

TPP: The time is now

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[2014 Agri-Food Exports to TPP](#)

For Canada's agricultural and food exporters, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is the biggest game in town. And after five years of negotiations, a deal is finally in sight.

Last week's commitment by U.S. President Barrack Obama and Japan's Prime Minister Shinzō Abe showed that a deal is close. With Japan and the U.S. at the epicenter of this mega-regional free trade agreement, once they agree the remaining dominoes will fall into place.

And while some have highlighted what others are seeking from Canada, the importance of the deal for Canada – and Canada's agri-food exporters in particular – should not be underestimated.

Canada's agricultural industry is one of the most trade-dependent agricultural sectors in the world. As a country, we export \$50 billion a year in agricultural and agri-food products – over half of everything we produce. It means that over 90 per cent of Canada's farmers are dependent on exports as well about 40 per cent of our food processing sector.

For Canada, the TPP will preserve and maintain our place in an integrated North American economy, and boost access to the rapidly growing Asian-Pacific economies such as Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore.

And then there's Japan, the crown jewel of the TPP and a premium market that demands \$4 billion per year in Canadian agri-food products – about 10 per cent of Canada's total agri-food exports. Japan is the largest predictable market for Canadian canola seed, the second largest market for Canadian malt and Canadian pork, the fourth largest market for Canadian beef and an important high-value market for Canadian wheat and pulses.

Can you imagine an export-based country like Canada being outside a trade agreement where our global competitors could get preferred access to one of our highest value and most stable markets?

With all of these possibilities, it is clear that this trade deal has broader benefits than any before it. It includes an unprecedented number of Asian-Pacific countries, could expand

disciplines to cover 21st century trading realities and set the tone for a regional trading block that other countries are already lining up to join.

But we're not there yet. We still need the 12 member nations to come to a final agreement that will allow Canadian agri-food exporters the ability to secure and grow a market of 800 million customers that take 65 per cent of our exports.

As talks near conclusion, Canada must act quickly to secure comprehensive and equal market access to TPP countries. It's a historic opportunity that is more important than any country's domestic political timelines. We cannot miss this critical window of opportunity. Being left on the sidelines of a trade deal that covers 40 per cent of the world's economic output is not an option. To remain a significant contributor to the economy, Canadian agriculture needs the TPP. And most of all, as a country we need to be fully engaged in the negotiations to ensure that Canadian exporters attain the same access to markets as exporters from other TPP countries.

The signal is clear. The world is moving towards a future of free trade, and the time is now to take a step forward. Canada must actively champion this now or we will lose a once in a generation opportunity.

We owe our farmers, ranchers, producers and exporters the chance to freely compete and grow markets, on an equal footing, with our international competitors.

There is no more time for waiting, and no such thing as the status quo. Now is the time for governments to be bold and stand up for the future of Canadian agriculture.

The opportunity is here. The time is now.