



WASHINGTON

from National Farmers Union

Corner

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Trade is heating up in Washington as the Obama administration attempts to break down barriers between the U.S. and Cuba, negotiate two very large trade deals across both the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans, and secure Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), or “fast-track,” an authority granted by Congress to allow the executive branch negotiating powers otherwise amendable by Congress. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) also solicited comments on a proposed rule to allow imports of fresh beef from northern Argentina. NFU has been very active in all these agreements, proposed rules and powers granted to different branches of government, advocating for family farmers, ranchers, fishermen and consumers alike. NFU is also looking forward to its 113th Anniversary Convention, which will be held next month in Wichita, Kansas. Registration is now open on the NFU website.

CUBA RELATIONS ADDRESSED IN WASHINGTON



In December, President Barack Obama announced that the United States would be taking steps to restore full diplomacy in Cuba. The administration has plans to establish an embassy in Havana and work with

Congress on lifting an embargo on Cuba that has been in place for over 50 years.

There are over 11 million people in Cuba, and with the island just 90 miles away, it represents a significant market for U.S. agricultural products, particularly rice, grains, soybeans, corn and meat. In fact, despite the current restrictions, the U.S. sold almost \$349 million in agricultural goods to Cuba last year.



Last month, National Farmers Union joined the U.S. Agriculture Coalition for Cuba, a group aiming to re-establish normalized trade relations with Cuba. Normalizing trade between the U.S. and Cuba has been a major push for NFU for many years, as the organization has sent at least 20 letters to government officials and legislators addressing normalized travel and trade between both nations.

Lifting the failed trade embargo and easing financial regulations need be done in order to facilitate increased and profitable trade for both countries. NFU believes the coalition will provide leading U.S. agriculture organizations a collective voice in

creation of a sustained and viable market for U.S. products in Cuba.

TRADE DEALS HEATING UP

Two trade deals, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), are currently being negotiated by the U.S. Trade Representative. The president is also seeking Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), or “fast-track,” which allows the executive branch to negotiate international agreements, such as TPP and TTIP, that Congress can either approve or disapprove, but not amend.



Representative Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., held a press conference in January with other House Democrats, unions, teachers and environmentalists to push back against TPA, saying it would hide the details of the current negotiations behind a “veil of secrecy” and prevent lawmakers from protecting their constituents from lopsided agreements.

NFU has been vocal on “fast track,” stating that it gives up a constitutional power of Congress, and therefore the people, to have a say on negotiations

made on the people's behalf. In January, in a POLITICO Pro guest column, NFU President Roger Johnson also argued that all future U.S. trade agreements should be negotiated with the goal of reducing the U.S. trade deficit, while ensuring that U.S. trading partners are keeping up with their end of the agreement and abiding by U.S. standards. The U.S. had a \$471.5 billion trade deficit in 2013, representing a full three percent drag on the U.S. Gross Domestic Product.

NFU CONCERNED OVER BEEF IMPORTS FROM AREAS WITH FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

In August, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) proposed to amend the regulations to allow the importation of fresh beef from northern Argentina, a region located north of Patagonia South and Patagonia North B. In late December, NFU President Roger Johnson submitted comments to the proposed rule, urging the U.S. not to resume importation of meat from northern Argentina and Uruguay because of ongoing concerns with Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), a highly contagious disease that could devastate family farmers and ranchers in the U.S.



"Livestock health is critical to production agriculture and our nation's ability to provide a safe food supply," said Johnson in the comments. "Achieving the necessary means to ensure livestock health is a priority for NFU."

APHIS acknowledges that northern

Argentina is not considered to be free of FMD. In May of 2000, the World Organization for Animal Health designated Argentina as FMD-free without vaccination. Just two months later, FMD outbreaks reappeared, culminating in the epidemic outbreak in 2001. Since then, Argentina has made multiple unsuccessful attempts to eradicate and control FMD and concealed the outbreaks from the international community for months.



The economic impacts of an FMD outbreak in the U.S. could be devastating. FMD is highly contagious and has the potential to spread very quickly. Given the rapidity with which FMD spreads, an outbreak would create devastating economic consequences for farmers and ranchers. Recent research has estimated outbreaks in FMD-free countries and zones cause losses of greater than \$1.5 billion per year.

U.S. farmers and ranchers are known throughout the world for the high standards to which their livestock herds are raised. Their long-standing disease prevention efforts have thus far been successful, and NFU does not support a provision that could expose them to such a huge risk.

NATIONAL CONVENTION SET FOR MARCH 14-17

Registration is now open for the National Farmers Union 113th Anniversary Convention, which will be held March 14-17, 2015, in Wichita, Kansas. The convention is the cornerstone event for the Farmers Union family. During the convention, attendees are afforded

the opportunity to hear from a wide variety of speakers, tour the local area, attend educational sessions, have their voices heard on official NFU policy, as well as spend time with their fellow Farmers Union members. The convention convenes Saturday, March 14, with the opening banquet – a highlight of the agenda. President Roger Johnson will give his annual State of the Farmers Union address, reviewing the year's accomplishments, obstacles and focus for the coming year. On Sunday evening attendees can purchase a ticket to support the NFU Foundation and NFU's education programs and attend the Education Gala.

More information and registration is on NFU's website at www.NFU.org/convention. You can also contact Melisa Augusto, NFU director of membership and marketing, with any questions. You are encouraged to register and reserve your hotel room early.



The Washington Corner can also be found at www.nfu.org/corner.