



Don't Fast Track Fracking and Unsafe Food

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The U.S. government is currently aggressively negotiating two large “free trade” deals with a dozen Pacific Rim countries and the European Union. Although these trade pacts are presented as opportunities to increase exports, the reality is that the small print in these trade negotiations has allowed big business to undermine vital public health, consumer protection and environmental safeguards as so-called “trade barriers.”

Both the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Free Trade Agreement (TAFTA) would increase pressure to frack for shale gas and weaken our food safety system. In order to assure that these deals make it through Congress, the Obama administration has asked Congress to grant it “fast track” trade authority.

What Is Fast Track and Why Does Obama Want It?

Fast track handcuffs Congressional oversight of international trade deals that are negotiated in secret by the White House. Fast track, now called “trade promotion authority,” was invented by President Nixon to present finalized trade pacts to Congress for an up or down vote, but it denies Congress the right to amend or filibuster the deals. The anti-democratic fast track undermines Congressional oversight and prevents Congress from eliminating even the most glaring flaws in the negotiated trade deals. To ensure that America gets the best possible trade agreements that meet the needs of workers, consumers, public health and the environment, Congress must have the legislative ability to address the shortcomings of any deal negotiated by the White House. Congress must reject fast track.

The Obama administration wants fast track authority to negotiate these trade deals with little or no Congressional oversight. The negotiations and agreement texts are largely hidden from the public and even Congress. This allows the negotiators (including former business lobbyists) to cut deals and insert special-interest provisions that favor big business.



TPP and TAFTA Assault on the Public Interest

The TPP is being secretly negotiated by 12 countries including the United States, Canada, Mexico, Chile, Peru, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Japan and Brunei. The TAFTA (officially known as the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) includes the 27 nations of the European Union. Both of these proposed trade agreements threaten U.S. food safety rules, would increase fracking, undermine efforts to develop local food systems, and increase the privatization of water systems.

Food Safety

The negotiations are already trying to undermine food safety rules, impose privatized meat inspection and prevent new protections such as the labeling of foods that contain genetically engineered ingredients. Many of the TPP nations produce farmed seafood that is raised with chemicals and antibiotics that are prohibited in the United States, and already these products are shipped here with minimal U.S. inspection. Around 90 percent of the seafood that Americans eat is imported, and most imported catfish and shrimp comes from TPP countries. A new trade deal will only increase the flood of unsafe imported fish.

Local Foods

Communities across the country are developing demand for local foods through “buy local” programs at schools, hospitals and other institutions. These programs are strengthening local food systems, but the TPP and TAFTA trade partners have already targeted these farm-to-school programs as trade barriers to be eliminated. The new partners want to go after government “buy America” rules, and “buy local” rules are equally vulnerable.



Fracking

The trade deals will put additional pressure on the drive to frack for shale gas in the United States. Japan is the world's largest importer of liquefied natural gas (LNG), amounting to a third of the total global import market. Four of the top 10 LNG importers are in the European Union, accounting for another fifth of world imports. The U.S. oil and gas industry is eager to export fracked LNG and is already building pipelines to LNG export terminals. Exports of natural gas to free trade agreement partners are exempt from rules that ensure that the exports don't harm consumers, communities and the environment. Congress is trying to curb LNG exports, but the drive for these trade deals will only increase the pressure for LNG exports and spur a bigger push to drill and frack in communities across the United States.

Wall Street Protection, Secret Tribunals and Jobs

These aren't the only headaches in these secret trade deals. The proposed trade agreements are also trying to unravel the rules to curb Wall Street speculation on food and consumer protection in the Dodd-Frank financial reforms. Both trade deals also include “investment” rules that allow overseas companies to sue state and local governments if they enact environmental rules that potentially cost polluters money. And the agreements would only increase the pressure to offshore American jobs overseas, often with special tax breaks.

Take Action

To stop these new trade deals, we must defeat fast track in Congress. You can email your Senators and Representatives by going to:

<http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/global/global-trade/tpp-and-tafta-free-trade-with-a-high-price>.

For more information:

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