



CAFTA Facts

Office of the United States Trade Representative
CAFTA Policy Brief – February 2005

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Support From Environmental Groups Environmentalists in Central America Write to Support CAFTA Environmental Provisions

January 31, 2005

The Honorable Robert B. Zoellick
United States Trade Representative
Executive Office of the President
600 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Ambassador Zoellick:

We are writing to express our support for the environmental provisions set forth in the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). The CAFTA Environment Chapter is a positive indicator of the focus on regional environmental concerns and strengthening of local implementation that can improve Central America's environmental movement. Together and in our respective countries, we are firm believers that sustainable economic development can lead to improved environmental practices and that the framework established within this agreement is a positive influence on environmental protection efforts in Central America.

CAFTA and the Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA) promote environment policies that can be mutually supportive. Together, these Agreements ensure that the region will not only maintain current environmental laws but also strive to improve these measures without sacrificing environmental protection laws to free trade rules. This effort is critical to further empower local entities to action in order to protect habitat, sustain our natural resources, and address the needs of increasing pressure on local and migratory species.

We are aware that some local and international organizations have expressed concern that CAFTA will have a negative impact on the region because it places unfair requirements for environmental implementation on each country. However, the proper enforcement of national laws is precisely what will help mitigate environmental degradation in the region and the reason why we endorse the environmental provisions set forth in this agreement.

Our organizations continue to work with government representatives to ensure that environmental concerns are highlighted throughout the Central American community and to ensure proper implementation of environmental measures by the appropriate authorities. To continue this work and examine the success or failure of CAFTA there must be proper participatory implementation of the environmental provisions within CAFTA. In this context, the public submission process and the establishment of a secretariat for submissions through the Central America FTA are important tools that enable NGOs like ours to participate in the monitoring process and further engage counterparts when necessary. These types of consultative mechanisms are necessary and must continue to be a part of trade efforts in each of our countries.

We will continue to support the Environment Chapter of the Central America Free Trade Agreement and other instruments that can strengthen and facilitate government and NGO efforts that advance animal and

environmental conservation. For this reason, we the undersigned urge our legislative bodies to follow through with ratification and support the provisions of CAFTA's Environment Chapter and Environmental Cooperation Agreement.

Signed by:

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