

Animal Welfare, Climate, and Food Safety Impacts of Korea-US FTA

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My name is Perry Bolkin. I live in Fair Lawn and am here today representing the League of Humane Voters of New Jersey, the Animal Protection League of NJ, and the Coalition to Protect NJ Black Bears. Our organizations have a combined membership of over 600,000 New Jersey residents concerned about the welfare of animals. I'm joined today by Angi Melter, the director of these organizations. I'll be addressing the impacts of the Korea-US FTA on animals, the environment, and food safety.

I'll begin by addressing agriculture. Increased market access for US animal product exports under the FTA will exacerbate a dangerous trend towards intensive confinement farming and increased net consumption of animal products -- both contributors to the spread of deadly disease epidemics and to global climate change. According to Center for Agricultural and Rural Development at Iowa State University, elimination of agricultural tariffs on US exports to Korea is expected to increase consumption of pork by 9%, chicken by 6.1 %, beef by .15%, cheese by 13.1, and butter by 14.1%.

Korea has seen a dramatic increase in overall consumption of animal products over the last 40 years. Consumption of animal foods increased from 3.0% in 1969 to 19.2% in 1998. To meet rising demands and remain competitive with intensively produced imports, South Korea has increasingly shifted away from traditional family farm agriculture towards corporate agribusiness using high-concentration, intensive confinement factory farms. According to the USDA Economic Research Service, "Despite government restrictions on the maximum farm size because of environmental concerns, the trend toward larger, more efficient farms continues. Increased foreign competition, intensified since 1997, quickens the pace of change in farm size." This shift to factory farming has resulted in outbreaks of dangerous livestock diseases like swine flu and hoof and mouth disease and annual mass culls of farmed animals.

According to Danielle Nierenberg of the Worldwatch Institute, "recent studies in Asia and Africa indicate that the real culprits may be factory farming and the globalized poultry trade and transport of livestock. Rising demand has helped drive livestock production from rural mixed farming systems, where farmers raise a few different species of animals on grass, to intensive periurban and urban production of pigs and chickens. These confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs), or factory farms, create the perfect environment for the rapid spread of disease between animals and to people.

Between December 2010 and March 2011, 10 million animals - pigs, birds, and cattle - were culled, with 8 million buried alive. According to British NGO Compassion in World Farming, "Live burial causes severe suffering to animals and is contrary to any internationally accepted standard of treatment. The Republic of Korea is a member of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and live burial of animals is in clear breach of OIE Guidelines on the Killing of Animals for Disease Control Purposes... Compassion believes that vaccination rather than killing is the preferred way to deal with Foot and Mouth Disease...If emergency killing is genuinely needed for disease control purposes, Compassion believes the authorities must ensure that it is done in strict accordance with the international animal welfare guidelines of the OIE."ⁱ

According to John McDermott, deputy director general for research at the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) "...in Africa and Asia, the capacity of veterinary services to track and control outbreaks is lagging dangerously behind livestock intensification." According to Dr. Samuel C. Jutzi, Director Animal Production and Health Division at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "The production of poultry and other livestock is continually increasing in Asia, to meet the needs of growing urban populations. The effects of avian influenza and the threat of future outbreaks of transboundary animal diseases, including animal diseases that affect humans will increase with growing intensification of livestock production."

While South Korea declared itself bird flu free in September 2011ⁱⁱ, late August 2011, the Food and Agriculture Organization, "urged heightened readiness and surveillance against a possible major resurgence of the H5N1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza amid signs that a mutant strain of the deadly Bird Flu virus is spreading in Asia and beyond, with unpredictable risks to human health...Virus circulation in Viet Nam poses a direct threat to Cambodia, Thailand and Malaysia as well as endangering the Korean peninsula and Japan further afield. Wild bird migration can also spread the virus to other continents.

"The general departure from the progressive decline observed in 2004-2008 could mean that there will be a flareup of H5N1 this fall and winter, with people unexpectedly finding the virus in their backyard," [FAO Chief Veterinary Officer Juan]Lubroth said."ⁱⁱⁱ

According to FAO, "The H5N1 virus has infected 565 people since it first appeared in 2003, killing 331 of them, according to WHO figures. The latest death occurred earlier this month in Cambodia, which has registered eight cases of human infection this year -- all of them fatal."^{iv}

According to a Worldwatch report "If the disease does become a pandemic, loss of human life could be staggering. Thanks to globalized air travel and trade, a highly pathogenic flu virus could spread to every corner of the globe in just a matter of months. A December 2006 study in *The Lancet* estimated that as many as 62 million people could die in such a flu pandemic."^v

Increased consumption of animal products, particularly, those produced by intensive systems, will also hasten climate change. According to Henning Steinfeld, Chief of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's Livestock Information and Policy Branch, "Livestock are one of the most significant contributors to today's most serious environmental problems. Urgent action is required to remedy the situation." A November/December 2010 article in the journal of the Worldwatch Institute, a leading environmental research authority states that, "[O]ur analysis shows that livestock and their byproducts actually account for at least 32,564 million tons of CO₂e per year, or 51 percent of annual worldwide [greenhouse gas] emissions."

