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**BAUCUS HAILS DEAL ON COLOMBIA FTA AS VICTORY
FOR U.S. RANCHERS, FARMERS, MANUFACTURERS, URGES QUICK ACTION**

Finance Chairman Led Congressional Fight for Action on FTA to Kick Start \$1 Billion Economic Boost for U.S.

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) today hailed the announcement that the Obama Administration and the Colombian government have agreed to an action plan to allow the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to move forward as a major victory for U.S. ranchers, farmers and manufacturers. Baucus led the fight to push the Administration to send the job-creating agreement to Congress, which is estimated to increase U.S. goods exports by more than \$1 billion annually.

"The Colombia Free Trade Agreement will increase U.S. exports, create good-paying jobs here at home and help cement our leadership in opening global markets," said Baucus. **"Free Trade Agreements like this one have huge potential to help American ranchers, farmers and manufactures grow and create jobs by expanding into foreign markets. Moving forward with the Colombia Free Trade Agreement will reverse the steady loss of market share that U.S. agricultural products and manufactured goods have suffered while this agreement languished. The agreement between the Administration and Colombia on an action plan to build on the progress Colombia has made in strengthening labor rights, reducing violence and punishing violent offenders will allow us to move the Free Trade Agreement forward. The Administration should immediately begin working with Congress on the implementing legislation so the President can submit and Congress can approve the agreement in the coming months."**

Once the U.S.-Colombia FTA is approved and implemented, Colombia's average 30 percent tariff on U.S. food and agricultural products and its effective 14 percent tariff on U.S. manufactured goods will end. And American farmers, ranchers and manufacturers will enjoy the same unrestricted access to the Colombian market that Colombian exporters have enjoyed in the United States. Nearly nine out of ten of those manufacturers with increased access will be small and medium-sized businesses, which are critical to job creation and economic growth in the U.S.

Colombia has recently signed FTAs with countries in Europe, Asia and the Americas, threatening U.S. market share in Colombia. In addition, China has tripled its market share in Colombia and has become Colombia's second-largest trading partner.

In February, Baucus met with Colombian labor leaders in Bogota to discuss how to further improve labor conditions in Colombia and called for a concrete plan to address labor issues so as to move forward with approval of the FTA. Once implemented, the FTA itself would help address many labor concerns. The FTA includes an enforceable obligation to adopt and maintain in law the five fundamental labor rights laid out by the International Labor Organization: freedom of association; the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labor; the effective abolition of child labor and a prohibition on the worst forms of child labor; and the elimination of workforce discrimination. Colombia already has made significant progress in reducing the level of violence against unionists and prosecuting the perpetrators.

Although the full labor action plan has not yet been released, the details that have been made available thus far appear to represent a solid basis on which to build on Colombia's good work and ensure that Colombia takes additional steps to strengthen labor rights, reduce violence and increase prosecutions of those responsible for the violence.

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