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## **NASDA Urges Focus on Expanding Export Markets at Annual Meeting**

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) reiterated the importance of international trade and expanded export markets for U.S. agriculture at the 2017 NASDA Annual Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana today. NASDA members voted to urge the administration to ensure gains agriculture has made under existing trade agreements are preserved. Furthermore, NASDA urged the Administration to place a priority on pursuing new free trade agreements that provide market access and a level playing field for U.S. farmers and ranchers.

Dr. Michael G. Strain, NASDA President and Louisiana Commissioner of Agriculture & Forestry, highlighted the importance of international trade to U.S. agricultural producers.

“As our competitors continue to negotiate trade agreements that give them a leg up in critical markets, it is absolutely vital that the U.S. aggressively pursue new export market opportunities for agriculture,” said Strain. “Just as importantly, we must also ensure we preserve and build upon the gains agriculture has made under existing trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS).”

In addition to emphasizing the importance of NAFTA for agriculture, NASDA highlighted several opportunities to modernize the agreement, including enhancing mechanisms for states and provinces to consult with federal governments, addressing remaining market access challenges for U.S. producers, and updating and improving Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) provisions. NASDA also highlighted the upcoming Tri-National Agricultural Accord hosted by NASDA and the Colorado Department of Agriculture on October 17 to 19 in Denver, Colorado. This annual meeting of the chief state and provincial agricultural officials from the U.S., Canada, and Mexico will focus on the importance of NAFTA for agriculture and opportunities for continued collaboration across North America.

Today’s meeting agenda included a presentation on the opportunities and challenges for agricultural trade by Kent Bacus, Director, International Trade, National Cattlemen’s Beef Association and an update on federal policy development for agriculture’s labor needs by Lynn Jacques, Principal, CJ Lake, LLC.

NASDA Members passed several additional action items and policy amendments during today’s committee meetings.

- Food Regulation
  - Automated Milking Installations (AMI): Urging FDA to include state regulators on AMI task force
  - FDA Dairy Inspections: Urging FDA to streamline duplicative dairy inspections
- Marketing & International Trade
  - 2018 Farm Bill: Supporting a comprehensive and unified Farm Bill
  - Food Insecurity and Nutrition Incentive Program (FINI): Supporting the FINI Program in the Farm Bill
  - Support for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farm to School Grant Program

- Rural Development & Financial Security
  - Land Grant University Designation: Opposing creation of new land grant universities within the states
  - Cooperative Federalism: Emphasizing the importance of federal funding for agriculture and rural America
  - Port Infrastructure Improvements: Prioritize deepening and upgrading of ports in any infrastructure package
  - Invasive Species: Requesting greater federal coordination with the states to address invasive species challenges

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NASDA represents the elected and appointed commissioners, secretaries, and directors of the departments of agriculture in all fifty states and four U.S. territories. NASDA grows and enhances agriculture by forging partnerships and creating consensus to achieve sound policy outcomes between state departments of agriculture, the federal government, and stakeholders. The 2017 NASDA Annual Meeting is one of two annual meetings for NASDA. For more information about this event, please click [here](#).