

# GMO

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However, few GMOs have received such approval, so the law effectively prevents shipments of U.S. biotech crops from increasing, Boote said. Russia’s government also has the power under the new law to ban GMO imports due to any perceived health or environmental threat without scientific proof of a hazard, which can lead to

market disruptions, she said. Apart from impeding global commerce in GMOs, the law is a public relations victory for opponents of biotechnology, Boote said. “It sets precedent.” Biotech critics, meanwhile, say the ban could give Russian farmers a leg up with exports to the U.S. and Europe. “Non-GMO markets are growing globally,” said Doug Gurian-Sherman, director of sustainable agriculture for

the Center for Food Safety, a nonprofit critical of genetic engineering. In the U.S., the recently passed federal GMO labeling bill — which biotech critics opposed as being too lax — will likely spur demand for non-GMO foods, he said. “If anything, it’s likely to make consumers more suspicious.” Russia’s agricultural productivity isn’t likely to suffer due to the ban on GMO breeding and cultivation, as traditional breeding and improved agron-

omy have been shown to offer better yield gains than biotechnology, Gurian-Sherman said. If the GMO ban frees up resources for improving drought tolerance and fertilizer efficiency through conventional means, for example, Russia’s productivity is unlikely to suffer, he said. While Russia’s new law does contain an exemption for using GMOs in research, the USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service nonetheless ex-

pects such studies to stop “because the scientific community will not be interested in conducting expensive research without prospects for commercialization,” according to an agency report. In 2013, Russia passed a law that would allow GMOs to be registered for release into the environment, but public backlash against these crops caused authorities to delay its implementation and eventually to enact the recent ban, the FAS report said.

# TPP

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TPP’s agricultural supporters argue lower tariffs and the elimination of non-tariff barriers, such as protectionist-motivated food safety and phytosanitary restrictions, will help farmers export more food, particularly to Japan and Vietnam. But not all farm groups favor TPP. The National Farmers Union has historically opposed trade agreements, warning they increase the trade deficit to the detriment of the entire U.S. economy. The group also has historically been on the losing end of the argument, after prolonged and bitter fights. “The history on these things is you never kill them, you just delay them,” said Roger Johnson, president of the National Farmers Union and a former North Dakota commissioner of agriculture. “That’s what was set up to happen this time,” he said. “Then along came Donald Trump.”

## TPP’s future

With both candidates committed to opposing TPP, supporters say the only chance for it to gain congressional approval is during the lame-duck session that will follow the November election.

On Jan. 20, President Barack Obama, whose administration negotiated TPP, will leave office. That would likely leave an anti-TPP president — either Clinton or Trump — in charge. The new Congress may also have more Democrats, who would likely line up against the treaty.

Republicans typically provide most of the votes for free-trade agreements.

“It would really be difficult for a new administration and new Congress in 2017 to take up and pass something as monumental as TPP,” said Kent Bacus, associate director of legislative affairs for the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association.

That leaves TPP supporters such as Bacus thinking about a post-election and pre-inauguration ratification vote.

“We have a Democratic administration that’s strongly supportive of it and plenty of pro-trade Democrats, but this is an election year and a lot of people are worried about getting attacked by anti-trade groups,” Bacus said. “Hopefully, some will come out after the election and support TPP.”

