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Five Nations Beef Alliance urges high quality, comprehensive TPP outcomes

We, the cattlemen of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States, working in a co-ordinated partnership known as the Five Nations Beef Alliance (FNBA)¹, continue our unified and strong support for a high quality, comprehensive outcome for agricultural liberalization via a Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement.

The FNBA comprises the Cattle Council of Australia, Canadian Cattlemen's Association, Confederacion Nacional de Organizaciones Ganaderas, Beef + Lamb New Zealand, and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. Together we represent producers from countries that account for one-third of global beef production and approximately half of global beef exports.

We are concerned, however, with the current state of play of the TPP negotiations, and the possibility of a non-comprehensive outcome in respect of agricultural liberalization. In this regard, there must be no sector or product exclusions. If any one TPP member country is allowed to claim exceptions for perceived sensitive products then other TPP partners will inevitably demand the right to do the same. Exclusions would limit opportunities in each of the member countries to reach new markets, grow businesses and generate economic growth and jobs.

Furthermore, allowing exceptions for sensitive products sets a dangerous precedent for other countries (with similar product sensitivities) who may seek to join the TPP Agreement at a future date. Moreover, a weak TPP agreement, with such exclusions, could have significant negative implications on other Free Trade Agreement negotiations underway.

It is also our firm view that for ease of use and flexibility for all current and future TPP members, all agricultural market access schedules within the TPP deal should be plurilateral. This would ensure that all countries receive the same tariff phase out period and reduction in tariffs for each tariff line, as well as ensuring future TPP aspirant countries have a clear understanding of the level of commitment required in agricultural market access. It is our understanding that this issue remains problematic with some countries holding firm to a preference for bilateral market access offers and thus potential differential outcomes.

Risk based scientific decision making, regulatory convergence and equivalence are also critically important. International science-based standards must be incorporated in the text (for example conformity with OIE and Codex guidelines). Non-science based Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) measures must not impede trade.

Finally, Rules of Origin established by a TPP agreement must facilitate trade in all red meat products from live animals through to prepared red meat products.

In conclusion, any TPP agreement must include comprehensive agricultural liberalization. It will ultimately be difficult for the Five Nations Beef Alliance to support a TPP agreement that does not include comprehensive liberalization in the agricultural sector by all participating countries.

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¹ The fifth FNBA member from Mexico has not yet endorsed this TPP Position Statement.