

Leave market access provisions alone in new TPP11, agri-food exporters warn

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Ottawa - The Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance (CAFTA) is warning the federal government not to make changes to the market access provisions that were established in the original Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement during TPP 11 talks taking place this week in Vietnam.

“We are disturbed by news reports that the Canadian government is looking to make significant changes to a deal that’s already been negotiated,” said Brian Innes, President of CAFTA. “We have a small window of opportunity. Demanding changes to the market access provisions could jeopardize the entire agreement.”

CAFTA has been an avid supporter of the original 12-member TPP agreement – based on the need for Canada to diversify its trade relationships with dynamic Asian markets, many of which are members of the TPP. CAFTA has representatives on the ground in DaNang Vietnam this week given the importance of the agreement to agri-food exporters.

Innes added that the original agreement took years of hard bargaining to achieve a fine balance among competing interests of all participating countries. The agreement by 12 countries is the basis for how it can be implemented with 11 countries. Even small changes to the market access section could throw off that balance, resulting in a collapsed deal.

This situation would leave the thousands of farmers, ranchers and food processors CAFTA represents without access to the lucrative markets represented by the TPP 11. Japan is especially important, accounting for \$4 billion in agri-food exports in 2016 and is the third-largest market for Canadian agriculture and agri-food products.

“Ninety per cent of Canadian farmers and about a million jobs in the agri-food sector depend on world markets,” Innes said. “With our competitors already ahead of us in Japan, we can’t afford to lose this agreement.”

Australia, Mexico and Chile already have free trade agreements with Japan and the Japan-EU agreement will slash 85 per cent of Japanese tariffs on European agriculture and food products.

“Staying the course on market access provisions is the best way to ensure we land an agreement that will bring the most economic benefits for our sector and for Canada,” he said.

CAFTA is the voice of Canadian agriculture and agri-food exporters. Representing the 90% of farmers who depend on trade and ranchers, producers, processors and agri-food exporters who want to grow the economy through better access to international markets. This includes the beef, pork, meat, grains, cereals, pulses, soybeans, canola as well as the sugar, malt, and processed food industries. The sectors CAFTA represents support over a million jobs in urban and rural communities across Canada.

For further information, please contact:

Claire Citeau
Executive Director
613-560-0500
cciteau@cafta.org