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Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy Statement on notice of NAFTA Renegotiation

The Trump administration's decision to renegotiate NAFTA has long been expected, yet what the administration hopes to accomplish remains a mystery. Last month's leaked draft of U.S. objectives in NAFTA renegotiation showed that Trump was breaking his campaign promise to take a different approach to trade, instead relying on the same failed strategies of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which he railed so loudly against. The contradictory views confusing chain of command within the administration leave more questions than answers about the coherence and seriousness of any negotiating objectives.

In January, we, along with other food and agriculture groups released our principles for what must be included in NAFTA renegotiation. For NAFTA to be acceptable, it must:

1. **Restore local and national sovereignty over farm and food policy:** "All countries should enforce consumers' right to know about what's in their foods. A first step would be to convince Mexico and Canada to withdraw their challenges to Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) for meat and then to negotiate a solution that works for everyone," said IATP's Director of Agriculture, Ben Lilliston.

"They should certainly not import the failed measures in TPP that would limit state and local authority to determine the best food and farm rules for their communities. We need a new starting point for trade and farm policy," said IATP Advisor, Sharon Treat. "This includes rejecting the intellectual property rights provisions proposed in TPP that would limit farmers' ability to save and share seeds and strengthen the power of seed companies and agribusinesses over farmers."

2. **Stop corporate giveaways in trade agreements.** There is broad consensus among food, farm, faith, environmental, labor and other civil society groups that "Investor State Dispute Settlement" (ISDS) should be removed from NAFTA and other trade agreements. Investment disputes should be dealt with under existing national legal systems. "We're also very concerned about new proposals in TPP that speed up rules on approval of agricultural biotechnology products in ways that bypass national efforts to assess their safety, effectiveness and impacts on rural communities," said Steve Suppan, Senior Policy Analyst on Technology and Trade.

3. **Ensure economic viability and resilience in rural communities.** "Farm prices are so low now. Farmers are being told that the solution is to get back on the treadmill of exporting more and more to compensate for low prices," said IATP's Director of Trade & Global Governance, Karen Hansen-Kuhn. "Instead we need a new take on trade and farm policy that ensures fair prices for farmers and consumer and healthier food for all. We won't get to a better food system by doubling down on the mistakes of the past.

It is also imperative to protect the rights of farmworkers to decent wages and working conditions. New rules should be established that generate rural jobs in all three countries and that protect farmworkers' labor and other human rights.

Additionally, negotiations must be transparent, with draft texts made publicly available, and with participation not just limited to the corporate advisors who have been given special clearance, but to all affected sectors, including independent farmers. We will be watching closely to hold the administration accountable to these standards.