



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Finance

SENATOR CHUCK GRASSLEY, OF IOWA - CHAIRMAN

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For Immediate Release

Tuesday, June 22, 2004

Grassley Expresses Concerns to USTR on WTO Food Aid Proposals

WASHINGTON – Sen. Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Committee on Finance, today wrote to the U.S. Trade Representative to express his concerns regarding proposals in the current World Trade Organization (WTO) agricultural negotiations that could threaten U.S. food aid programs, including programs that provide high protein soy-fortified foods to impoverished victims of HIV/AIDS.

The text of Grassley's letter follows.

June 22, 2004

The Honorable Robert B. Zoellick
U.S. Trade Representative
600 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20508

Dear Ambassador Zoellick:

I am writing with regard to the subject of food aid in the ongoing Doha Development Agenda negotiations of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

U.S. food aid programs, including programs under Title II of P.L. 480, play an instrumental role in reducing hunger and improving health throughout the world. As an example, U.S. food aid programs are being used to provide impoverished victims of HIV/AIDS in developing countries with soy-fortified foods, thus combating the potentially debilitating effects of HIV/AIDS. Given that protein is already lacking in the diets of many people in the developing world, and given that victims of HIV/AIDS are in particular often unable to afford foods high in protein, such U.S. food aid is indeed life-sustaining for those receiving it. Moreover, such programs better enable U.S. agricultural producers, including Iowa soybean farmers, to contribute to the alleviation of suffering around the world, including suffering caused by HIV/AIDS.

Accordingly, I am concerned by proposals at the WTO by some of our negotiating partners that would threaten U.S. food aid programs and the individual projects that result from them, such as current projects that provide high protein soy-fortified foods to HIV/AIDS victims. Some of these proposals, if adopted, would limit the flexibility of WTO members in deciding how to give such aid. Flexibility is required when addressing an issue as complex as world hunger, so I urge that U.S. negotiators work to ensure that needed flexibility in providing food aid is not lost as a result of current WTO talks. While I believe that nothing should be off the table during the ongoing WTO negotiations, the ability of the United States to provide legitimate humanitarian assistance should not be threatened.

I also note that I am wary of proposals that would require that food aid be provided through cash assistance only. After all, while cash donations might be sent, they would not necessarily be converted into food for those most in need.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Grassley
Chairman