

*Letter from Former Secretaries of Agriculture  
To Members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate*

Dear Member of Congress:

As former secretaries of agriculture, we understand the importance of negotiating trade deals that minimize the costs and maximize the benefits to U.S. farmers, ranchers, and food and agriculture organizations. We support the Free Trade Agreement with Central America and the Dominican Republic (CAFTA-DR) because the benefits are very significant and the costs are minimal. We urge you to pass CAFTA-DR quickly and without amendment.

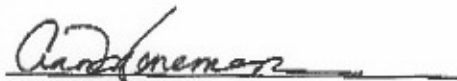
A vote for CAFTA-DR is a vote for fairness and for reciprocal market access. Under CAFTA-DR all of our food and farm products will receive duty free treatment when the agreement is fully implemented.

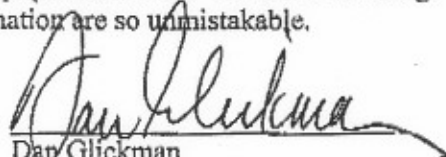
A vote against CAFTA-DR is a vote for one-way trade. Virtually all of what we import from the six CAFTA countries now enters the U.S. duty free as a result of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) and the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI). Yet, our food and agricultural exports to these six nations are restricted significantly because of high tariffs. As a result of the current one-way trade deal, we are running an agricultural trade deficit with these six countries.


In addition, a formal trade agreement with the United States will help ensure the economic stability and growth that the region needs to avoid a return to the civil wars, insurgencies, and dictatorships of the recent past. As economic freedom and democracy take deeper root, incomes will increase and demand for our food and agriculture products will expand.

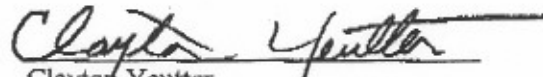
Failure to approve CAFTA-DR will have a devastating effect on U.S. efforts to negotiate trade agreements on behalf of U.S. agriculture. The World Trade Organization Doha Development Round would be dealt a serious blow. Other countries would be less willing to negotiate with the United States knowing that CAFTA-DR, a trade agreement so clearly beneficial to U.S. interests, could be rejected by the U.S. Congress.

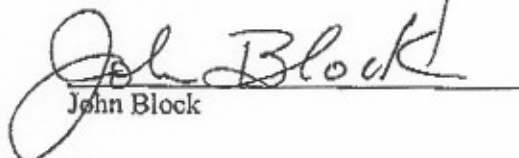
The future of American agriculture continues to lay in expanding opportunities for our exports in the global marketplace, where 96 percent of the world's population lives. We must not forego these opportunities, especially when the benefits to our nation are so unmistakable.

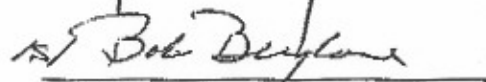
  
Ann M. Veneman

  
Dan Glickman

  
Mike Espy

  
Clayton Yeutter

  
John Block

  
Bob Bergland