



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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Contact: Laura Hayes
202-224-4515

Senator Raises Agriculture Concerns with Mexico's Economy Minister

(Cancun, Mexico) As a lead proponent of expanding agricultural trade opportunities for Montana and the nation, U.S. Senator Max Baucus, Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee and senior member of Senate Agriculture Committee, met today with Fernando Canales, Mexico's Minister of the Economy.

In the meeting, Baucus focused on the ongoing agricultural trade disputes between America and Mexico and urged Señor Canales to work with the Mexican and American government to establish long-term, workable solutions. Baucus is in Mexico attending the World Trade Organization's Ministerial Conference.

"In recent years, I've become concerned by the protectionist trend the Mexican government is moving toward," Baucus said. "A number of U.S. agricultural commodities have faced unreasonable import barriers in Mexico, which is harmful to my state of Montana and to the nation as a whole. Mexico is Montana's biggest export market for beef and dry beans. I'm hopeful that our countries will be able to resolve these disputes in an efficient and straight forward manner."

One major issue of concern that Baucus raised has to do with an agreement that was reached between the U.S. and Mexico during the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) negotiations. Under the terms of the agreement, Mexico was granted duty-free access to a limited, large volume of American sugar. The exact conditions are currently under dispute, which is harming both American producers and Mexican consumers.

"The problems surrounding our NAFTA sugar agreement are symptomatic of a larger problem," Baucus said. "It's essential that America and Mexico work hard together to resolve our agriculture trade issues. The Senate Finance Committee will be holding a hearing this month to review the status of each commodity and find a way to reach an agreement that works for both of our countries."

"I'm pleased that I had the chance to meet with Señor Canales in person in Mexico. Agriculture is the backbone of Montana's economy and the faster we can find solutions for our two countries, the better it is for our economy and our citizens on both sides of the border."

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