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WTO Accession Agreement For Vietnam Finalized; NPPC To Urge Congress To Pass PNTR For Asian Nation

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 31, 2006 – The National Pork Producers Council today applauded the Bush administration for finalizing an agreement that defines the terms of Vietnam’s entry into the World Trade Organization. NPPC, along with other agriculture groups, now will urge Congress to approve Permanent Normal Trade Relations status for the Southeast Asian country so that U.S. agriculture can benefit from Vietnam’s accession to the WTO.

“We support Vietnam’s accession to the WTO, and our producers will work hard to get PNTR passed by the Congress so that the U.S. pork industry can reap the benefits of increased trade with Vietnam.” said NPPC President Joy Philippi, a pork producer from Bruning, Neb. “U.S. pork exports have climbed to unprecedented levels as a result of past trade agreements, so we look forward to a significant increase in U.S. pork exports to Vietnam.”

Under the agreement, tariff rates for about 75 percent of U.S. agricultural exports to Vietnam, including pork, will decline to WTO-bound duty rates of 15 percent or less. Additionally, Vietnam has made numerous improvements to its implementation of WTO rules on sanitary and phytosanitary measures and has agreed to recognize the U.S. inspection system for pork as equivalent to its inspection system. The matter of equivalence is very important to the pork industry because low tariffs don’t mean anything if sanitary and technical barriers are used in place of tariffs to restrict U.S. exports.

To complete its accession bid to the WTO, Vietnam must complete bilateral market access negotiations and the multilateral negotiations on a Working Party Report and Protocol of Accession. Vietnam also is still in the process of enacting legislation that will enable it to apply WTO provisions after its accession.

The agreement was made possible in part because of the effective working relationship between NPPC and the National Pork Board and their shared goal of increasing U.S. pork exports.

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NPPC is one of the nation’s largest livestock commodity organizations. It has producer members in 44 affiliated state associations and provides a unified voice for America’s pork producers on a wide range of industry and public-policy issues. NPPC’s Web site is at www.nppc.org.