

October 13, 2006

Dear Member of Congress:

The undersigned food and agriculture organizations are writing to urge you to pass permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) status for Vietnam as soon as Congress reconvenes in November.

Vietnam's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) is imminent. In order for the United States to be in compliance with its WTO obligations and receive the full benefit of Vietnam's accession to the WTO, Congress must pass PNTR for Vietnam. We urge the Congress to act expeditiously.

The United States negotiated an outstanding bilateral market access package with Vietnam. Approximately three-fourths of U.S. agricultural exports to Vietnam will have duties reduced to 15% or less. Products benefiting from these lower tariffs include beef, pork, dairy products, grapes, apples and pears, and soybeans. All of these concessions are to be permanent, just as our reciprocal granting of normal trade relations to Vietnam must be permanent.

In addition to the foregoing tariff obligations, Vietnam's entry into the WTO will require the acceptance of important WTO rules and disciplines, including those applying to import licensing, customs valuation, technical standards, and – of special importance to U.S. agriculture – sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures and state trading activities. Finally, the United States will have recourse to WTO dispute settlement mechanisms should Vietnam not live up to any of its obligations, an avenue of recourse we currently do not have, and which we will not secure, if Congress fails to approve PNTR.

The United States is obliged to do very little for Vietnam in return for these concessions. The key action the United States is obliged to take is to provide the same normal trade rights to Vietnam on a permanent basis that we already provide to Vietnam on a temporary basis. This is nothing unique but rather a trade status the United States already provides to all of the 149 other WTO members.

Providing normal trade status for Vietnam through periodic extensions has never been a controversial matter. Congress has consistently authorized maintaining normal trade status for Vietnam by overwhelming majorities. In 2002, the last year in which Congress temporarily extended normal trade relations to Vietnam, there was a strong, bipartisan showing of support, with 338 Members of the House voting in support of Vietnam.

We expect U.S. food and agriculture exports to Vietnam to grow significantly. We urge Congress to act now and pass PNTR for Vietnam so that U.S. food and agriculture is on an equal footing with global suppliers from other WTO member countries.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Meat Institute  
American Potato Trade Alliance  
American Soybean Association  
Bunge North America  
Corn Refiners Association  
Distilled Spirits Council of the United States  
Food Products Association  
Grocery Manufacturers Association  
International Dairy Foods Association  
Louis Dreyfus Corporation  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Black Farmers Association  
National Cattlemen's Beef Association  
National Chicken Council  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Cotton Council  
National Grain and Feed Association  
National Grain Trade Council  
National Milk Producers Federation  
National Oilseed Processors Association  
National Pork Producers Council  
National Potato Council  
National Renderers Association  
National Turkey Federation  
North America Equipment Dealers Association  
North American Export Grain Association  
North American Millers' Association  
Northwest Horticultural Council  
Oregon Potato Commission  
Sunkist Growers  
The Fertilizer Institute  
U.S. Apple Association  
U.S. Dairy Export Council  
U.S. Dry Pea and Lentil Council  
U.S. Meat Export Federation  
U.S. Wheat Associates, Inc.  
United States Dry Bean Council  
USA Poultry and Egg Export Council  
Washington State Potato Commission