

U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

The U.S.-Colombia TPA requires high levels of intellectual property protection, consistent with U.S. standards of protection, and will support the growth of trade in valuable digital and other intellectual property-based products. Although Colombia has made great strides modernizing intellectual property laws, shortcomings remain in its laws, and effective enforcement continues to be a challenge. Implementation of the commitments made under the U.S.-Colombia TPA will reinforce national efforts to strengthen intellectual property law enforcement. Like our other free trade agreements, this Agreement takes into account significant legal and technological developments that have taken place since WTO, TRIPS and NAFTA were implemented. It establishes clear precedents in most key areas of intellectual property protection for future trade liberalization negotiations. The Industry Trade Advisory Committee on Intellectual Property Rights' report to the U.S. Trade Representative on the U.S.-Colombia TPA notes, "...the fact that Colombia found it in its own interest to significantly increase its levels of IPR protection beyond that required by TRIPS is a testament to the principle that high levels of protection benefit all innovators, including indigenous creators, in the same manner as they do in developed countries."

Trademarks

U.S. trademark holders will see much stronger protections in Colombia. The U.S.-Colombia TPA expands the definition of trademark to include protection for non-visually perceptible marks such as sounds and scents. It also recognizes the principles of priority and exclusivity in the relationship between trademarks and geographical indications.

Colombia committed to improving its trademark application system by implementing an electronic application filing system and developing a public on-line database of trademark applications and registrations. This will save U.S. companies time and money and make it easier for them to take the necessary steps to protect their trademarks. Improved transparency provisions will give interested parties the opportunity to oppose and cancel registrations and to know the reason for decisions with respect to registration. Additionally, Colombia's commitment to accede to the Protocol Relating to the Madrid Agreement Concerning the Registration of Marks will make it easier for U.S.

Key Intellectual Property Facts

Protection for copyrighted works

- Copyright-based industries are among the fastest growing and most productive of any sector of the U.S. economy. They employ new workers in higher-paying jobs at over three times the rate of the rest of the economy create new revenue at over two times that rate; and contribute close to \$90 billion to the U.S. economy each year through foreign sales and exports. The industries' principal barrier to trade is the lack of effective protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights.

Stronger protections for patents & trade secrets

- Innovation has historically been a driving force in U.S. industry. Competitive advantage based on innovation needs to be protected and defended. U.S. companies need access to legal tools in all markets across the globe.

Tough penalties for piracy and counterfeiting

- The high level of enforcement required by the U.S.-Colombia TPA will benefit industry and increase the standard throughout the region.

trademark owners to file for trademark protection in Colombia.

Copyright

The International Intellectual Property Alliance estimates that U.S. companies lost approximately \$98.5 million in Colombia in 2005 due to piracy of motion pictures, records and music, business application software, videogames, and books.¹ The U.S.-Colombia TPA includes many important provisions for stemming these losses and otherwise benefiting U.S. copyright industries. One of these important provisions is the prohibition on the circumvention of technological protection measures (TPMs) that authors, performers, and producers of phonograms use in the exercise of their rights to prohibit or restrict unauthorized acts (e.g., unauthorized access to a work or illegal copying). Defined and limited exceptions to the circumvention of TPMs will provide further certainty to right holders by bolstering Colombia's laws in this area and improving the enforcement against circumvention techniques for copyrighted material. This prohibition on circumvention of TPMs is also an effective tool for addressing the challenges presented in the digital environment.

The protection of encrypted program-carrying satellite signals directly addresses some of the concerns of U.S. broadcasters and content providers. Colombia has also committed to mandating that government agencies use computer software only as authorized by the right holder and to actively regulate the acquisition and management of the software, a high priority for the U.S. software industry. In addition to the needs addressed by the industry-specific challenges, a 20-year increase in the term of protection for copyrighted works (a forty percent increase) will allow a broad range of right holders to increase the value of their intellectual property.

Patent and Data Protection

Colombia committed to provide pharmaceutical and agricultural chemical data protection, as well as restore patent rights for the term of protection lost due to unreasonable delays in granting the patent or market approval. Data protection is significant to the pharmaceutical industry because it ensures that pharmaceutical innovators can recoup the large investment of both time and money in clinical research and testing to prove the safety and efficacy of pharmaceutical products. Without protection, fewer innovative companies would invest the hundreds of millions of dollars needed to bring life-saving and life-enhancing pharmaceuticals to market. Furthermore, without data protection, innovators would face unfair competition from companies seeking a free ride on their time-consuming and expensive research investment. Term/rights restoration is significant to ensure that an inventor's patent term is not unreasonably diminished as a result of application backlogs or insufficient examination resources.

Data Protection

Colombia has obligated itself to data protection for pharmaceuticals for five years. Pharmaceutical companies can introduce new medicines in the Colombian market confident that their product will have both patent and data protections.

Improved Transparency and Reduced Corruption

As in other recent free trade agreements, the U.S.-Colombia TPA contains an obligation to publicize information on efforts to provide effective enforcement of intellectual property rights. Final judicial decisions or administrative rulings of general applicability pertaining to the enforcement of intellectual property rights must be in writing and must state any relevant findings of fact and the reasoning or the legal basis on which the decisions or rulings are based.

Enforcement

The U.S.-Colombia TPA includes measures that should facilitate enforcement of the enhanced intellectual property protections, thereby improving the enforcement environment in Colombia. The agreement establishes a framework for determining damages and establishes a system of statutory or "pre-established" damages, offering the right-holder the option to elect between statutory damages and the often-difficult task of proving actual damages. The agreement also mandates that courts must have the authority to order the infringing party to identify accomplices, suppliers and others involved in the infringement at the risk of sanctions for failure to do so. As Colombia's economy grows, its government will have additional resources, including personnel and expertise to wage a more effective campaign against copyright piracy, trademark counterfeiting and other intellectual property violations.
