

Failure Of Fast Track Evidence Of Inadequacies In Current Trade Agreements

WASHINGTON, D.C. — National Farmers Union (NFU), a general farm organization representing 300,000 family farmers and ranchers nationwide said the failure to bring fast track negotiating authority to a vote in Congress this year is evidence of the inadequacy of current trade agreements.

"We are very pleased to see the free trade train pull into the station for the rest of this year," said NFU President Leland Swenson, upon learning that the legislation authorizing trade representatives to

negotiate trade deals without the possibility of congressional amendment is most likely dead this year. "Congress clearly recognized that too many problems exist with current free trade agreements, and that these problems must be fixed before authorizing the administration to expand them."

According to NFU, under recent trade agreements farmers and ranchers have become increasingly concerned about the inadequacy of border inspections, a lack of reporting of agricultural trade activi-

ties, and the impact of currency fluctuations on the marketability of their own products. Farmers Union members also point to the potential for manipulation of commodity markets, such as this spring's precipitous drop in soybean futures upon the announcement by a major processor that it would begin importing Brazilian soybeans.

U.S. producers feel food safety and inspection of processing facilities in foreign countries are inadequate. Farmers Union members also are concerned with the

impact of import surges on commodity prices, regional transportation and storage systems and access to processing facilities. In addition, producers say the dispute resolution system falls short of expectations and that they strongly favor country of origin labeling on all food products.

"Agricultural trade is important and we strongly desire to see continued growth and expansion, but there must be fair trading rules," Swenson said. "Producers have adhered to increasingly higher environmental and quality standards

and have supported higher standards for the food processing sector to provide consumers with the high quality, wholesome food."

Swenson added that NFU has supported standards for worker safety, fair wages, and other crucial consumer protections and that the organization is not willing for free trade agreements to undercut standards which serve the best interests of individuals. He also noted that the failure of fast track authority to pass during this session of Congress does not stop the Clinton administration from moving forward with additional trade negotiations. He also hopes that discussions between the United States and Canada and the United States and Mexico will take place to address a number of the concerns raised during the debate over fast track legislation.

"President Clinton realized there were legitimate concerns and began to address some of them through administrative action, including steps to improve U.S./Canadian exchange of information on livestock and voluntary U.S.-produced meat labeling," said Swenson. "While these measures are positive first steps, they must serve as the foundation upon which to build even stronger, fairer rules of trade. We hope that the administration and Congress will now work together to take a fresh look at how we create fair trade agreements."

Beekeepers Add Education Program

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — The Capitol Area Beekeepers Association's popular short course in basic beekeeping is being expanded to a two-day format to allow the addition of an apiary education program.

This 11th annual course will be held May 9 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Dauphin County Agriculture and Natural Resources Center in Dauphin, and on May 16 from 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Milton Hershey Farm Conference Center and Apiary, Hershey. This course is sponsored by the Association and the Penn State Cooperative Extension.

Course faculty includes master beekeeper Jim Aucker, cooperative extension apiculturist Maryann Frazier, chief state apiary in-

spector Jim Steinhauer, Penn State graduate in entomology Jennifer Finley, and members of the association.

Hiving a package of bees and the opportunity to get hands-on experience in an operating apiary will be two of several highlights of the course. Topics will include bee-ology; diseases, parasites, and pests; equipment; hive management; harvesting and marketing; byproducts of the hive; colony inspection; and colony observation. Table displays of beekeeping equipment books and periodicals, and other beekeeping topics will be offered. A random drawing will award a hived package of bees and hive to a lucky beginning beekeeper. Refreshment breaks will feature homemade goods made

with honey.

The course is planned, organized, and presented by the members of the association to strengthen the association's mission of fostering and preserving the science and art of beekeeping. This course will assist new beekeepers in getting started as well as provide the latest information to current beekeepers. Many experienced beekeepers will be in attendance to assist in responding to questions and concerns. A certificate of completion will be

awarded to each new beekeeper completing the course.

Preregistration is requested before May 6. Course fee is \$25 per person. Participants are encouraged to bring a bee veil and protective suit if possible. A brown bag lunch is suggested, although restaurants are located nearby.

For a registration form, location maps, and lodging information, contact Maria Contino, Secretary, Capitol Area Beekeepers, 6087 Rockland Dr., Harrisburg, PA 17112, (717) 657-3932.

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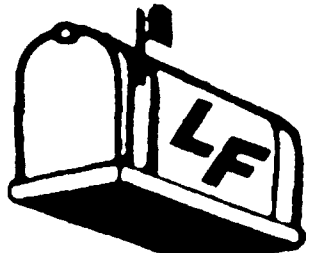
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