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TPP Should Keep Dairy “Off the Table”

Dairy Farmers and Processing Workers throughout Pacific Rim Express Shared Concerns Prior to Lima

Lima, Peru — As international trade negotiators prepare to meet in Lima starting Wednesday for a 10-day summit aimed at pushing the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) towards conclusion, farm and labor organizations throughout the Pacific Rim are demanding that dairy be kept out of the agreement. Whether countries will be forced to open their dairy markets to New Zealand’s monopolistic dairy export industry, thus undercutting local producers, is a major issue yet to be resolved in the ongoing TPP negotiations now entering their seventeenth round.

“It is not in the interest of family-owned and -operated dairies to open greater access to a country with a consolidated entity controlling the dairy sector,” said [Roger Johnson, president of the National Farmers Union \(NFU\)](#). “U.S. trade negotiators should not force other countries in the TPP to dismantle supply management programs, especially as efforts are currently underway to implement a similar system in the United States. Dairy should not be part of any TPP agreement if these inconsistencies are left unresolved.”

“The Teamsters are North America’s dairy union. We support trade that is fair and trade deals that keep and create jobs. That’s why we are concerned about the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations,” said [James P. Hoffa, general president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters](#). “Without a strong Labor Chapter and protections for dairy workers throughout the supply chain, the TPP should not be signed. We join the dairy farmers of North America and Japan and throughout the region, and demand that dairy be taken ‘off the table’ in the TPP talks.”

“With just under 50,000 dairy farmers left in the U.S., they deserve to have sensible policies enacted on a domestic level, not to be crushed by unfair trade deals that threaten their ability to recover their costs of production. It makes no sense for our nation's dairy farmers to compete against dairy farmers in New Zealand and Australia, the lowest-cost

producers in the world,” said [Ben Burkett, a Mississippi farmer and president of the National Family Farm Coalition](#). “We are also anxious about the expanded imports of milk substitutes, such as Milk Protein Concentrate, which could be substituted in many products without being labeled clearly for customers.”

[Teamsters Canada](#), which represents more than 6,000 dairy industry workers in Calgary, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, has also explicitly called for TPP negotiators to “keep dairy ‘off the table’ in the trade talks convening in Lima.” In a written statement, they “respectfully remind the head of the Canadian delegation, Kirsten Hillman, and Trade Minister Ed Fast that Canada has joined several trade pacts, including NAFTA, and maintained supply management. Like the dairy farmers and processors with whom we work, Teamsters Canada expects the government will defend the stability of the Canadian dairy industry, which supports over 200,000 good, middle-class Canadian jobs.”

In March, the [Dairy Farmers of Canada](#) published an article about the Singapore Round of TPP negotiations stating that they “will continue to closely monitor trade talks and oppose any proposals that could negatively affect the Canadian dairy supply management system, which is crucial to maintaining the prosperity and viability of the Canadian dairy industry.”

“If Japan participates in the TPP and abolishes import tariffs... dairy farmers will be forced to give up farming, dairy workers will lose their jobs and their communities will be ruined,” said [Fujio Yomada, chairperson of Hokkaido Farmer’s Union](#), which represents 27,000 farmers in the agriculture-intensive northernmost portion of Japan.

“The TPP negotiations endanger food sovereignty, coexistence of diversified agriculture, food safety and stable food supplies. We can never accept it,” he said, citing government estimates that the TPP’s could displace as many as 56,000 Japanese dairy jobs.

In March, [Akira Banzai, president of JA ZENCHU](#), the central union of agricultural cooperatives in Japan, issued a press statement saying, “I, together with the farmers around the nation, strongly protest and denounce the Prime Minister’s decision [to enter the TPP negotiations]” and that Japan’s dairy and other sensitive agricultural sectors must be excluded from tariff eliminations.

Draft minutes from a February 20th meeting of the Mexican dairy industry organization [CANILEC](#) also reiterate its position is that finished milk products should not be included in the TPP negotiations, and that they are still studying the question of raw materials.

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