

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 27, 2012

The Honorable Ron Kirk
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20508

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Ambassador Kirk and Secretary Vilsack:

As you know, the trade agreement with Colombia holds significant benefits for American agriculture. Specifically, the agreement could result in substantial new export sales for U.S. pork producers. When fully implemented, estimates show the agreement will generate an additional \$68.9 million in annual pork exports, create nearly 1,000 direct pork industry jobs and increase live U.S. hog prices by \$1.15. While these figures are significant, many pork producers have expressed concerns that the benefits may not be fully realized if the Colombians continue their ongoing restrictions on pork trade.

Currently, the U.S. producers ship mostly frozen pork to Colombia. As the market is expected to increase when the trade agreement is fully implemented, U.S. pork exports would naturally include sales of chilled pork. However, Colombia requires all chilled pork imports be tested for trichinae, which adds an unnecessary and burdensome cost when there is negligible risk for exposure.

U.S. pork production uses a number of bio-security measures, which include hygienic requirements for feed and feed storage and rodent control. According to the International Commission on Trichinellosis, the odds of finding trichinae in the U.S. commercial food supply are one in 300 million. Furthermore, under the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's Trichinae Export Program more than 38 million tests were conducted for trichinae in pigs without a single positive case. In fact, Colombia does not test for trichinae in domestically produced pork. Therefore, it appears Colombia's requirements may not be science-based.

In order to maximize the immediate benefits for pork under the trade agreement, I urge you to discuss this issue with the Colombians and work with their government to ensure the removal of the testing requirement so it does not impair the market access granted to U.S. pork producers under the agreement.

I appreciate your efforts to date and look forward to working with you to further address this important matter.

Sincerely,



ADRIAN SMITH
Member of Congress