



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 21, 2012

Contact: Communications Office

(202) 224-4515

## **BAUCUS SEEKS U.S. EXPORT BOOST, RESOLUTION OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ISSUES IN MEETINGS WITH RUSSIAN AGRICULTURE, FOREIGN MINISTERS**

*Finance Chair in Russia to Pursue New Trade Opportunities for U.S. Businesses, Ranchers, Farmers to  
Create U.S. Jobs*

**Washington, DC** – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) met today with Russian Minister of Agriculture Yelena Skrynnik and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to discuss how U.S. agricultural exporters can fully reap the benefits of Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and to express concern over Russia's positions on Syria and Iran. Baucus is in Russia this week pursuing new trade opportunities that can create jobs here at home and provide an economic boost for U.S. ranchers, farmers and businesses, and discussing foreign policy concerns between the United States and Russia. The United States exported \$1.2 billion in agricultural goods to Russia last year, but certain unfair policies that Russia maintains make it difficult for that amount to grow. Russia will make concessions on some of these policies as part of the accession agreement required to join the WTO, which it is expected to do this year.

**"As they join the WTO, Russia has an obligation to play fair and increase access for our agriculture products, like beef," Baucus said. "Resolving trade issues and opening new doors to trade can be a major boost for American businesses, ranchers and farmers and create jobs here at home."**

WTO Members formally invited Russia to join the WTO in December 2011. Under the rules governing the accession process, Russia will become a WTO Member 30 days after it ratifies its accession agreement, which it must do by early July. If by that point Congress has not passed legislation granting Russia permanent normal trade relations (PNTR), the United States will not enjoy the full economic benefits of Russia joining the WTO. The package of concessions Russia agreed to before receiving their official WTO invitation will lower tariffs for a number of U.S. agricultural products and will establish higher quotas for imports of beef, poultry and pork. The process will also bind and phase down Russia's domestic agricultural subsidies and will eliminate Russia's export subsidies altogether. And U.S. agricultural businesses, like other American exporters, will also benefit from the more stable and predictable business environment that will come with Russia's WTO membership and the ability to enforce WTO rules through WTO dispute settlement.

But despite these concessions Russia made in its WTO accession package, there are still barriers that could prevent U.S. exporters from taking advantage of these gains. Russia's sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) policies, which place unnecessary, strict requirements on production processes and facilities that are outside normal industry practices, hurt American poultry, pork and dairy exports. Russia and the U.S. entered bilateral agreements regarding SPS issues in 2006, but implementation of those agreements has been slow. Baucus, along with his fellow trade leaders in Congress, [has insisted](#) on holding Russia to a [high standard](#) through the WTO accession process to guarantee that American ranchers, farmers, workers and businesses benefit.

Meeting with Foreign Minister Lavrov, Baucus pushed for Russia to reevaluate the positions it has taken on Syria and Iran. He asked what steps Russia is willing to take to halt the violence in Syria, given that every effort to date has failed, and discussed Russia's response to Iran's nuclear program. He also addressed humans rights, corruption, and democracy in Russia, and asked what Russia is planning in these areas.

###