

April 27, 2016

Attention: Ag/Trade Leg. Staff

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

The undersigned 161 farm, food, rural and faith groups urge you to reject the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free trade agreement. Independent family farmers and ranchers will see little benefit from the purported export gains from the TPP. At the same time, TPP imports will compete against U.S. farmers that are facing declining farmgate prices that are projected to stay low for years. The main beneficiaries of the TPP are the companies that buy, process and ship raw agricultural commodities, not the farmers who face real risks from rising import competition.

The TPP is promoted as a boon to farmers because of the increased agricultural export opportunities. The trade deals of the past two decades have been promoted as export generating, but it is important to recognize that despite the reduction of foreign tariffs, the volume of U.S. exports has not increased as projected. For example, the United States' total combined exports of corn, soybeans and wheat have remained steady at about 100 million metric tons for the last 30 years despite a raft of free trade agreements since the mid-1990s.

More specifically, the TPP proponents have substantially oversold the agricultural market access and potential export gains. The TPP members that the U.S. does not already have existing free trade agreements with are mostly smaller economies like Malaysia, New Zealand and Vietnam where there is insufficient demand to generate significant export opportunities. Agricultural exports to the larger Japanese market will be hindered by long phase-ins of tariff reductions and offsetting policies like subsidies and tariff snapbacks for key products like pork and beef.

Even these modest export benefits accrue more to the companies that process and market agricultural products than to the farmers that produce crops and livestock. Individual farmers aren't the ones exporting their goods to these new markets. Instead, grain traders, meatpackers, produce shippers and food processors sell these products overseas and reap the majority of the benefits from increased market access. The farmer's share of any increased exports is similar to the tiny farmer's share of the retail food dollar.

Any export opportunities must be weighed against the more likely increase in low-priced agricultural imports that would compete against and displace U.S. farm products. Trade deals do not just add new export markets — the flow of trade goes both ways — and the U.S. has committed to allowing significantly greater market access to imports under the TPP. Agricultural imports have surged under previous trade deals that have been particularly damaging to the U.S. fresh and processed fruit and vegetable sector. Tomatoes from Mexico, berries from Chile, cut flowers from Colombia, lamb from

Australia, garlic and canned produce from China have all undermined domestic producers and the livelihoods of the farmworkers and food processing plant workers.

The increased agricultural import competition under the TPP will likely overshadow export benefits and will drive down the prices U.S. farmers receive for their crops and livestock. Larger import volumes depress domestic prices — this is especially true for low-priced and even artificially low-priced imported farm goods. For example, already the United States has more than a one billion-pound beef trade deficit with TPP partners and beef imports will likely increase significantly more than beef exports. Currently, domestic cattle prices are collapsing and the added influx of even more beef will make this bad situation even worse. The TPP would also bring more dairy powder from New Zealand, processed fruits and vegetables from Vietnam and Malaysia as well as fresh produce from all the TPP partners.

These additional imports also benefit the buyers of raw agricultural products. These transnational companies have the capacity to look all over the globe for agricultural products, pitting farmers worldwide against one another. For example, the largest domestic beef and pork packing firms are not U.S.-based companies. The TPP gives these firms even more countries to shop for cheaper goods (often produced under considerably weaker environmental, farmworker and labor standards) and import them under lower tariffs to compete directly with U.S. farmers.

The TPP contains other provisions governing investment, government purchasing, food safety, animal health and crop disease and labeling that can further undermine domestic farm economies. Trade deals have been used to overturn U.S. country of origin meat labels, investment rules facilitate foreign corporate ownership of U.S. farmland, and the procurement provisions could be used to unravel domestic and local farm purchasing programs.

Finally, since the TPP lacks binding and enforceable provisions against currency manipulation, foreign countries would likely devalue their currencies to encourage even more agricultural exports to the United States. By failing to effectively deal with currency manipulation, TPP fails to address a substantial cause of a debilitating trade deficit that causes a 3 percent drag on our economy and caused the loss of millions of U.S. jobs. Many family farmers need off-farm income to supplement their farm earnings and ensure a decent living for their families. That off-farm income is harder to find as jobs are lost to trade deals like the TPP.

The TPP poses significant risks for American farmers and ranchers. The surge of agricultural imports from prior trade deals contributed to declining prices and the often-precarious economic viability of independent farms. The modest agricultural export opportunities would largely be captured by the shippers, distributors, processors and traders and provide a very limited benefit to farmers and ranchers. We urge you to stand up for American independent farm and ranch families and reject the TPP.

