

For Immediate Release:

**American Corn Growers Oppose Ratification of CAFTA
Farmers Recognize Trade Pact as Extension of Failed Policy and
False Promises of NAFTA**

CRAWFORD, Texas – March 23, 2005 – Larry Mitchell, American Corn Growers Association (ACGA) Chief Executive Officer, today stated his organization’s opposition to the U.S. ratification of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). “CAFTA is nothing short of the extension of the failed policies and false promises of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) ratified over a decade ago,” said Mitchell. “Just as NAFTA proved to not only turn out to be a bust for U.S farmers, it put at least 2 million Mexican farmers off their land, maybe as many as 10 million.”

Mitchell just returned from a series of meetings with farmers and national leaders in Costa Rica at the invitation of Carlos Solís, leader of Upanacional, an organization representing the country’s small and moderately sized farmers. “I know CAFTA will not help many U.S. farmers,” said Mitchell. “I know it will hurt many U.S. farmers, especially our sugar farmers. But I would hate to think of what would happen to the farm families of Costa Rica if the raw power and will of U.S. based international corporations were unleashed upon them, or the farm families of any other Central American nation should CAFTA be ratified by the U.S. Congress. Just look at what has happened to so many families just across our border in Mexico under NAFTA.”

“ACGA will oppose any trade agreements, such as CAFTA, the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA), or any other trade agreement which advances other sectors of the U.S. economy at the expense of U.S. farm families,” declared Mitchell. “We also recognize that one of the major concessions the U.S. government wants other countries to make in return for greater access to U.S. farm product markets is that they impose U.S.-like Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) protection. We recognize the government’s hypocrisy in promoting free trade on one hand and promoting more restricted trade on items covered by IPRs on the other hand.”

“ACGA also recognizes that current and proposed free trade agreements enhance the multinational corporations’ ability to exploit natural resources and production labor around the world at the expense of workers and traditional industry in the U.S., including family farmers,” added Mitchell. “We recognize that beef, dairy, and other livestock and other agricultural sectors will meet the same fate that the U.S. textile industry has met if the proposed free trade agreements pass, and the continuing attrition among American vegetable and fruit producers caused by already existing free trade agreements will only accelerate.”

“CAFTA may have a pretty name, but the consequences of its ratification by Congress are ugly, concluded Mitchell. “We stand ready, willing and able to support an agreement to help all farmers, but CAFTA falls well short of that goal. We must rethink U.S. agriculture and trade policy and change course to secure farmer livelihoods worldwide”

The American Corn Growers Association represents 14,000 members in 35 states. See www.acga.org .