

CANADA-KOREA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT CRITICAL FOR CANADIANS

OTTAWA (ON) February 14, 2014 – The Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance (CAFTA) joined 30 companies and organizations calling on the Government of Canada, and the provinces, to accelerate efforts and complete negotiations for a Canada-Korea Free Trade Agreement earlier this week.

Agriculture is one of several sectors with a vested interest in restoring a level playing field for Canadian firms in the South Korean market. We also share an eagerness to see Canada negotiate and conclude a free trade agreement (FTA) with Korea to secure access to that market, and through it, the larger Asia-Pacific region.

“A Canada-Korea FTA will stimulate jobs and growth in the food processing sector which is the largest manufacturing employer in Canada,” said CAFTA President Lisa Skierka. “Our industry directly employs close to 500,000 Canadians and represents 80 per cent of Canada’s agriculture and agri-food exports. The benefits of a Canada-Korea FTA will be felt by Canadians employed in our sector.”

Korea imports over 70 per cent of its food and, until a few years ago, Canada was a preferred supplier for many agri-food products.

Quick Facts on Canada–Korea Agri-Food Trade History *Prior* to 2012:

- Canadian grain exports were \$479 million a year. Today they are less than \$100 million.
- Canadian pork exports were \$233 million a year. In 2013 they were \$66 million.
- Canadian beef exports were \$96 million a year. Today, they are \$10 million.

Canada has lost significant market share in recent years while Korea has concluded FTAs with Canada’s key competitors, namely the European Union in 2011 and the United States in 2012, and most recently Australia. South Korea is currently negotiating FTAs with its other key trading partners in New Zealand and Mexico.

“Canada’s farmers and the people who work in the agri-food industry have already paid a price for the delay in the conclusion of the negotiations with South Korea,” said Skierka. “It’s time to move this process forward.”

Swift conclusion of a Canada–Korea FTA will renew prosperity in the agriculture and agri-food sector, 90 per cent of which are dependent on, or supported by, export markets.

CAFTA is a coalition of national and regional organizations that support a more open and fair international trading environment for agriculture and agri-food. CAFTA’s members include producer organizations, processors, marketers and exporters from the major trade dependent sectors in Canada. Together, these sectors produce almost 80 per cent of Canada’s agriculture and agri-food exports, conduct about \$40 billion in business annually and directly employ close to 500,000 Canadians.

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