

United States Senate Committee on Finance

Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa, Chairman

For Immediate Release/Thursday, Dec. 15, 2005/Contact: Jill Gerber, press secretary for Chairman Grassley, jill_gerber@finance-rep.senate.gov, Hong Kong cell phone 6779-2533

Grassley Comment on South Korean Farmers' Protest of WTO Talks

HONG KONG -- Sen. Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, the Senate committee with legislative and oversight jurisdiction over international trade, today made the following statement on South Korean farmers' protest of the World Trade Organization Ministerial. A longtime outspoken advocate for American agriculture and free trade, Grassley farms corn and soybeans with his son in Butler County, Iowa.

“South Korean farmers have been loudly protesting this week at the WTO negotiations in Hong Kong. They say agricultural liberalization will ultimately harm them. But let's put this in perspective. One of the goals of the Doha Round is to remove market access barriers to agricultural products, including those of wealthier countries like South Korea. Better market access would benefit farmers in both developed and developing countries.

“South Korea has one of the most restricted agricultural markets in the world. Its agricultural tariffs average 66 percent versus 12 percent for the United States. South Korea's rice market is essentially closed to imports. These restrictive import policies certainly don't help farmers in developing countries, and they also adversely impact U.S. farmers, including Iowa farmers. Also South Korea is currently banning imports of U.S. beef for scientifically unsubstantiated reasons. Meanwhile, South Korean goods, such as electronics and cars, are plentiful in the American market and in other markets around the world. If we're going to conclude the Doha Round, all countries must be willing to make concessions. South Korean concessions on agriculture would certainly help development.”