



## PRESS RELEASE

**For immediate release  
April 27, 2016**

### Press Contact

Ben Lilliston  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)  
(612) 870-3416  
blilliston@iatp.org

Stephanie Porter  
Land Stewardship Project  
(612) 722-6377  
stephaniep@landstewardshipproject.org

### About IATP

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. IATP is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota with an office in Washington D.C.

# Minnesota Farm and Rural Groups Join 150+ Organizations to Ask Congress to Reject TPP, Stand Up for Independent Farmers and Ranchers

**MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL** – The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) has become a divisive issue in the nation's capital, and criticism intensified after 161 food, farm, faith and rural organizations, including **four from Minnesota**, sent a letter to Capitol Hill today, urging lawmakers to reject the trade pact.

"The main beneficiaries of the TPP are the companies that buy, process and ship raw agricultural commodities, not the farmers who face real risks from rising import competition. TPP imports will compete against U.S. farmers who are facing declining farm prices that are projected to stay low for years," the organizations wrote. Minnesota groups Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Land Stewardship Project, Minnesota Farmers Union and Minnesota National Farmers Organization signed the letter.

The White House has promoted the TPP as an export-boon for farmers to generate support for the agreement, but past trade agreements have not always delivered on export promises, the letter noted. For example, the United States' total combined exports of corn, soybeans and wheat have remained steady at about 100 million metric tons for the last 30 years despite a raft of free trade agreements since the mid-1990s.

"Trade deals do not just add new export markets – the flow of trade goes both ways—and the U.S. has committed to allowing significantly greater market access to imports under the TPP," the groups explained. Especially "alarming" is the agreement's complete lack of enforceable provisions against currency manipulation, a substantial cause of America's debilitating \$531 billion trade imbalance.

"Until we address currency multiplication in all trade agreements, trade will not be fair," said Minnesota Farmers Union President Doug Peterson. "Fair trade, not free trade, will help our family farmers and ranchers compete globally."

The TPP poses particular risks for cattle producers and dairy farmers. In 2015, the United States imported nearly 2.3 billion pounds of beef from TPP partners but only exported about 1.2 billion pounds. The TPP will increase beef and cattle imports at

a time when domestic cattle prices are plummeting. Dairy export opportunities were more modest than promised, but the TPP will likely increase imports of milk and whey protein concentrates from global dairy powerhouse New Zealand also at a time of declining farmgate milk prices.

“Low prices are already forcing local dairy processors to pour raw milk from U.S. dairy farms down the drain,” says Steve Suppan, senior policy analyst at IATP. “Under the TPP, dairy processors can import even more cheap, low-nutrient dairy products at the expense of U.S. farmers. The TPP serves the interests of a handful of the largest dairy product manufacturers and exporters, while setting the terms to force most U.S. dairy farmers out of business and further impoverish rural communities.”

The TPP also covers important agricultural policy areas such as investment, procurement, labeling, food safety, animal health and crop disease. The stringent rules and dispute system under the TPP make it easier to successfully challenge and overturn domestic laws, as happened last year to country of origin meat labels.

“This ability for a multi-national corporation to sue local governments unquestionably undermines our democracy and our food and farming system,” said Land Stewardship Project member Sylvia Luetmer. “The TPP would prevent communities from doing what they believe is best for the health of people and of the land, benefiting a few large corporations at the expense of the rest of the population.”

The letter was introduced in Washington, D.C. with a press teleconference with House Agriculture Committee Member Rep. Rick Nolan (MN-8), National Farmers Union President Roger Johnson, Auburn University agricultural economist Professor C. Robert Taylor and an independent rancher and member of the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union.

Read the letter and complete list of signers.