

April 18, 2016

Dear Member of Congress,

We write to you as development, faith-based and sustainable agriculture organizations concerned about the potential impacts of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) on food security and sustainable development in the member countries and around the world. Many of us work closely with partners in developing countries and have witnessed the devastating impacts of previous free trade agreements on small-scale farmers and their communities. We urge you to reject the TPP.

The TPP would expand many of the worst features of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Under NAFTA, more than two million Mexican farmers were driven from their lands after a dramatic increase in dumped corn imports from the United States. NAFTA has led to increasing corporate concentration in agricultural production, leaving farmers with fewer options of where to buy and sell goods and a decline in the number of family farmers in Mexico, the U.S. and Canada. The TPP would replicate those problems, opening fragile markets for basic grains and other foods even further.

The TPP also requires countries to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants 1991 (UPOV-91), an international treaty protecting plant breeders. UPOV-91 requires 20-25 years of intellectual property protection to be provided for all plant varieties. It stops farmers and breeders from saving and exchanging protected seeds, common practices of farmers in many countries around the world. Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico and New Zealand have not yet ratified UPOV-91, but will be required to do so under TPP—as will any country who may join the TPP in the future.

In general, the TPP would lock member countries into a path that has proven to be unsustainable and unsupportable. Rather than encouraging knowledge sharing and local control, the TPP would enshrine the UPOV-91 system. Rather than adopting a precautionary approach to hazardous chemicals and novel genetic modification, TPP's provisions on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards would judge food, plant and chemical safety based on scientific studies provided by industry and not subject to scientific peer review. Provisions in the Annex on Agricultural Biotechnology in TPP's chapter on National Treatment and Market Access would impose new rules on how countries assess Low Level Presence of GMOs and contaminants in imports—all designed to facilitate trade. In contrast to the binding rules on these issues, hortatory language in the chapter on Development acknowledges the importance of encouraging inclusive growth, but only commits to establish a committee to discuss it.

We share the concerns raised by hundreds of civil society organizations and legal experts over TPP's Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism, which allows corporations to sue governments over measures that limit their expected profits. Existing ISDS cases over mining and natural resource rules have already undermined small-scale farmers' access to healthy soils and water. Extending this unnecessary provision in TPP would increase the possibility of similar suits, as well as others involving innovative local foods system reforms even more directly.

Given all of these problems, it is alarming that the provisions on Accession to the TPP would direct other countries to sign on to this flawed agreement without changes. Rather than allowing new prospective members to negotiate provisions that respond to their particular situations—much less correcting the various problems in TPP—developing country governments would be expected to simply accede to the existing agreement.

Our organizations support fair trade, sustainable development and democratic practice. The TPP fails to support any of those principles. We urge you to reject the TPP.

Sincerely,

National and Regional Organizations

ActionAid USA

Agricultural Missions, Inc. (AMI)

American Jewish World Service

Center for Food Safety

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

Dean's Beans

Equal Exchange

Fair World Project

Food & Water Watch

Grassroots International

GMO Free USA

Heal the Planet

Holy Cross International Justice Office

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

Institute for Responsible Technology

International Development Exchange

LabelGMOs.org

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Medical Mission Sisters Alliance for Justice

Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate-Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office

National Family Farm Coalition

NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

New England Sustainable Agriculture Working Group

Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility

Oxfam America
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Justice and Peace Office
Sisters of the Holy Cross Congregation Justice Committee
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Institute Justice Team
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
WhyHunger

State and Local Organizations

American Federation of Government Employees, Local 3354, St. Louis, Missouri
Berkeley Fellowship of Unitarian Universalists, California
Birchwood Café, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Citizens for Sanity.com, Inc., Florida
Community Alliance for Global Justice, Washington
ConnFACT, Connecticut
Crawford Stewardship Project, Wisconsin
Earth in Brackets, Maine
Faith Action Network, Washington
Farm Life Foundation, Florida
Farms Not Arms, California and Tennessee
GMO Free Florida
Jubilee Oregon
Kaleo Center for Faith, Justice and Social Transformation @ United Theological Seminary, Minnesota
RRBG Farm LLC, Arton Alabama
NaVera Farms, Florida
NH Right To Know GMO, New Hampshire
St. Leo Church, Tacoma, Washington

Social Services Office, Catholic Charities CNM, Diocese of Jefferson City, Missouri

The Second Chance Foundation, New York

Washington Fair Trade Coalition