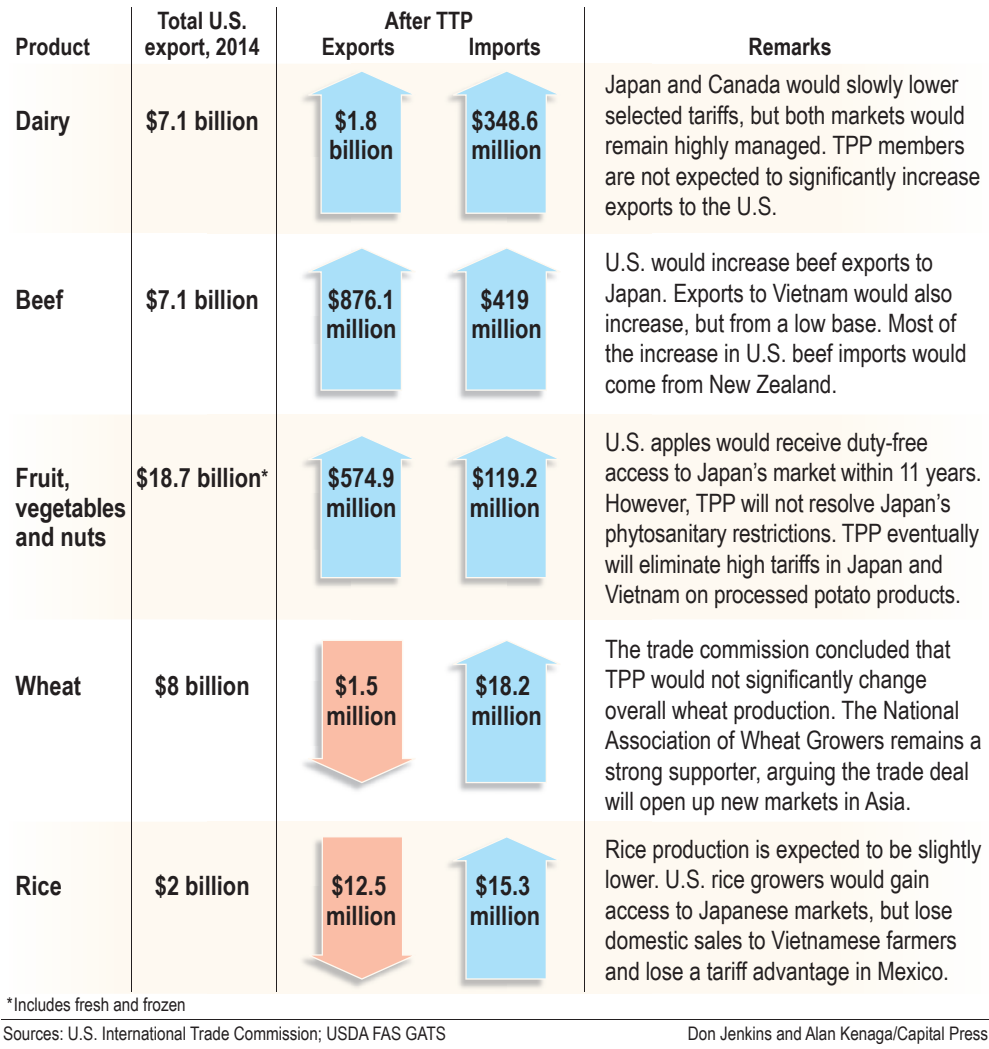
Johnson of the National Farmers Union is thinking the same thing.

He agrees the trade deal’s best chances are with a lame-duck Congress. He also says passing TPP in December would reaffirm suspicions about the political establishment.

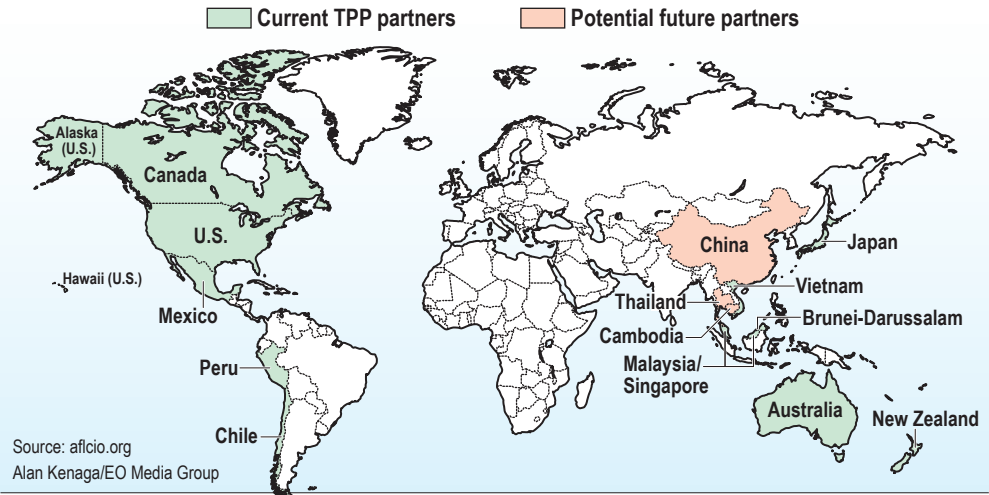
“To deal with an issue of this consequence in a lame-duck session would be done for only reason — because nobody had the guts to do it before the election,” Johnson said. “It’s kind of a

## Trans-Pacific Partnership: A two-way street

The increase in export opportunities for U.S. agriculture would outweigh new access to the U.S. for overseas farmers and ranchers, according to the U.S. International Trade Commission. The trade commission forecasts that if TPP takes effect U.S. agricultural exports would increase by \$7.2 billion by 2032. Agricultural imports to the U.S. from TPP partners would increase by \$2.7 billion.



