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VULNERABLE U.S. DAIRY INDUSTRY COULD BE HARMED BY TPP TRADE DEAL

*Farmers, Workers, Processors Fear Unfair Competition
From New Zealand Dairy Industry*

(WASHINGTON) Congress should not approve the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal without carefully considering the impact on vulnerable U.S. dairy farms and workers. That was the message delivered today by 11 national organizations representing dairy farmers and dairy industry workers in a letter to eight key members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

The TPP has the potential to become the biggest trade deal in history. As the 16th round of talks gets underway today in Singapore, negotiators now include Brunei, Chile, New Zealand, Singapore, Australia, Canada, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, the United States and Vietnam. Other Pacific Rim nations – notably Japan, the Philippines and Thailand – are watching the talks closely, with an eye to joining the controversial trade pact.

U.S. dairy interests are especially concerned that the trade deal will damage family farmers, dairy processors and consumers.

The [letter](#) states the pending trade deal could have tremendous impact on where and how dairy products are produced and processed.

“New market access for New Zealand’s monopolistic dairy sector would be especially damaging to U.S. dairy farmers and those who produce and process nonfat dry milk, butterfat or cheese,” the letter states.

-MORE-

Page 2 of 2/Vulnerable U.S. Dairy Industry Could Be Harmed By TPP Trade Deal

To make sure the U.S. dairy industry won't be decimated by the TPP, the letter urges Congress to adopt new trade policymaking procedures rather than reinstating so-called "fast-track" authority.

"Congress must make sure this trade deal doesn't open the door to unfair competition," said Rome Aloise, international vice president for the Teamsters and head of the union's dairy conference, which represents 30,000 dairy workers throughout the supply chain. "The dairy industry is too important to our economy and to our food supply."

Aloise added the Teamsters would not support any trade deal that provides lesser protections to workers than to corporations.

Ben Burkett, a farmer and the president of the National Family Farm Coalition, explained why his group joined the call to Congress, "This letter elevates an issue so important to our dairy farmer members and to all consumers. The future of our nation's 60,000 dairy farmers is at stake."

"National Farmers Union supports trade agreements that benefit U.S. agriculture and promotes societal goals of healthy communities, feeding the poor, economic justice, human rights, and a sound environment. If those high standards are to be met in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, Congress needs to weigh in on the terms of the agreement now, before the negotiations are concluded," said Roger Johnson, president of the National Farmers Union.

"It's especially important that Congress review the impact of the TPP on the U.S. dairy industry because the deal has been negotiated in complete secrecy," said James P. Hoffa, general president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

The letter was sent to House Agriculture Committee Chairman Frank Lucas of Oklahoma and Ranking Member Collin Peterson of Minnesota; House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp and Ranking Member Sander Levin, both of Michigan; Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Debbie Stabenow of Michigan and Ranking Member Thad Cochran of Mississippi; and Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus of Montana and Ranking Member Thad Cochran of Mississippi.

-MORE-

Page 3 of 3/Vulnerable U.S. Dairy Industry Could Be Harmed By TPP Trade Deal

The letter was hand-delivered today to Capitol Hill by representatives of the ad-hoc national “fair trade” coalition, consisting of the Citizens Trade Campaign, Family Farm Defenders, Food & Water Watch, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/ Land Assistance Fund, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, League of Rural Voters, the National Farmers Union, and Rural Coalition/Coalicion Rural.

An example of the letter can be found [here](#).

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