

Inhumane Trade

Trade at the expense of animal and environmental legislation and standards is unacceptable. The FTAA in its existing form presents a very real threat both to existing and future animal and environment protection legislation and efforts. Consequently an extensive reworking of this agreement is in order, with a primary focus on harmonizing it with existing national legislation that strives to protect animals, the environment and people from harm.

The Species at Risk Act (SARA), currently under consideration by the Canadian government, appears to be in the process of being weakened by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) to ensure its compliance with the WTO before it has even been enacted. The FTAA will present even more stringent compliance problems. As further examples, The Meat Inspection Act and The Health of Animals Act deal with the design and condition of slaughterhouses; slaughter procedures; goads and electrical prods and their usage; care of animals prior to slaughter; export, import and transportation of animals that are infirm, ill, injured or fatigued; food, water, rest and care during transport etc. Many aspects of these two Acts that deal with the humane care of farm animals can be challenged under the FTAA as barriers to trade.



Puppy Mills

Canada enacted legislation with the intention of protecting consumers from purchasing US bred puppies with congenital defects. The US puppy mill industry challenged the legislation under NAFTA, which led to a compromise on Canada's part, whereby shipments of puppies into Canada would be checked for signs of health problems at the border. If any animals showed signs of illness the entire load would be denied entry. Unfortunately the compromise kneecapped the original intent of the legislation as US most congenital defects only manifest themselves at later stages in the animal's life, and will not be picked up by a cursory inspection.

WHAT CAN WE DO

Mission Statement:

The New York City People's Referendum against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) is a grassroots coalition of organizations and individuals that is part of the national and hemisphere-wide Global Justice and Fair Trade movement to stop so-called "Free Trade" agreements like the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and the FTAA. These agreements are now being negotiated in secret by governments and multinational corporations. Our aim is to reclaim democratic control over this decision-making process by raising awareness, organizing concerned people, and showing elected leaders—through a referendum—just how many people are against these pro-corporate, anti-labor, anti-environment, anti-democratic agreements.

NYC Referendum:

In order to coordinate this city-wide referendum on the FTAA and CAFTA, we meet regularly to strategize community and media outreach, congressional concerns, and to plan town hall meetings in each borough to educate ourselves and the public about the effects of free trade.



NYC People's Referendum

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Come join us on the 1st Wednesday of every month at 7pm!

The FTAA and CAFTA's Potential Impact on Animal Welfare



GATT, WTO & NAFTA as Models for FTAA

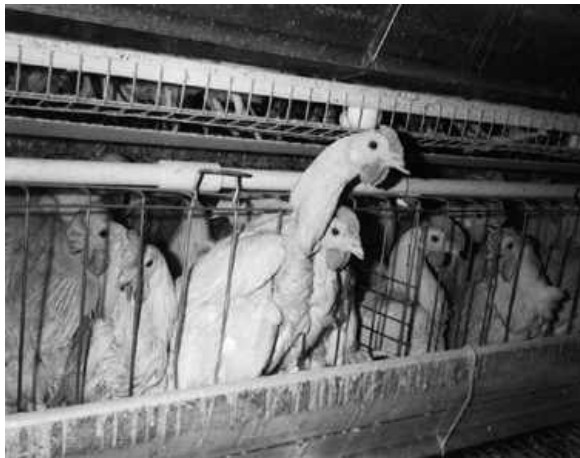
In their present form, the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), which will expand NAFTA to the entire Western Hemisphere, and other trade agreements pose an enormous threat to animals and animal habitats worldwide.

The FTAA is continuing a trend whereby the legitimacy of current and future legislation that seeks to protect animals and the environment is questionable in the context of free trade. To date, free trade under the auspices of GATT, the WTO and NAFTA has had a devastating impact on animal and environmental protection legislation.

Given that the FTAA, as currently proposed, contains many of the same provisions as the above-mentioned free trade regimes, this Agreement has the potential to undermine all existing national animal protection legislation in the Hemisphere, and impede the adoption of further protections. For example, Canadian laws that deal with animals and the environment are potential casualties if Canada joins the FTAA.

Whenever a nation has challenged an animal protection regulation, the relevant authority has ruled that regulation to be an illegal trade barrier. The nation that has enacted the offending rules must either change its law or pay a heavy financial penalty. Most of these animal welfare issues affected by free trade relate to the method of production (the processes by which animals are raised, trapped, transported etc.), the so-called production and process methods (PPMs). In the eyes of the WTO, dolphin friendly tuna is indistinguishable from tuna caught by encircling dolphins, and shrimp caught by boats with turtle excluder devices is the same as shrimp caught without turtle conservation methods. There are many examples ranging from the use of hormones in cattle to cosmetic testing on animals, all with a common thread: animal welfare sacrificed in the name of free trade.

