

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Free Trade Pacts Mean Expanded International Access for U.S. Potato Growers

Washington, DC (October 13, 2011)—The following statement is from Randy Hardy, Vice President of Trade Affairs for the National Potato Council (NPC) and owner of Hardy Farms, a potato growing operation in Oakley, Idaho, on Congressional approval of United States free trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia and Panama:

“With a \$50 million increase in annual U.S. potato exports at stake, the National Potato Council is pleased that these vital free trade agreements have cleared this important hurdle. The South Korea, Colombia and Panama markets represent some of the best opportunities for American-grown potato exports, and we call upon the President to quickly ratify the agreements and finally enact them into law. As a committed supporter of liberalized and fair trade with all foreign markets, NPC strongly supports these new trade pacts as a way to help the U.S. potato industry compete on a level playing field with our global competitors and immediately get more rural workers back on the job.”

In 2009, U.S. potato growers produced more than 43 billion pounds of potatoes at a farm-gate value of \$3.5 billion. An average of 15 percent of the crop is exported yearly. Exports for 2010 were valued at \$1.25 billion, a six percent increase over 2009.

SOUTH KOREA BY THE NUMBERS

- Korea is the fourth largest and fastest-growing market for U.S. frozen potatoes.
- In 2010, U.S. frozen French fry exports to Korea grew by 31 percent in both volume and value over the previous year.
- U.S. frozen French fry exports to Korea grew from \$35 million in 2009 to \$46 million in 2010.
- Passage of the Korea FTA will result in the immediate elimination of the 18 percent tariff on U.S. frozen potatoes.
- The EU’s Free Trade Agreement with Korea eliminated tariffs on frozen French fries and took effect on July 1, 2011.
- Conservative estimates show that U.S. potato exports to Korea could increase by \$35 million annually following successful passage of the Korea FTA.

COLOMBIA BY THE NUMBERS

- Passage of the Colombia FTA will result in the immediate elimination of the 20 percent tariffs on U.S. frozen and dehydrated potatoes, and potato chips.
- A similar trade agreement between Canada and Colombia took effect on August 15, 2011.
- U.S. frozen French fry exports to Colombia grew from \$1.8 million in 2009 to \$2.3 million in 2010, an increase of 32 percent.
- The Colombian market for U.S. frozen potatoes is estimated to be \$5-10 million per year following passage of the Colombia FTA.

PANAMA BY THE NUMBERS

- In 2010, U.S. frozen French fry exports to Panama grew by 77 percent in value and 93 percent in volume from 2009.
- U.S. frozen French fry exports to Panama grew from \$2.9 million in 2009 to \$5.2 million in 2010.
- Passage of the Panama FTA will result in the phased five-year elimination of the existing 20 percent tariff on US frozen potato exports.
- Conservative estimates show that passage of the Panama FTA will result in a \$10 million market for U.S. frozen potato exports.
- Growth in U.S. frozen potato exports to Panama is fueled largely by quick service restaurants (QSRs).

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The National Potato Council is the advocate for the economic well-being of U.S. potato growers on federal legislative, regulatory, environmental, and trade issues. Potato growers, along with the U.S. potato industry as whole, directly benefit from involvement in the National Potato Council. NPC supports the U.S. potato industry by monitoring issues affecting the strength and viability of the potato industry, influencing regulators and legislators on issues crucial to the industry's long term success, ensuring fair market access for potatoes and potato products, and bringing the unique issues and interests of diverse growing regions in the U.S. together on a national level. The National Potato Council is a voluntary organization supported by quota assessments from state organizations, allied industry memberships and sponsorships, and directly by potato growers through membership dues.