

**WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION  
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**NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**Wisconsin Farmers Union Disappointed with  
Australian Free Trade Agreement**

**CHIPPEWA FALLS, WI --** "Wisconsin Farmers Union is extremely disappointed with the agreement reached on Sunday, February 8, 2004 between the U.S. and Australian trade negotiators that includes an agreement on trade in agricultural commodities," said Sue Beitlich, WFU President. The administration will now focus on finalizing the complete text of the agreement and developing and implementing legislation in order to present the Free Trade Agreement to Congress for ratification.

Although the agreement does not change the above-quota tariff on dairy products subject to quotas, this agreement does not address milk protein concentrates or any new products that may be developed and converted to standardized dairy products, which currently can enter the country tariff free. "The fact is there will be more imports of dairy products under this agreement, and if we continue to pursue bilateral trade agreement with other countries around the world, collectively the amount of dairy imports would be enormous. We are struggling now to make ends meet due to the flood of imports of milk protein concentrates, casein and other blends. This will devastate Wisconsin's dairy farm families. We will be asking Congress to vote against the US/Australian Trade Agreement." Beitlich said. In a letter hand-delivered by Beitlich to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann Venneman during the National Cattlemen's Beef Board meeting in Phoenix in late January, the organization requested she reconsider her support of this shortsighted agreement.

Wisconsin Farmers Union members adopted a resolution on trade at their state's 73<sup>rd</sup> annual convention this past weekend, which calls for several considerations for fair trade, including the development of an effective mechanism to offset the negative impact of differences in exchange rates. "This agreement fails to address exchange rates which impact trade, even though as recently as 2002 the Australian dollar traded at \$1.79 to U.S. dollar," said Beitlich.

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Wisconsin Farmers Union, a member-driven organization, is committed to enhancing the quality of life for family farmers, rural communities and all people through educational opportunities, cooperative endeavors and civic engagement.