Despite the WTO ruling in the Beef Hormone dispute above, the EU to its credit continues to ban hormone treated beef. The US therefore has been authorized to apply retaliatory trade measures to EU imports. For nearly a decade now, the EU has paid a costly economic price to maintain precautionary health safeguards for its citizens.



Egg Labeling

Hens confined to battery cages live day in and day out without ever seeing the sun. The ability to walk freely, fully stretch their wings, or just bathe, become impossible tasks. The battery cage frustrates every natural instinct. These naturally clean animals are reduced to living in the excrement of their cage mates. Severe overcrowding. It reduces the hens to "cannibalistic" pecking. The egg industry combats this problem, not by giving the hens more space, but by cutting off part of the chicken's beak with a hot blade.

In 1992, the European Commission, fearing a WTO challenge, dropped a proposal to require mandatory labeling of all eggs on the basis of animal welfare criteria. More recently, the European commission put forward a proposal to modify the conditions in which laying hens are kept in the EU, in particular by increasing the size of cage space for each hen. The proposal recognizes that these improvements in animal welfare will result in higher costs, which will make EU eggs more expensive than eggs from other countries where animal welfare standards are lower. Unfortunately, the WTO does not allow distinction among products based upon methods of production, and forbids the use of trade barriers that favour domestic industry.

Thus, the net result of this proposed legislation will be local "humane" egg producers losing market share to foreign "inhumane" egg producers.

Cosmetics Testing

In response to public demand, EU legislation was adopted in 1993 to prevent the use of animals in cosmetic testing from 1998 onwards. However because the measure was thought to be incompatible with the WTO, it was not implemented. On April 3, 2001, the European Parliament voted to ban sales of all new cosmetic products tested on animals. Pending approval from the 15 European Union member nations, The legislation would immediately prohibit animal-tested cosmetics for which alternative testing exists. By January 2005, the ban also would apply to all new cosmetics using animal-tested ingredients, even if alternative tests have not been developed. The ban also would apply to imported products. While this legislation is welcomed, it is a greatly diluted version of the original proposal adopted in 1993 by the EU. This weakened legislation is due entirely to the WTO.

Steel-Jaw Leghold traps

The EIJ banned the use of the steel-jaw leghold trap in 1995. The United States and other fur-exporting countries were given notice that as of January 1, 1996, furs and fur products from thirteen commonly trapped species would not be accepted for import into the EU unless the exporting country had banned the use of steel-jaw leghold traps or adopted internationally agreed upon humane trapping methods. The US and Canada, pressured by local commercial interests, threatened a WTO challenge to the EU ban if it was implemented against imports. As the EU did not believe it could successfully defend the ban against a WTO challenge, it considerably weakened the effect of its

ban. The EU then tried to negotiate humane trapping standards with the US and Canada. However, the final agreement allowed, for the foreseeable future, the import of fur caught with steel-jaw leghold traps. This is yet another example of how commercial interests have used the WTO to undermine legitimate environmental and animal protection legislation.



Driftnet Fishing

Driftnet fishing is a process where large nets are put into the water, and held up by buoys. When sharks (or any marine animal, for that matter) swim into the nets, their gills get stuck and the more they fight and try to back up, the more entangled they become. They eventually drown or starve to death. Smaller sharks or unwanted animals that get caught in the net are inevitably thrown back into the water - dead. In December 1991, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for a global moratorium on all high-seas driftnet fishing in the world's oceans. To implement this resolution, the US enacted the 1992 High Seas Driftnet Fisheries Enforcement Act, which, among other things, prohibits the import of fish from countries that continue to illegally driftnet. As a result of the US Driftnet Act, several countries ceased high-seas driftnet fishing. Italy, however, did not, and as of 1998 still had nearly 600 driftnet vessels on the high seas. However, Italy continues to export fish into the US. The WTO dispute resolution rules, and the subsequent environmental losses as a result of WTO panel rulings, have all had a chilling effect - in this case, on the enforcement of US environmental and animal protection legislation. Despite nearly a decade of persistent urging by animal and environmental advocates, two lawsuits, and the fact that the United Nations calls annually for the cessation of high seas driftnet fishing, the US has yet to actively enforce the Driftnet Act.