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McCormick Testifies before Senate Finance Committee

Great Falls – Montana Grain Growers Association President Ryan McCormick testified before the United States Senate Committee on Finance on the significance to Montana and the wheat industry nationwide of a pending trade agreement between the United States and the European Union.

McCormick said, in part:

“In a typical year, U.S. wheat farmers export about 50 percent of the product we produce; in Montana we export nearly 80 percent of our production. To say that trade is important to Montana producers would be an understatement - trade is just as important to Montana producers as tractors, fuel and seed. Not only do we depend on trade, the world depends on us, as a reliable supplier of high-quality wheat.”

In urging support for a swift negotiation and ratification of a comprehensive, high-standard Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), McCormick listed four key points.

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1. The TTIP must eliminate all duties on U.S. wheat imports. A recently completed free trade agreement between the EU and Canada increases the urgency to finalize a US trade agreement so that we can stay competitive.
2. U.S. wheat producers strongly support science-based, least-trade restrictive regulations. The US and the EU are viewed as global scientific leaders, and actions on sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures have a broad impact, making this a critical area of discussion.
3. The European Union must agree to a more predictable biotechnology approval process. The EU biotechnology approval process is slow and often influenced more by politics than science, creating uncertainty, deterring new investment in wheat research and putting future trade at risk.
4. We urge Congress to renew trade promotion authority (TPA). TPA renewal is essential to completion and ratification of a comprehensive TTIP agreement, as well as completing the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and securing an eventual WTO agreement.

In concluding his testimony, McCormick said, “U.S. wheat farmers welcome the progress that has taken place so far and encourage Congress and the Administration to work together to negotiate a comprehensive, high standard agreement.”

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