

Remarks by Ambassador Ron Kirk

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"Thank you all for having me here today, and thanks especially to Secretary Tom Vilsack for hosting this event.

"Around 10,000 years ago, the earliest farmers settled down. They stopped being nomads, and stayed in one place to tend to newly cultivated crops. They built permanent houses and communities. And successful farmers were able to barter their crops for their neighbors' goods and services. They no longer had to produce everything they needed – they could trade for what they couldn't produce themselves.

"Those agricultural communities grew and prospered. Neighbor to neighbor exchanges grew into city to city trade. Long-distance commerce was born. Suddenly, people were able to purchase all kinds of goods they couldn't find or make locally.

"It was a major breakthrough in world history. But today, international trade is commonplace. Almost anywhere in the world, you can walk into a store and purchase something not just from a nearby town, but from another country – household items, textiles, even food products.

"In communities around the world, families rely on food from American ranches and farms thousands of miles away. Busy Mexican mothers make tortillas from American corn. Japanese children munch on American oranges.

"And here in America, our supermarket shelves are stocked with wholesome, varied foods year-round, because we are able to import those foods from growers around the world.

"The global flow of agricultural goods – from harvesting nations to hungry families – is a valuable slice of international trade. Last calendar year, the United States exported more than \$100 billion worth of agricultural products, supporting a \$30 billion agricultural trade surplus.

"Now, like almost every other kind of trade, agricultural exports have suffered during the global economic downturn. But this year, American agricultural exports are expected to begin to grow again. USTR is committed to supporting that growth.

"Here's why: in his State of the Union Address, the President set a goal to support two million new American jobs by doubling American exports in the next five years. And to achieve that goal, the United States must work to increase every kind of export – from goods to services to home-grown agricultural products. Because this country can't afford to leave any jobs on the table.

"To that end, President Obama has called upon key federal agencies to participate in a National Export Initiative. Through that Initiative, the Office of the United States Trade Representative is teaming up with the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Commerce, the Small Business Administration, the Export-Import Bank, and other federal agencies. We are leveraging all our resources to help more American farmers, ranchers, businessmen, and workers to succeed through trade.

"The National Export Initiative is an unprecedented whole-of-government approach to export-promotion and export growth. Over the next three months, every agency involved has been asked to develop a concrete plan to leverage its resources to deliver more export-sector jobs and opportunities.

"So USTR is thinking strategically about how our office can help more Americans do business in more places. And that includes American ranchers and farmers.

"To put it simply, our office is working across the board to help Americans sell more "Made in America" goods and services and more "Raised in America" crops

and animal products in more places around that world. We are making that possible both by seizing new export opportunities and defending existing American trade rights.

"USTR is doing critical market opening and market expanding work – not only by seeking out new agreements, but also by working to ensure that Americans can take full advantage of our existing agreements.

"This year, American farmers and ranchers have new access to markets around the globe, because we were able to negotiate an end to long-standing trade disputes over beef and other agricultural products. And American pork producers can continue to sell their products around the world because we fought aggressively to keep global markets open to American pork in the aftermath of the H1N1 influenza outbreak, which was shown to have no connection to food safety.

"And we are continuing to press our trading partners to address barriers that impede the sale of U.S. agricultural products in many overseas markets.

"American agricultural exporters face a vast array of non-tariff measures that can be onerous trade barriers. Those non-tariff measures – including non-science-based import rules and overly burdensome product approval and labeling requirements – are often rooted in less than full implementation of existing trade rules.

"So USTR has stepped up its enforcement efforts on behalf of agricultural exporters.

"This spring, our office will release a new report identifying unjustified sanitary and phytosanitary barriers to trade and technical standards that keep our farmers, ranchers, and other exporters from receiving the full benefits of trade.

"We are also continuing to working closely with China and Russia to address non-science-based rules and standards that are preventing American producers from taking full advantage of those markets.

"We are moving forward with a World Trade Organization dispute settlement case against the European Union ban on U.S. poultry. American poultry exporters have been shut out of the EU market for far too long, and we are working hard to make sure they regain access to that market.

"At the same time, USTR is pursuing new trade opportunities for American businesses, farmers, and ranchers in some of the fastest-growing 21st century markets – with single trade partners in bilateral agreements, with economically significant regions through multiparty talks, and with all our WTO partners, as in the Doha round.

"USTR is seeking to resolve outstanding issues on the Colombian, Korean, and Panama Free Trade Agreements in an effort to move those forward at the appropriate time. Because we know these are already important markets for American farmers and ranchers. In 2008, the United States sold \$430 million worth of corn, soybean meal, wheat, rice, and other agricultural products to Panama alone. That same year, Korea was the United States' fifth largest market for agricultural exports, and Colombia was the largest single market in Central and South America for American farm exports. The American Farm Bureau Federation estimates that U.S. farm exports to Korea, Colombia, and Panama will increase annually by almost \$3 billion after full implementation of these FTAs, with gains spread across a wide range of U.S. agricultural products.

"USTR is also taking the first steps toward a new Trans-Pacific Partnership that will expand U.S. trade in the Pacific under a high-standard, 21st century trade agreement that will ensure American farmers and ranchers have access to the burgeoning markets of the Asia-Pacific for decades to come.

"And USTR remains committed to a balanced and ambitious Doha Round outcome that provides a meaningful market access package that lifts the economic prospects of the poorest countries even as it supports U.S. new economic opportunities for American farmers, ranchers, manufacturers, and service providers.

"The success of the Doha Round will depend on every nation engaging and contributing – in particular, emerging markets such as China, Brazil, and India.

In addition to the multilateral negotiating efforts in Geneva, the United States is seeking sustained bilateral engagement between key developed and developing countries in order to provide the market access necessary to achieve a successful outcome in agriculture, as well as in non-agricultural market access and services.

"Even as USTR works to secure additional market access opportunities, we are thinking hard about how to make those opportunities accessible to more kinds of American businesses. In particular, USTR is reaching out to small- and medium-sized businesses to shape trade policy that works better for smaller American enterprises – and that includes small- and medium-sized American ranches, farms, and farm businesses. Because virtually every American farm or ranch is a small- or medium-sized business. And when smaller agricultural enterprises seek to take advantage of international markets, they face many of the same hurdles as small manufacturers or services providers – from pure market access issues to regulatory complications. So we are seeking to make trade policy that helps to eliminate or mitigate those difficulties.

"Already this year we have held a major conference on small- and medium-sized business issues and designated a new Assistant United States Trade Representative for Small Business to ensure that our trade agreements make it possible for American ranches, farms, and businesses of all sizes to succeed in markets around the world.

"These efforts are increasing agricultural export opportunities abroad and supporting agricultural growth here at home. Over the coming decades, that growth will be more important than ever.

"Over the next fifty years, it is estimated that the world's food needs will be greater than the cumulative food needs of every person throughout human history. To meet this demand for food it is imperative that we use our land, water and other resources wisely and efficiently. And it is equally important that we continue to embrace innovation and adopt new technologies that boost agricultural productivity.

"Some of the most difficult trade issues we face are regulatory barriers that interfere with trade in the products of new production technologies such as plant biotechnology, cloning and nanotechnology. So at USTR we are working hard to develop an effective dialogue with our counterparts in other countries to develop policies that support trade in products that are the result of new technologies and innovation. Because if we are going to meet the world's food needs over the next fifty years, we have to make sure that every ounce of what is grown on a farm or raised on a ranch can be transported, marketed, and sold efficiently around the world.

"With smart trade policy, we can make that happen.

"Thank you all. I look forward to working with you."