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Montana Grain Growers Welcome U.S.-Colombia FTA Implementation

Great Falls – The Montana Grain Growers Association (MGGA) welcomes today’s implementation of the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The U.S.-Colombia FTA is vital to the wheat industry’s efforts to rebuild market share in one of the largest markets for U.S. wheat in South America.

Implementation of the FTA will immediately eliminate all tariffs on U.S. wheat imports into Colombia. The agreement creates a level playing field for U.S. wheat farmers as export competitors Canada and Argentina already enjoy duty-free access to the market.

Montana’s senior Senator Max Baucus, a strong proponent of free trade, led the effort through the Senate as Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee.

Gordon Stoner, grain producer in Outlook, MT, and MGGA Past President said, “We thank Senator Baucus for his tireless efforts in promoting Montana agriculture worldwide and especially for his leadership on the Colombia FTA. Montana exports nearly 80 percent of our wheat production and every overseas market is vital to our growers.”

Colombia is currently the second largest destination for U.S. wheat in South America. In marketing year 2010/11, Colombia imported about 800,000 metric tons of U.S. wheat from five of the six U.S. wheat classes. The implementation of the FTA will help the United States regain the market share lost this year after the Canada-Colombia FTA went into effect on Aug. 15, 2011.

“The Colombia FTA is very important for Montana wheat growers, and I can’t thank Senator Baucus enough for his work on this issue. Wheat is a staple of Montana’s economy, bringing more than a billion dollars into the state each year. Exporting more Montana wheat will support farmers and jobs right here in our state,” said MGGA Executive Vice President Lola Raska.

The Montana Grain Growers Association is the primary trade organization representing Montana wheat and barley producers who, by combining their strengths, voices, and ideas, are working to ensure a better future for themselves, their industry and the consumer.

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