## Trans-Pacific Partnership Free Trade Agreement partners



rotten way to run a government.”

## Then came Trump

The Republican Party has led the way on trade deals. In 1985, President Ronald Reagan signed the first agreement, with Israel. The House ratified it unanimously, and the Senate approved it by voice vote.

In 1993, Republicans provided most of the votes for the North American Free Trade Agreement, which was signed by President Bill Clinton.

Free-trade agreements proliferated during the George W. Bush and Obama administrations, always with more support from Republicans than Democrats. The U.S. now has free-trade agreements with 20 countries, including six of the 11 TPP partners.

The 2012 Republican Party platform lauded trade agreements and criticized Obama for not pursuing more.

Former Washington state Republican Party Chairman Chris Vance, who’s running

against pro-trade Democratic Sen. Patty Murray, said he now meets Republicans who find his support for TPP “shocking.”

“They’re listening to national messages, which are coming from Trump, but others, too,” Vance said.

Vance said he finds the attitude remarkable in a state that practically boasts about its dependence on trade.

“Our whole economy is based on trade,” he said. “We don’t eat all that wheat they grow in the Palouse.”

## Turning point

In his acceptance speech at the Republican party’s national convention in Cleveland, Trump said he would make trade a signature issue of his presidency.

“Using the greatest business people in the world, which our country has, I’m going to turn our bad trade agreements into great trade agreements,” he said.

He promised “individual deals with individual countries,” rather than “massive” deals “no one

reads or understands.”

Trump also predicted that Sanders supporters “will join our movement because we will fix his biggest single issue: Trade deals that strip our country of its jobs and strip us of our wealth as a country.”

Throughout the speech, Sanders sent out complimentary tweets, including one that called Trump a “hypocrite” for making Trump-branded products in “low-wage countries abroad.”

Nevertheless, Trump, the Republican nominee, and Sanders, a self-described democratic socialist, are simpatico on free-trade agreements and TPP.

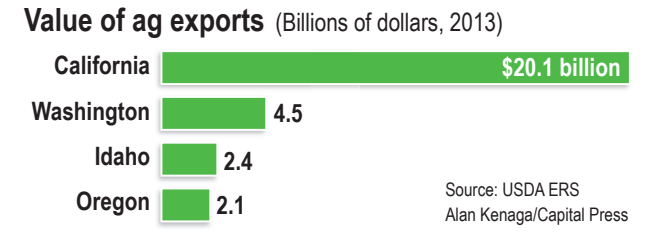
“It’s a turning point for this country,” said Bill Bullard, CEO of the cattle and sheep producer group R-CALF USA, which opposes TPP.

“I think it reflects the fact we have not achieved the prosperity free-trade agreements are supposed to bestow on citizens. It simply has not materialized,” he said.

His organization argues

## Top 5 agricultural exports from the Northwest and California, 2013

Rank	California	Washington	Idaho	Oregon
1	Fruits/nuts	Fruits/nuts	Wheat	Wheat
2	Vegetables	Vegetables	Dairy	Fruits/nuts
3	Dairy	Wheat	Vegetables	Vegetables
4	Cotton	Dairy	Beef/veal	Dairy
5	Rice	Beef/veal	Feed/fodder	Beef/veal



Joe Bippert



Floyd Gaibler



Bill Bullard



Roger Johnson

that TPP would make U.S.-raised beef an “undifferentiated cog” in an international market managed by multi-national meat packers.

“It’s called free trade, but what it really is, is globalization,” Bullard said.

The repeal by Congress last year of the country-of-origin-labeling law for beef and pork was a “huge factor in generating awareness,” Bullard said.

Liberal consumer groups and some ranchers liked the COOL law, but the World Trade Organization ruled it was discriminatory and authorized Canada and Mexico to impose \$1 billion in retaliatory tariffs.

“We do not want a vote in the lame-duck session because we believe that’s the only time the agreement could pass Congress,” Bullard said. “We’d like to see both parties support their presidential candidates’ positions on TPP.”

Mindful of a post-election vote on TPP, Republicans ended their platform’s section on trade with this: “Significant trade agreements should not be rushed or undertaken in a lame-duck Congress.”

## Full-court press

Free-trade voices may re-emerge after the election, particularly from lawmakers who represent farm districts and states, said Floyd Gaibler, director of trade policy for the U.S. Grains Council.

“From a political standpoint, I think agriculture has a lot of influence,” he said. “But there’s no doubt about it. You have to acknowledge it’s a pretty heavy lift. The (Obama) administration has to put its full political weight behind it.”

