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U.S. Congress Defends Naming Rights for U.S. Cheeses

55 members of the House Dairy Farmer Caucus (DFC) wrote today to U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk to urge a robust defense of America's dairy industry against efforts by the European Union to claw back for its countries' sole use several generic cheese names such as parmesan, provolone and feta, as well as other names of importance to the U.S. dairy industry.

This bipartisan effort was led by Caucus Co-Chairs Joe Courtney from Connecticut; Devin Nunes from California; Tim Walz from Minnesota and Peter Welch from Vermont. The DFC applauded the dedicated efforts that the Trade Representative's office has invested in this area, and stressed the importance of ensuring that as the United States exports more American-made cheeses, America must retain the right to use these common names that are so recognizable to consumers around the world.

The DFC's Co-Chairs have led this effort to defend valuable cheese markets because they recognize that helping the industry retain existing markets, and find new markets for U.S. milk and dairy products, is a critical tool in helping dairy producers and manufacturers.

The Caucus letter focused on efforts by USTR to address the impact that a free trade agreement between the European Union and South Korea could have on U.S. exports. The EU-Korea FTA's geographical indication provisions could "set [a] precedent that could, and likely would, be readily replicated in EU negotiated FTAs in a number of other foreign markets of importance to the U.S. dairy industry." This makes resolution of the issue important not just for U.S. cheese exports to Korea, but also for U.S. export



prospects in other key markets such as China, Canada, many areas of Latin America, and several countries in Southeast Asia.

“NMPF appreciates the dedication of the Congressional Dairy Farmer Caucus to issues that make a positive difference in producers’ milk checks. Many producers are still struggling to recover from the historically dire cost-price squeeze of last year. While work is underway to greatly improve upon the safety net that producers rely on, the Caucus efforts to help farmers at this stage are very much welcomed,” remarked Jerry Kozak, President and CEO of the National Milk Producers Federation.

The United States exports a small but swiftly growing amount of its total cheese production, averaging \$463 million over the past three years. Last year, 20 cents out of every one dollar’s return that U.S. dairy farmers received from the export market was attributable to overseas cheese sales. Every pound of cheese exported translates into 10 pounds of milk finding a home outside the U.S. market, making cheese exports important to the bottom line of America’s dairy producers.

“The EU has been seeking to make our job of expanding U.S. cheese exports much more difficult by using its geographical indication system to inappropriately designate EU cheese makers as having the exclusive rights to market some of the world’s most commonly produced cheeses under the most recognized names,” said Tom Suber, president of U.S. Dairy Export Council. “This attack on the U.S.’s ability to use common cheese names is aimed at trying to impede USDEC’s efforts to capitalize on growing demand for cheese around the world by helping U.S. suppliers be the ones to make those sales. We thank USTR for their strong commitment to ensuring that the EU does not stand in the way of efforts by our industry to help contribute to the President’s goal of doubling U.S. exports over the next few years.”

The U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC) is a non-profit, independent membership organization that represents the global trade interests of U.S. dairy producers, proprietary processors and cooperatives, ingredient suppliers and export traders. Its mission is to enhance U.S. global competitiveness and assist the U.S. industry to increase its global dairy ingredient sales and exports of U.S. dairy products. USDEC accomplishes this through programs in market development that build global demand for U.S. dairy products, resolve market access barriers and advance industry trade policy goals. USDEC is supported by staff across the United States and overseas in Mexico, South America, Asia, Middle East and Europe.

The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF), based in Arlington, Va., develops and carries out policies that advance the well-being of U.S. dairy producers and the cooperatives they collectively own. The members of NMPF’s 31 cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the voice of nearly 40,000 dairy producers on Capitol Hill and with government agencies. For more on NMPF’s activities, visit www.nmpf.org.