



A Few Reasons to Choose Fair Trade Over Free Trade

Free trade agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) are global agreements to govern the rules of trade among multiple countries. Unlike the recent global climate agreement which focuses on one topic and is essentially non-binding, free trade agreements cover many topics, some not strictly about trade, including environment, health care, agriculture, intellectual property rights, among others, and are legally binding. Governments, along with their trade advisors and corporate lobbyists, spend years negotiating these agreements. The TPP text, for example, was finalized in fall of 2015 after six years of secret negotiations.

These are clearly massive agreements of great importance to governments and corporations. Yet we've noticed that some people's eyes glaze over when we talk about TPP and TTIP. We agree these topics can sound dry and remote. For that reason, we've compiled a list to clarify who may be personally impacted by these agreements. You do not need to worry about how free trade agreements will affect you unless:

You have a job. (One study showed the TPP would mean a pay cut for 90% of US workers.)¹

You have been affected, directly or indirectly, by climate change. (Our current trade system drives the industrial food system which in turn drives climate change; we cannot break our reliance on industrial food without first breaking our reliance on "free trade.")²

You or a loved one takes generic prescription medication as a less expensive alternative to patented brand name drugs. (TPP will threaten the availability of less expensive, generic medications and give drug companies holding patents more rights.³ This is especially harmful to impoverished communities in the Global South who already struggle for access to medication, a fact that has led Doctors Without Borders to oppose the TPP.)⁴

You prefer to eat food that you know is safe and free of chemical residues. (TPP would require countries to accept food that meets only the lowest safety standards of the collective participants.)⁵

¹ Public Citizen: <http://citizen.typepad.com/eyesontrade/2013/09/the-verdict-is-in-the-trans-pacific-partnership-tpp-a-sweeping-free-trade-deal-under-negotiation-with-11-pacific-rim-coun.html>

² <http://fairworldproject.org/blogs/first-paris-now-organize/>

³ http://www.exposethetpp.org/TPPImpacts_Public-Health.html

⁴ <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/help-us-fix-tpp>

⁵ <http://www.iatp.org/documents/who's-at-the-table-demanding-answers-on-agriculture-in-the-trans-pacific-partnership>

You drink water and don't want it contaminated through increased fracking. (TPP would limit the authority of governments to restrict permits to extract and export liquid natural gas to partner countries, which could lead to an increase in fracking.)⁶

You have a job in the manufacturing sector. (A 2011 report estimated a net loss of nearly 700,000 jobs, more than half in the manufacturing sector, due to NAFTA;⁷ TPP is expected to create a loss of a million jobs as companies shift work to low wage countries.⁸ This means not only a loss of decent jobs in the US, but the creation of more undesirable jobs in countries where wages are low and workers' rights are not protected.)

You are a family-scale farmer (or prefer to buy food from family-scale farmers). (After the passage of NAFTA, 2 million farmers and agricultural workers in Mexico were forced off their land⁹, imports of fruits and vegetables to the US increased making it more difficult for US farmers to compete in markets, and reports showed that incomes dropped for farmers in most commodities in Canada, the US, and Mexico¹⁰. TPP is likely to have similar affects and family-scale farmers may lose income or their farms.)

You would like your local government or school to adopt a "buy local" policy to give preference in buying to local farmers and producers. (TPP would outlaw preferential buying clauses.)¹¹

You are a government official attempting to pass a domestic health, environmental, or economic policy to benefit citizens in your country. (Early in 2015, Trans Canada initiated a \$15 billion dollar lawsuit, under a provision of NAFTA, against the United States after President Obama blocked the Keystone XL pipeline; as free trade agreements expand, we can expect more such suits¹².)

You want more information about where and how your food was grown, not less. (Last year, Congress announced it would repeal Country of Origin Labeling for meat products, a popular labeling rule that simply requires consumer packaging to list where meat comes from, after it was challenged under World Trade Organization rules.)

If after reading this, you are still confident you are not affected by free trade agreements, congratulations, you can rest easy. But if you are or will be affected, now is the time to take action! <http://fairworldproject.org/campaigns/trade-policy/>

⁶ <http://www.sierraclub.org/trade/trans-pacific-partnership>

⁷ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/05/12/nafta-job-loss-trade-deficit-epi_n_859983.html

⁸ <http://www.citizen.org/TPP>

⁹ <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2013/11/24/what-weve-learned-from-nafta/under-nafta-mexico-suffered-and-the-united-states-felt-its-pain>

¹⁰ <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/insight/poisoned-fruit-american-trade-policy>

¹¹ <http://www.hightowerlowdown.org/node/3402#.VqaT--IEBUT>

¹² <http://fairworldproject.org/blogs/corporate-greed-wont-get-the-last-word/>