

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**November 8, 2023**

**GROUPS FORMALLY REQUEST TO SUPPORT MEXICO'S BAN ON GM CORN IN USMCA TRADE DISPUTE**

*IATP, Rural Coalition and Alianza Nacional de Campesinas support Mexico's authority to protect environment and public health, preserve biodiversity, respect Indigenous communities*

**MINNEAPOLIS**—The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy ([IATP](#)), the [Rural Coalition](#) and the [Alianza Nacional de Campesinas](#) filed a formal request to file written views in support of Mexico's ban on genetically modified (GM) corn to assist the dispute settlement panel established in a trade dispute between the United States and Mexico pursuant to the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

The dispute revolves around Mexico's plans to phase out the importation of GM corn and the use of glyphosate, in alignment with Mexico's goals of enhancing food sovereignty and transitioning toward agroecological production. Some U.S. agribusiness exporters claim these plans violate the terms of the USMCA. The formal U.S. request for a USMCA panel on this issue was submitted on August 17 and centered on two issues: 1) the ban on GM corn, or maize, in the corn people eat (known as the Tortilla Corn Ban); and 2) the instruction to Mexican government agencies to gradually substitute the use of non-GM corn for GM corn in all products for human consumption and for animal feed.

With deep expertise on agricultural trade policy and decades of work on behalf of Indigenous and small-scale farmers in the U.S. and Mexico, the joint submission from IATP, the Rural Coalition and the Alianza Nacional de Campesinas would provide a unique and well-informed perspective to the dispute settlement panel. The groups also have long-standing connections with small-scale and Indigenous farmers in the U.S. and Mexico.

"Our submission is one of many sent by civil society groups in the three countries to challenge the assertions that Mexico's programs to build healthy local foods systems somehow violate their trade commitments," says Karen Hansen-Kuhn, IATP Director of Trade and International Strategies. "We hope the panel will consider this broad range of views in support of Mexico's food sovereignty in deciding this case."

If IATP, the Rural Coalition and the Alianza Nacional de Campesinas are granted the opportunity to submit written views, the submission will address:

- The relationship between the U.S. claims that the Mexican programs violate USMCA rules on Sanitary and Phytosanitary standards, which address food safety and risk assessment, and provisions in the agreement protecting Indigenous legal rights.
- The cultural and historical significance of native corn species in Mexico and the implications of GM corn contamination on farmers' ability to produce biodiverse corn varieties that protect their cultural heritage.
- The alignment of Mexico's measures with its laws and Constitution, which protect Indigenous rights and the right to a clean environment (including protecting maize biodiversity).
- An analysis of the General Exception protecting Indigenous legal rights in USMCA Article 32.5 considering Mexico's laws and Constitution and the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and related Indigenous protections articulated in USMCA's Environment Chapter.
- The lack evidentiary support for the U.S. assertion that Mexico's measures are a "disguised restriction on trade" and will result in economic damage.

"The USMCA includes first-time legal protections for Indigenous peoples that are missing from prior trade agreements entered into by the U.S.," says Sharon Treat, IATP Senior Advisor. "We are hopeful the panel will accept our application to participate in the dispute settlement proceedings, recognizing the importance of the

USMCA’s Indigenous legal protections and the value of listening to the voices of small-scale and Indigenous farmers.”

The dispute settlement panel will next consider whether to invite our organizations to submit a more detailed analysis of these issues, along with submissions from other stakeholders, as part of the ongoing proceedings. The final report is expected to be made public by October 2024.

###

Based in Minneapolis with offices in Washington, D.C., and Berlin, Germany, the 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. To learn more, visit: [www.iatp.org](http://www.iatp.org).