TPP supporters also hope Japan’s legislative branch, the Diet, will approve the agreement in September. Because of the size of their economies, the U.S. and Japan are indispensable for TPP ratification.

The Japan Times reported recently that business leaders have asked Prime Minister

Shinzo Abe to call the Diet into a special session to vote on TPP, hoping to build momentum for U.S. approval after the presidential election.

Bacus of the NCBA agreed that passing TPP will be difficult, but not impossible.

“It’s definitely something we can achieve, but it’s something we need all agriculture to get behind,” he said.

Besides the immediate benefits of lower tariffs, farm groups are presenting a bigger-picture argument that TPP will also lead to more access to non-TPP countries in Asia, such as Indonesia and the Philippines.

They also argue that embracing TPP will give the U.S. more leverage in negotiating the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership with the European Union.

If the U.S. rejects TPP, they say, China, which is not a TPP partner, will fill a power vacuum and dictate trade policies to Pacific Rim nations, while the U.S. will look like an untrustworthy negotiator.

“I don’t know what plan B is,” the grains council’s Gaibler said.

TPP would add Japan, Vietnam, New Zealand, Malaysia and Brunei to the countries the U.S. has free-trade agreements with. Even without trade agreements, the Washington State Department of Agriculture has participated in trade missions to Vietnam and Japan.

“If the Trans-Pacific Partnership doesn’t go through, I don’t see us being able to back away from Southeast Asia,” said Joe Bippert, manager of WSDA’s international marketing program.

Although he staunchly opposes TPP, Johnson, of the National Farmers Union, said he hopes the U.S. will pursue trade opportunities.

“I am a trade proponent,” he said. “I’m against stupid trade agreements. I don’t mean to sound like Donald Trump here.”

# Rules

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“Boy, you guys just whipped the energy out of me,” said Snohomish County dairy farmer Don Tillman, 82.

More than 100 people attended the hearing at Whatcom Community College on Ecology’s proposal to require up to 300 mid-sized and large dairies to obtain a permit to operate a concentrated animal feeding operation.

Ecology estimates that complying with the permit will cost a dairy between \$11,000 and \$25,000 over five years.

To ease the financial hard-

ship on the industry, the agency plans to exempt from the rules about 100 dairies that have fewer than 200 mature cows.

After Tuesday’s hearing, Ecology’s special assistant on water policy Kelly Susewind said the department may consider redrawing the line and exempting more dairies.

He said dairy farmers have raised valid concerns that Ecology’s analysis didn’t account for all costs.

Ecology didn’t include the financial impact of not being able to spread manure within 100 feet of ditches and other waterways that are unprotect-

ed by vegetation or other measures, such as an embankment.

Ecology says it plans to allow commercial fertilizers in the buffers, though that will increase production costs and could hinder organic farming.

Also, Ecology assumed every dairy has just one lagoon, though many dairies have multiple lagoons. The agency estimated a lagoon assessment would cost \$7,400.

“If you want us out of here, you may get your way because this is cost-prohibitive,” testified Lynden, Wash., dairy farmer Sherman Polinder.

“I think the ag land will be replaced with towns and cities,” he said. “And you’re

going to have more problems than you have now.”

Environmentalists testified that Ecology should require dairies to line lagoons with synthetic fabric to prevent leaks and to install wells to monitor groundwater.

Puget Soundkeeper Executive Director Chris Wilke said Ecology has yielded too much to farm interests, calling the agency’s proposal a “travesty.”

“We understand Ecology is under big pressure from the agricultural lobby,” he said.

Susewind said soil tests should detect threats to groundwater, without requiring farmers to drill numerous

wells to trace sources of pollution.

Ecology says it does not have enough evidence of actual groundwater pollution to justify mandating synthetic liners. The agency hopes to collect more information about pollution coming from dairies over the next five years, One farmer Tuesday characterized the new permit as an expensive research project paid for by dairies.

A second hearing is scheduled for Thursday in Yakima. Ecology chose to hold hearings in the two counties with the most dairies. Although the rules could apply to other livestock operations, dairies

will be most affected because they must store and apply large amounts of manure.

Ecology maintains that manure seeps into the ground from storage lagoons, even those designed to standards set by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. To avoid coming under the new permit and its requirements, a dairy would have to make the case that manure seeping from its lagoons isn’t reaching groundwater, according to Ecology.

The second hearing will be 6 p.m. Thursday, July 28, at the Yakima Convention Center, Room B, 10 North Eighth St.