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**CAFTA**  
**The Sucking Sound of America's Production Agricultural Demise**

Dickinson, ND—The Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) signed today will result in low prices and a loss of U. S. sovereignty, according to Dakota Resource Council.

“CAFTA would undermine the already struggling production agriculture in America and exploit the Central Americans as cheap labor,” said John Hagen, farmer-rancher and DRC spokesperson. “It will hurt the American farmer.”

“CAFTA is an extension of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the same ‘Chapter 11’ provision. Chapter 11 allows companies from our trade partner countries to sue the U. S. government for any policies or laws that impede their profit making,” said Hagen. “This right is not available to our domestic companies or individuals.”

Secret tribunals of “trade experts” decide the fate of these trade cases, not the U.S. judicial system.

Hagen said, “The Bush administration is bartering away American sovereignty at the expense of our production agriculture and rural communities.”

This agreement is expected to go to Congress for approval in July 2004. Once submitted to Congress, under Trade Promotion Authority (Fast-Track) Congress only has 60 days to debate and vote on the agreement. Congress cannot change any provisions in the agreement.

The CAFTA countries include Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. “It is estimated that in Central America, over 70% of its 35 million inhabitants are poor,” according to Carlos Quintanilla, author of *Central America and Neoliberalism*.

“How can we expect these people to buy our products when they can't afford the basic needs like food?” questioned Hagen.

The Dominican Republic will also be included in the agreement when it is sent to Congress this summer.

This agreement does not exclude any agricultural product. CAFTA would grant Central American agricultural products such as beef, sugar, wheat, fruits, and vegetables greater access to U. S. markets.

According to Hagen, NAFTA and CAFTA are just the first steps towards the completion of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

Dakota Resource Council is a grass roots, member based organization working for strong local economies, family farms and the environment.

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