Signed:

Alabama Contract Poultry Growers Association
 Alabama State Association of Cooperatives
 Alabama Sustainable Agriculture Network
 Alaska Farmers Union
 Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO) (MT)
 American Agriculture Movement
 American Grassfed Association
 Arkansas Farmers Union
 Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake County (OH) Farmers Union
 Bandera Grassland (TX)
 Belcampo (CA)
 BioRegional Strategies
 Bold Alliance (IA, LA, NE & OK)
 Boots on the Ground, LLC
 Buckeye Quality Beef Association (OH)
 Buffalo Mountain Coop and Café (VT)
 Bull Mountain Land Alliance (MT)
 California Dairy Campaign
 California Farmers Union
 Campaign for Contract Agriculture Reform
 Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment
 Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (NC)
 The Carrot Project (MA)
 CASA del Llano (TX)
 Social Services Office-Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri/Diocese of Jefferson City
 Cattle Producers of Louisiana
 Cattle Producers of Washington
 Center for Family Farm Development Inc. (GA)
 Central United Methodist Church of Detroit Social Justice Society
 Church Women United in New York State
 Colorado Independent CattleGrowers Association
 Colorado Women Involved in Farm Economics
 Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CA)
 Contract Poultry Growers Association of the Virginias
 The Cornucopia Institute
 Cottage House, Inc. (AL)
 Council for Healthy Food Systems (TX)
 Crawford Stewardship Project (WI)
 Dakota Resource Council (ND)
 Dakota Rural Action (SD)
 East New York Farms!
 Ecological Farming Association (CA)
 Fair World Project (OR)
 Family Farm Defenders (WI)
 Farm Aid
 Farm Alliance of Baltimore
 Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance
 Farm Labor Organizing Committee
 Farmworker Association of Florida
 Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund
 Florida Certified Organic Growers and Consumers, Inc.
 Food & Water Watch
 Food Chain Workers Alliance
 Food Democracy Now!
 Food for Maine's Future
 Four Seasons Artisans and Farmers Market (CO)
 Franklin Community Co-op (MA)
 Friends of Family Farmers (OR)
 Grand Forks County Citizens Coalition (ND)
 Grassfed Livestock Alliance
 Hawai'i Farmers Union United
 Idaho Organization of Resource Councils
 Illinois Farmers Union
 Illinois Stewardship Alliance
 Independent Beef Association of North Dakota (I-BAND)
 Independent Cattlemen of Wyoming
 Indiana Farmers Union
 Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
 International Texas Longhorn Association
 Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
 Iowa Farmers Union
 Just Food (NY)
 Kansas Farmers Union
 Land Loss Prevention Project (NC)
 Land Stewardship Project (MN)
 Local Food RULES (ME)
 Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA)
 Michigan Farmers Union
 Michigan Land Trustees
 Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op (VT)
 Midwest Organic Dairy Producers Association
 Minnesota Farmers Union
 Minnesota National Farmers Organization
 Mississippi Assoc. of Cooperatives
 Mississippi Sustainable Agriculture Network
 Missouri Farmers Union
 Missouri Rural Crisis Center
 Missouri's Best Beef Cooperative
 Monadnock Food Co-op (NH)

Montana Farmers Union
 Montgomery Countryside Alliance (MD)
 National Family Farm Coalition
 National Farmers Organization
 National Farmers Union
 National Hmong American Farmers, Inc.
 National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
 National Women Involved in Farm Economics
 Nebraska Farmers Union
 Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society
 Nebraska Women Involved in Farm Economics
 Neighboring Food Co-op Association (New England)
 Nevada Live Stock Association
 New England Farmers Union (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT)
 New Entry Sustainable Farming Project (MA)
 North Dakota Farmers Union
 Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
 Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. - CT
 Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. - MA
 Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. - NH
 Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. - NY
 Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. - VT
 Northeast Organic Farming Association, Interstate Council (NOFA-IC)
 Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
 Northern New Mexico Stockman's Association
 Northern Plains Resource Council (MT)
 Northwest Farmers Union
 Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
 Ohio Farmers Union
 Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project
 Oregon Rural Action
 Oregon Rural Action, Blue Mountain Chapter
 Oregon Rural Action, Snake River Chapter
 Oregonians for Safe Farms and Families
 Organic Farmers' Agency for Relationship Marketing (OFARM)
 Organic Seed Growers & Trade Association
 Organization for Competitive Markets
 Our Family Farms Coalition
 Pennsylvania Farmers Union
 PLBA Housing Development Corp. (AL)
 Powder River Basin Resource Council (WY)
 Progressive Agriculture Organization (PA)
 R-CALF United Stockgrowers of America
 Rainbow Natural Grocery (MS)
 Ranch Foods Direct (CO)
 Real Pickles Cooperative, Inc. (MA)
 Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
 Rooted in Community
 Rooted in Community Youth Food Justice Leadership Network (CA)
 Roots of Change (CA)
 Rural Advancement Foundation International - USA (RAFI-USA)
 Rural Advancement Fund (SC)
 Rural Coalition
 Rural Vermont
 Slow Food USA
 Socially Responsible Agricultural Project
 South Dakota Farmers Union
 South Dakota Stockgrowers Association
 Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
 Spokane County Cattlemen (WA)
 Sustainable Food Center (TX)
 Texas Farmers Union
 Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Assoc.
 United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
 Utah Farmers Union
 Valley Alliance of Worker Co-operatives (MA)
 Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network
 Western Colorado Congress
 Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC)
 Willimantic Food Coop (CT)
 Wisconsin Farmers Union
 Wyoming Women Involved in Farm Economics