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Bipartisan Senate Coalition Says Trade Talks Should Boost U.S. Ranchers and Farmers

Conrad, Baucus: World Trade Pact Must Be Balanced, Fair

Washington, DC – In a letter signed by a bipartisan majority of senators, Senators Kent Conrad and Max Baucus called on the White House to reject World Trade Organization (WTO) talks that would undermine domestic farm support while failing to open new global markets. “We cannot support a deal that directly reduces new farm income through steep cuts in farm programs in return for minimal market access gains whose effect on farm gate receipts would be speculative at best,” the senators wrote. The letter was signed by 58 senators.

Last summer, the U.S. rejected an unbalanced approach. Some recent press reports suggest, however, that U.S. negotiators may now consider even greater cuts in U.S. farm programs while dropping their demands for new export opportunities for U.S. agriculture.

“This nation’s trade policy has us on the road to retreat. American trade negotiators appear willing to trade away the future of American farm and ranch families,” Senator Conrad said. **“We are sending a clear message to the White House: a majority of U.S. senators is opposed to their plan to trade away American farm families.”**

“I’ve said many times that no deal at Doha is better than a bad deal for America’s ranchers and farmers,” said Baucus. **“The Senate is speaking forcefully today against any conclusion that fails to promote the survival and success of U.S. ranches and farms through the export of our agricultural products.”**

At issue are WTO talks that appear headed for an agreement that would force deep cuts in U.S. farm programs, but would not significantly open new export markets for U.S. farmers and ranchers. Without greater market access to compensate for the loss of government support, the deal would hurt America’s agricultural producers and rural communities.

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