

January 28, 2008

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the undersigned organizations and businesses, representing U.S. farmers, ranchers, food processors, agri-businesses and exporters, wish to express our appreciation to members of the House and Senate for the recent approval of the Peru Trade Promotion Agreement. Our economy, workers and farmers will profit from the agreement. This is equally true of the Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement (TPA), and we urge you to take up the Colombia TPA as soon as possible.

The Colombia and Peru trade agreements are nearly identical and have been skillfully negotiated on behalf of U.S. agriculture. Many U.S. food and agricultural products will become eligible for duty-free treatment immediately upon entry into force of the agreement, and the remainder will receive duty-free treatment upon full implementation. Under the Colombia TPA, U.S. beef, cotton, wheat, soybeans, soybean meal, apples, pears, peaches, cherries and many processed food products will receive immediate duty-free treatment, while corn, poultry, fruits and vegetables and dairy products will benefit immediately from improved market access.

The TPA will correct an inequity that exists between U.S. exporters of agricultural and industrial products and Colombian exporters. While 90 percent of Colombian products currently shipped to the United States are free from tariffs, most U.S. exports face significant tariffs or other restrictions in Colombia. This inequity is due in part to the Andean Trade Preference and Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA), which Congress recently extended by an overwhelming majority. Passage of the Colombia TPA is the only way to resolve this inequity and "level the playing field" in our trade relations with Colombia.

The agreement will strengthen our economic ties with and promote greater political stability in Colombia, benefiting our two nations and the hemisphere. Colombia's government is on the right track on labor and other issues, and its people support this trade agreement. They clearly recognize that any trade deal must provide economic benefits to the United States or it cannot gain political approval. Colombians also understand that by providing more open access to their market, they are solidifying our bilateral relationship and their own prosperity.

As a strong ally, Colombia deserves our continued economic and political backing. This can be demonstrated by Congress taking up and passing the Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement implementing legislation as soon as possible in 2008.

Sincerely,

American Cotton Shippers Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Feed Industry Association

American Frozen Food Institute
American Meat Institute
American Seed Trade Association
American Soybean Association
Blue Diamond Growers
California Table Grape Commission
Commodity Markets Council
Corn Refiners Association
Distilled Spirits Council of the United States
Grocery Manufacturers Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Chicken Council
National Confectioners Association
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Cottonseed Products Association
National Grain and Feed Association
National Grange
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
National Turkey Federation
North American Equipment Dealers Association
North American Millers' Association
Northwest Horticultural Council
Pet Food Institute
Produce Marketing Association
Sweetener Users Association
The North American Export Grain Association
U.S. Apple Association
U.S. Wheat Associates
United Egg Association
United Egg Producers
United States Hide, Skin and Leather Association
USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council
USA Poultry & Egg Export Council
USA Rice Federation
Western Growers Association