While consumption of beef is expected to increase far less than other animal products, this is an area of particular concern from a climate perspective. According to the USDA Economic Research Service, "Koreans consume more pork than any other meat, in part because beef was in short supply and often quite expensive relative to pork." According to the US Meat Export Federation, "South Korea's beef prices are world's highest without U.S. imports." The Federation illustrates the impact of US imports on Korean beef consumption by pointing out that "Beef consumption in Korea fell from an annual volume of approximately 390,000 metric tons (mt) in 2003 to 260,000 mt when beef from the United States was banned." Beef production has a significantly greater climate impact than pork or poultry production. According to research presented by Nathan Pelletier of Dalhousie University School for Resource and Environmental Studies at the 2009 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, even though beef only accounts for 30 percent of meat consumption in the developed world it's responsible for 78 percent of the emissions, because a single kilogram of beef produces 16 kilograms of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions: four times higher than pork and more than ten times as much as a kilogram of poultry. According to Pelletier "The environmental impacts of the increase in the livestock industry are significant. Projections suggest that in the next 50 years, the livestock industry alone will account for 72 per cent of humanity's total safe operating space for anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, 88% of safe operating space for biomass appropriation and nearly 300 per cent of the safe operating space for reactive nitrogen mobilization." Given the Obama administration's stated commitment to addressing the global climate crisis, reducing global consumption of animal products should be an administration priority. Unfortunately, the KORUS will have the opposite effect.

South Korea must craft a public policy to use cultural and economic influences to reverse the 40 year national trend towards increasing consumption of animal products, and shift away from dangerous intensive production systems. Unfortunately, a trade agreement that will force Korea to eliminate tariffs on heavily subsidized, intensively produced US imports will exert pressure in the wrong direction, increasing the likelihood of a disastrous bird flu pandemic and exacerbating climate change. Global Justice for Animals and the Environment, LOHV of NJ, ad APLNJ urges Representative Rothman to have the foresight to look beyond the narrow economic self-interest of corporate agribusiness and consider the impact that this trade agreement will have on global survival.

Organizations like Korean Animal Rights Advocates, International Aid for Korean Animals, Bear Necessity Korea, Green Korea United, Moonbears.org, Coexistence of Animal Rights on Earth, and the Korean Animal Protection Society, speaking on behalf of the many South Koreans who care deeply about animal welfare and wildlife preservation, have called on the international community to support them in working to abolish a number of egregious forms of animal cruelty and unsustainable practices that persist in South Korea. By failing to address these concerns as a precondition for ratification of a free trade agreement, the United States is squandering an opportunity to bring South Korea in line with international humane and conservation standards.

Operating in a legal grey area, dog and cat meat markets persist in South Korea. Cruel killing and confinement methods associated with the dogmeat trade in South Korea, include beating, strangling, and boiling, methods barred for killing mammals for food in the United States under the Humane Slaughter Act. Korean American animal advocates working in conjunction with animal advocacy groups in South Korea, have reported that whereas the Bush White House previously supported enforcement of the dog meat ban, it later refused to touch the issue in the interest of avoiding any controversy that might slow passage of the free trade agreement.

Despite a ban on the slaughter of horses in every US state, the agreement will allow for the untariffed export of US horses to a nation where horses are still slaughtered for food – and used in gruesome fights to the death.

Shockingly, the agreement even allows the export of live bears to South Korea, undermining the effort of activists in South Korea to shut down the horrific bear bile trade. South Korea is one of only three countries where bear bile farming is still practiced. While only 20 bears remain in the wild, 1,600 bears live in cramped cages on unregulated farms until the age of 10, when they are slaughtered for their bile.

Current South Korean practices also endanger marine life. Whereas the US supports CITES listing for threatened bluefin tuna, South Korea's bluefin catch and exports to Japan are surging, undermining even CITES listing for Japan's effort to limit total bluefin catch.

Flouting the international whaling moratorium, South Korea allows fishermen who "accidentally" catch whales to sell them at state-designated facilities.

Modifying the treatment of animals as a precondition to market access between the US and Korea is not without precedent. In April 2008, a Korean farm ministry statement said US beef from cattle older than 30 months will be allowed once the US improved safety standards. In March 2009, only 54 days into his presidency, President Obama announced that the USDA will ***will ban the slaughter of all downed cows for food, ending the cruel practice of dragging sick, crippled, non-ambulatory cattle*** to the killing floor for processing. Of course, concerns about mad cow disease drove this policy change, but the point remains that the promise of market access can be a powerful tool to encourage trading partners to improve animal welfare standards.

Especially given that the trade agreement will put animals exported from the US into harm's way in Korea, the League of Humane Voters,

APLNJ, and the Coalition to Protect Black Bears cannot support a US-South Korea Free Trade Agreement until these concerns are addressed and thus must urge Representative Rothman to vote against the agreement at this time. We also ask that Representative Rothman urge USTR and President Obama to encourage Korea to abolish the cruel and unsustainable practices outlined above as a precondition to passing the trade agreement.

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