

ASA Speaks Against Restrictive Trade Practices

At the Council on Foreign Relations roundtable on "Current Negotiations on Agricultural Biotechnology," in New York City, ASA Chairman Dwain Ford said it is imperative that we not go back to a time decades ago when politicians and government restricted trade based on populist opinions.

"Efforts to stigmatize and restrict trade in agricultural biotechnology crops that have been approved by regulators and determined to be even safer than conventional crops gives rise to the question of whether agricultural innovators will be allowed to improve the food products they export to consumers around the world," Ford said.

According to Ford, a readily available example of this type of unwarranted government restriction is the European Union's (EU) adoption in mid July of traceability and labeling regulations for biotech food and feed products. These regulations will require that all food products containing more than 0.9 percent biotech ingredients carry a label, even though the biotech ingredients have been approved by EU regulatory

authorities and determined to be safe for food, feed, and the environment. Additionally, all food products containing biotech ingredients must be elaborately traced from farm to fork with records kept for five years, a costly and trade-limiting requirement not being imposed on foods that don't contain biotech ingredients.

"By bowing to populist pressure, the European Union is making it possible for anti-ag biotech activists to drive biotech products off the shelves, and will ultimately lead to activist pressure for over-regulation of other product advancements," Ford said. "Despite clear and wide-ranging scientific proof that biotech crops are even safer and more environmentally friendly than conventional crops, the EU has taken action that will deny farmers in the U.S. and elsewhere, who adopt new technologies, access to markets in Europe. To make matters worse, the EU is attempting to 'export' its restrictive approach to agricultural innovation to the rest of the world."

Ford was joined at the roundtable by CEOs from several corporations, top government officials, and leaders from non-governmental organizations.

Soybean Growers and ASA Are Moving Biodiesel Forward

Soybean farmers in the United States produced more than 2.7 billion bushels of soybeans in 2002, with soybean ending stocks at 135 million bushels last year. As a soybean producer, you have the opportunity to put more of these soybeans to work for the good of the U.S. economy and environment, and help increase the price of the crop you grow. How? Simply make the decision to support efforts and activities that help increase the use of biodiesel (1.5 gallons of biodiesel = 1 bushel of soybeans).

The efforts of the American Soybean Association (ASA), along with its supporters and members, have helped to move biodiesel legislation forward in Washington. As this is being written, Congress is expected to address ASA-backed biodiesel tax incentives in September that were approved in an Energy Bill in late July by the U.S. Senate. This puts ASA one step closer toward its goal of enacting stronger biodiesel incentives this year.

The success of ASA's biodiesel policy work in Washington, D.C., is due to the vital assistance of supporters and members through their dollars and their strong voices. The current progress on biodiesel legislation is the result of several years of focused and persistent work by ASA.

ASA's legislative work in Washington is absolutely

critical because checkoff funds cannot legally be used to help pass laws creating a stronger market for the nearly 1.5 billion pounds of surplus soybean oil in the United States. Just 100 million gallons of biodiesel will displace 750 million pounds of soybean oil, resulting in a higher price paid to growers for soybeans.

Soybean growers can support ASA and issues like biodiesel in many different ways. Some provide targeted financial support for the issues and some become on-going members. Many soybean growers have responded to ASA "calls-to-action" for contacting their U.S. senators and representatives on biodiesel and other important issues. Grassroots groups from the state soybean associations have lobbied in Washington, D.C. on many key issues. Volunteer ASA leaders take time from their family and farming to testify on Capitol Hill.

Biodiesel is one of many issues that ASA is involved in on behalf of all soybean producers. You can make your voice heard and invest in your future as a soybean farmer by choosing to support the efforts of the American Soybean Association.

If you are now saying to yourself, "Yes, I want to invest in my future as a soybean farmer by contributing to ASA's biodiesel efforts," call ASA at 1-800-688-7692, and know that you are helping move your industry in a more profitable direction.

New Soymeal Export Terminal Will Benefit Soybean Growers

Time is money, and for Omaha, Nebraska-based Ag Processing Inc, a new export terminal at the Port of Grays Harbor represents an opportunity to cut by half the number of days it now takes soybean products shipped from the U.S. Gulf to reach Pacific Rim customers.

“AGP is the largest soybean crushing cooperative in the world, and the fourth largest crushing company in the U.S.,” said AGP Director of International Trade Glen Heitritter. “A real advantage of Grays Harbor for AGP and its members is its location.”

Located in Aberdeen, Washington, AGP’s custom-built Terminal No. 2 at Grays Harbor is the closest, most direct route from AGP’s processing facilities in the central

part of the United States to its customer base in the Pacific Rim. AGP utilizes other port facilities in the Pacific Northwest, in Duluth, Minnesota and in the U.S. Gulf.

“It’s all about bringing value to our customers in order to increase exports from the United States,” Heitritter said. “Value includes a competitive and efficient transportation system.”

Delivery times from the U.S. Gulf versus the West Coast are substantial. The transit time from the U.S. Gulf to a typical destination in the Asia market is roughly 40 to 42 days. When shipping out of the Pacific Northwest (PNW), that time is reduced by half to about 20 days. And because of its proximity to the open ocean, Grays Harbor further reduces transit time compared to other PNW ports like Seattle-Tacoma and the Columbia River.

AGP’s Midwest processing plants are served by the two largest railroads in the United States, the Burlington Northern & Santa Fe and the Union Pacific. These railroads move the cars from AGP’s facilities to an interchange with the Puget Sound & Pacific Railroad that brings the cars the last 40 miles to the port.

“There are many advantages to the Gray’s Harbor facility,” said Terry Voss, AGP Senior Vice President of Transportation. “The port includes a new loop track

that’s 8,000 feet long so trains can move continuously through the unloading facility without any switching.”

“AGP is owned by local cooperatives, who in turn are owned by the producers, and they have hundreds of millions of dollars invested in Ag Processing.” Voss said. “The Port of Grays Harbor is just an extension of that, which will enhance the investment they have and keep us continually competitive in the export markets.”

Voss said that AGP ensures product quality control through its network of cooperative members. AGP has even created a fleet of railcars just for transporting identity preserved (IP) products.

“We have identified, marked and kept a fleet of railcars separate from everything else,” Voss said. “These cars have been washed, cleaned and sealed, and they are used strictly for identity

preserved shipments. The big benefit is that this protects the integrity of AGP’s product from the origin to the destination.”

To facilitate IP loading, Terminal 2 was designed to be washed down, cleaned out, and air-dried at a minimum of cost. From the preliminary stages of design, AGP made it clear that the handling of IP products was of the utmost importance and was an essential part of their marketing program to provide their growers with the ability to market identity preserved products to customers in the Pacific Rim.

AGP’s Heitritter said, “The true benefit of Grays Harbor, not only to AGP but to our cooperative members and the producers, is that we now have a direct link or a gateway in which we can move our products from the Midwest directly to our customers in the Pacific Rim countries.”

You are invited to listen to comments from AGP and Grays Harbor representatives, visit one of AGP’s Midwest soybean processing facilities and take a virtual tour of Terminal 2 at Grays Harbor. Access the RealPlayer media presentation, and more photographs of Terminal 2, at: www.SoyGrowers.com/library/. Also see AGP’s web site: www.agpportofgraysharbor.com.



A bird's eye view of AGP's new Terminal 2 at the Port of Grays Harbor in Aberdeen, Washington. (ASA photo by Bob Callanan)