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## **Michigan Corn Growers Applaud Passage of Free Trade Agreements**

LANSING, MI. – The Michigan Corn Growers Association (MCGA) today applauded Congressional leadership for approving the pending free trade agreements with Colombia, Korea and Panama. Last week, the White House transmitted the three agreements to Congress.

“The free trade agreements with Colombia, Korea and Panama will provide great opportunities for Michigan’s corn farmers and everyone involved in our diverse agricultural industry,” said Ed Breitmeyer, MCGA Chairman, Corn Marketing Program of Michigan (CMPM) board member, U.S. Grains Council representative and corn farmer from Buckley. “The United States is the largest corn producer in the world and exports of corn and corn products are essential to the industry’s livelihood. Passage of these agreements will allow our industry to continue to grow and remain competitive internationally.”

South Korea is the United States' third-largest corn market and a key target for distillers grains, a co-product of ethanol production. Colombia traditionally has been one of the United States’ top export markets, but is currently importing corn from competitors because of an import-duty preference. Panama is one of the fastest-growing economies in Latin America but U.S. corn exports there have dropped 20 percent from their 2008 peak.

As a result of the agreements, farmers will see security in current export markets, increased exports of distillers grains and a significant increase in the demand for corn and corn co-products. These agreements will provide important opportunities for U.S. agriculture by immediately eliminating import duties on the vast majority of commodities, such as corn, other coarse grains and co-products such as distillers grains.

Not only are the agreements important for the corn industry, the signing of the agreements are also crucial to the livestock industry. Working with the livestock industry is vital to the corn industry as livestock has been the number one user of corn.

“These agreements will help enhance the market value of hogs. In fact, it has been projected that the market value will increase by more than \$11 per head because of these trade agreements,” said Sam Hines, Executive Vice President of the Michigan Pork Producers Association. “As we look at the pork industry, the international markets and exports are of vital importance. The number one consumed meat around the world is pork, and access to those markets is invaluable. In the early 90s, we imported pork into the United States and now nearly one-third of the pork we produce is shipped overseas to other markets. Now that is a success story.”

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Statistics show passage of the three free trade agreements could create 250,000 American jobs and add an additional \$13 billion annually in exports. In total, the agreements are expected to increase direct exports from Michigan by \$44.6 million per year, with nearly \$1.5 million coming from corn exports alone. It is estimated that the increased marketing opportunities for Michigan's farmers and ranchers will add more than 400 jobs to the Michigan economy.

"Prior to Congress' passage of the agreements, our nation's farmers watched as other countries received access to markets ahead of the United States," Breitmeyer said. "We need to keep and create jobs in America. The free trade agreements will help us achieve that."

Headquartered in Lansing, the MCGA is a grassroots-membership association that has represented the state's corn growers' political interests since the 1970s. The MCGA works cooperatively with the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan (CMPM) a legislatively-established program that utilizes one-cent per bushel of Michigan corn sold and invests in research, education, new uses and market development. Michigan's corn industry adds more than one billion dollars to the state's economy annually and in 2010, Michigan's corn farmers harvested a record setting crop of more than 315 million bushels. For more information, visit the website of the MCGA and the CMPM at [www.micorn.org](http://www.micorn.org).

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