a vote this year, according to many trade policy observers and congressional offices. Plans for a hemisphere-wide “Free Trade Area of the Americas” seem doomed for the near future.

“While the Administration has attempted to portray the dangers of the Australia agreement as minimal, they are in fact far-reaching and major,” said Larry Weiss, Executive Director of Citizens Trade Campaign. **“This deal will actually block consumer access to more affordable medicines. It is molded from the failed NAFTA model, and the Senate should reject it.”**

“This agreement is bad for dairy farmers - and in fact all U.S. family farmers,” said George Naylor, Iowa farmer and President of the National Family Farm Coalition. **“By voting for this deal, the House is foreclosing on the future of family farms in America.”**

Karen Englehart, a Bison, SD rancher and a member of the WORC Trade Team said, **“U.S. based Swift and Co. and Cargill have become the dominating force in Australia’s beef industry, opening the door to the use of international ‘captive supplies.’ This makes captive supplies not just a U.S. problem but an Australian problem, depressing prices to ranchers in both countries.”**

“Any agreement negotiated for the benefit of corporations without regard to the negative impacts on producers and rural communities is wrong,” said Dena Hoff, Glendive, Mont. livestock producer. **“It looks like the next major outsourcing to accompany the cowboy will be the democratic process, because it does not seem to be in play here at home.”**

The Citizens Trade Campaign (CTC) is a national coalition of environmental, labor, consumer, family farm, religious, and other civil society groups founded in 1992 during the fight over the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). CTC members include Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment; Americans for Democratic Action; Communications Workers of America; Defenders of Wildlife; Friends of the Earth; Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy; International Brotherhood of Teamsters; the National Family Farm Coalition; Public Citizen; UNITE!; United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society; the United Steelworkers of America; United Students Against Sweatshops; and Western Organization of Resource Councils, as well as regional, state, and city-based coalitions, organizations, and individual activists throughout the United States.

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See the Citizens Trade Campaign website for more information on the U.S.-Australia FTA at <http://www.citizenstrade.org/australia.php>