

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Contact: Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance: Judith McGeary, 254-697-2661,  
[Judith@FarmAndRanchFreedom.org](mailto:Judith@FarmAndRanchFreedom.org)

### **Texas Farm and Ranch Groups Join 160+ Organizations to Ask Congress to Reject TPP, Stand Up for Independent Farmers and Ranchers**

**Austin, Texas** (April 27, 2016) – The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) has become a divisive issue in the nation’s capital, and criticism intensified after 161 food, farm, faith and rural organizations including 9 from Texas sent a letter to Capitol Hill today, urging lawmakers to reject the trade pact.

“The main beneficiaries of the TPP are the companies that buy, process and ship raw agricultural commodities, not the farmers who face real risks from rising import competition. TPP imports will compete against U.S. farmers who are facing declining farm prices that are projected to stay low for years,” the organizations wrote. Texas groups signing the letter included: Bandera Grassland, CASA del Llano, Council for Healthy Food Systems, Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance, Grassfed Livestock Alliance, International Texas Longhorn Association, Sustainable Food Center, Texas Farmers Union and the Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association.

The White House has promoted the TPP as an export-boon for farmers to generate support for the agreement, but past trade agreements have not always delivered on export promises, the letter noted. For example, the United States’ total combined exports of corn, soybeans and wheat have remained steady at about 100 million metric tons for the last 30 years despite a raft of free trade agreements since the mid-1990s.

“Trade deals do not just add new export markets – the flow of trade goes both ways – and the U.S. has committed to allowing significantly greater market access to imports under the TPP,” the groups explained. Especially “alarming” to the organizations is the agreement’s complete lack of enforceable provisions against currency manipulation, a substantial cause of America’s debilitating \$531 billion trade imbalance.

The TPP poses particular risks for cattle producers. In 2015, the United States imported nearly 2.3 billion pounds of beef from TPP partners but only exported about 1.2 billion pounds. The TPP will increase beef and cattle imports at a time when domestic cattle prices are plummeting.

"Consumers seek out third party verified birth-to-harvest farmers that direct market products because transparency is of paramount importance in food safety," explained Debbie Davis of the Grassfed Livestock Alliance. "TPP will allow masking of foreign production practices, preventing American consumers from making educated choices about the products they

buy. TPP will favor foreign companies that raise food with lower standards, undercutting locally raised food and American farmers."

The TPP also covers important agricultural policy areas such as investment, procurement, labeling, food safety, animal health and crop disease. The stringent rules and dispute system under the TPP make it easier to successfully challenge and overturn domestic laws, as happened last year to country of origin meat labels.

"The TPP places the interests of international corporations ahead of American farmers and consumers," said Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance Executive Director Judith McGeary. "Our laws should be decided by our elected officials, not unelected international bureaucrats who have already said that we don't even have the right to know where our food comes from."

The letter and complete list of signers can be read here: <http://fwwat.ch/1qQ3Ux0>