

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 14, 2008
2:44 PM

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US Family Farmers Applaud Demise of Doha Negotiations

American Farmers Support India and Developing Countries Right to Food Sovereignty

WASHINGTON - August 13 - The National Family Farm Coalition welcomed with elation the recent failure of the Doha Round negotiations at the World Trade Organization in Geneva. NFFC, an organization representing family farmers in the United States and a member of Via Campesina, an international coalition of family farmers, peasants, and farm workers, has been at the forefront since 1993 of protesting the disastrous inclusion of agriculture in the world trading system. "NFFC has warned for over a decade that the WTO's policies were impoverishing farmers both here and abroad and would lead to an inevitable food crisis. The time has come for us to make food sovereignty, not free trade, our model and get the WTO out of agriculture," said NFFC President Ben Burkett, a Mississippi farmer.

From the beginning of the WTO's creation in 1994 in Marrakesh, NFFC has warned about the dire consequences of liberalized trade on rural communities, both here in the U.S. and abroad, and countries becoming dependent on foreign food imports. With the global food crisis upon us, NFFC is heartened that the WTO talks collapsed due to developing countries urging that food sovereignty take precedence over "free trade." "The WTO bears much responsibility for dismantling domestic and tariff protections and leaving countries at the mercy of volatile, speculative markets for their food security. As a U.S. farmer, I fully support the right of India and the G-33 countries to implement a special safeguard mechanism (SSM) to protect their farmers and consumers from below-cost imports flooding their markets. I am deeply disappointed with other U.S. farm groups and our government for not endorsing the fundamental principle of food sovereignty," said Ben Burkett.

NFFC strongly disputes the United States' position that India's request to utilize the SSM for a 10% import surge was unreasonable and believes the 40% surge proposed by the U.S. would have been a useless policy for countries devastated by below-cost dumping of imports, much of it from U.S. commodities. "It is immoral for misguided free trade ideology to take precedence over the starvation of millions of people," said Burkett.

NFFC also rejects the arguments of U.S. corporate commodity farm groups who demanded more "market access" in developing countries in exchange for dismantling U.S. farm subsidy programs. "The deregulation of agriculture as advocated by the WTO has decimated family farms both here and abroad. The U.S. commodity farm groups, backed by agribusiness, have propagandized for years that export markets would help family farmers when in reality, it just fattens agribusiness's profits," said George Naylor, an Iowa corn and soybean farmer. "Farmers don't export. Archer Daniels Midland and Cargill do. The corporate commodity groups are continuing to push for bilateral FTAs with South Korea, Colombia and pushed for the recent Peru FTA. Meanwhile they also scheme to keep in place a broken U.S. subsidy system that allows U.S. farmers to be paid below cost of production and agribusiness to dump cheap commodities into overseas markets, displacing farmers from Mexico to Indonesia to Ghana to Haiti, with no benefit to U.S. farmers. The WTO promotes a globalized market where all farmers in different countries are pitted in a 'race-to-the-bottom' that only benefits

agribusinesses that get access to the cheapest commodities possible. We need domestic farm and food policies that respond to the needs of local communities. NFFC's Food from Family Farms Act would have accomplished this, while curtailing dumping, but Congress chose to ignore our proposals during the Farm Bill."

NFFC, as a member of Via Campesina, opposes the WTO model of industrial agro-export oriented farming. Dena Hoff, NFFC vice-president and Montana farmer, serves as the North American co-chair of Via Campesina and denounced the WTO for failing to promote sustainable agriculture policies: "We have a food crisis, water crisis, climate crisis, but the WTO continues to promote export-oriented agriculture that only leads to increased deforestation, land concentration, soil erosion, bio-diversity destruction and water contamination. Farmers producing food for local domestic markets have now been replaced by agro-export industries such as cut-rate flowers in Kenya and Colombia and devastating agrofuel plantations in Brazil and Indonesia producing sugar, soya and palm oil instead of actual food to feed their citizens. Here in the U.S., this has led to monoculture production of corn and soybeans and factory farms instead of diversified farms producing healthy food for local markets."

Hoff warned about the impact this type of food system has on consumers: "The perils of having a globalized, centralized food system controlled by multinational corporations has been exposed as tainted pet food from China has killed our animals and salmonella-tainted peppers from Mexico have sickened Americans across the country. With the collapse of the Doha Round, NFFC looks forward to working for a global solution to the food crisis that supports family farmers, pays workers a living wage, sustains our ecological resources and fosters true democracy."

NFFC also criticized the U.S. government for sacrificing the livelihoods of U.S. farmers to promote more failed free trade policies. U.S. policymakers should be aware that the United States' \$19 billion in "trade-distorting subsidies" under the Amber Box of the Agreement on Agriculture is based on completely outdated world prices from 1986-1988. The reality of farm production and costs have changed dramatically since then. Dairy comprises the largest portion of U.S. subsidies deemed "trade distorting" at \$4.5 billion. However, this is based on the WTO using \$7.25 as the "world market price" based upon New Zealand's milk price from 1986-1988. The current U.S. dairy support price is \$9.90 per hundredweight (cwt). Average prices in New Zealand are now \$20.88 (cwt). "At a time when dairy farmers in the U.S. and around the world are experiencing a dire crisis with the rise in our costs of production, it is an outrage that U.S. trade negotiators are going along with the WTO's radical deregulatory scheme based on 20-year old numbers from New Zealand that have no connection to either current New Zealand or U.S. conditions," said Paul Rozwadowski, NFFC Dairy Subcommittee chairman and a Wisconsin dairy farmer. "Our current costs of production hover over \$30 cwt (hundredweight). It is obscene to sacrifice the livelihoods of dairy farmers, our rural communities and our domestic milk production on the altars of a fatally flawed globalization agenda. The last thing Americans want in the midst of the food crisis is to become dependent on Chinese powdered milk, but that is the situation that confronts us as American dairy farmers keep going out of business."

The National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC), founded in 1986, provides a voice for grassroots groups on farm, food, trade and rural economic issues to ensure fair prices for family farmers, safe and healthy food, and vibrant, environmentally sound rural communities here and around the world. For further information about the organization, visit www.nffc.net.

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