

June 16, 2011

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

The Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation Board of Directors at its recent meeting has directed me to write on its behalf and on behalf of our over 54,000 members to urge you to present the pending Free Trade Agreements with Columbia, Panama, and South Korea to Congress. These trade agreements are not only important to the bottom line of Nebraska's farmers and ranchers, but to the economic health of our rural communities and the overall U.S. economy.

The three agreements in total are expected to increase direct exports from Nebraska alone by \$123.6 million per year. It is also estimated that the increased marketing opportunities for Nebraska's farmers and ranchers will more than add 1,110 jobs to the Nebraska economy. The agreements would lead to considerable export gains in many of Nebraska's major agricultural commodities including beef (over \$70 million), pork (over \$11 million), soybeans (over \$10 million) and corn (over \$7 million).

Agricultural trade is not only critical to farmers and ranchers. It is important for the U.S. economy and the creation of American jobs. Every \$1 billion in agricultural exports supports 9,000 U.S. jobs including those of transportation workers, food processors, packers, longshoremen and even sales and marketing professionals. By passing all three trade agreements, Nearly 22,500 new U.S. jobs could be created.

Passing these trade agreements also means leveling the playing field. Currently, U.S. products going into these countries face exorbitant tariffs just to get into these markets. Yet, while we pay tariffs of up to 160 percent to sell to the Colombia and Panama markets, they receive duty-free access to the U.S. market for their goods. In Korea, tariffs of up to 500 percent are placed on U.S. goods. Passing these trade agreements would immediately eliminate most of these tariffs.

The loss of our current markets within these countries is also a concern. Our market share in Colombia has plummeted from 46 percent to 24 percent in the past several years. Panama has already completed an agreement with Canada which includes beef, potato products and processed foods, while we are left out in the cold. Due to inaction on these agreements, the debate is no longer simply about generating potential export gains but also how to prevent the loss of existing export markets.

Again, we urge you move quickly and present the pending trade deals to Congress. Further delay will only diminish our role as a major trading partner for these three countries and postpone a substantial opportunity for U.S. job creation.

Sincerely,



Keith R. Olsen
President

CC: Nebraska Congressional Delegation and U.S. Trade Ambassador, Ron Kirk