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## **The National Grange Applauds Introduction of Johnson-Enzi “Foot and Mouth Disease Prevention Act of 2008”**

*Legislative Director says “Argentina can’t be trusted to honor its debt, to not profiteer on its soybean exports or to export disease free beef”*

Washington, DC – The National Grange applauded Senators Tim Johnson (D-SD) and Mike Enzi (R-WY) for their introduction of the “Foot and Mouth Disease Prevention Act of 2008.” This key legislation would ban beef imports from Argentina until that country can guarantee that its beef exports are free of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD). In addition to Argentina’s unpaid debt, FMD is one of Argentina’s many problems that could potentially harm America’s farming community.

The National Grange Legislative Director, Leroy Watson, thanked Senators Johnson and Enzi for their introduction of this legislation, and call on more Senators to co-sponsor the bill in order to strengthen its support. Watson noted that it is important to keep FMD away from the U.S. mainland. “While there are many dangerous animal diseases that pose an economic risk to family farmers and ranchers, few come close to the nightmare of an outbreak of FMD,” Watson explained.

FMD is twenty times more infectious than small-pox. There is no known cure or universal vaccine. It causes painful blisters on animals such as cattle, swine, goats and deer, that can render them unable to walk, eat or drink. While people and other animals, do not contract FMD, once exposed, they can carry the virus in their lungs to transmit to other susceptible animals for up to 48 hours. The airborne transmission range for an outbreak of FMD can be a 50 mile radius or an area of more than 7800 square miles.

Based on experiences with major FMD outbreaks in 2001 and 2007 in Great Britain, once the disease was loose on the mainland U.S., it could require mass slaughter and disposal of potentially tens of millions of individual carcasses of domestic and wild animals. It would require the imposition of draconian human quarantine and decontamination measures that would disrupt general commerce, outdoor recreational activities like hunting, fishing or hiking as well as impede personal freedom of mobility both in and out of the agricultural sector. It would undoubtedly disrupt the domestic and international sale of meat and meat products throughout the nation for months or even years.

“The National Grange believes the ancillary costs to general commerce, outdoor

recreation, and impacts on future investments in the livestock sector by family farmers and ranchers would exceed the conservative estimates made by USDA in 2004 of \$60 billion in direct costs by several fold,” Watson stated.

“Argentina has proven to be an international pariah with its economic and foreign policies, which hurt America’s family farmers and ranchers,” said Watson. “Argentina repudiated its debt obligations of over \$30 billion in public and private debt in 2005 to American taxpayers. After the 2001 default, the Argentine government manipulated its currency, which allowed the country to maintain an unfair export incentive. Argentina recently moved to impose a 45% export tax on soybeans that amounts to “sovereign profiteering” in light of a world food crisis. And at a time when food safety is a rising international priority, Argentina has been unable to prove that its beef exports are FMD free. Clearly, Argentina can’t be trusted to honor its debt, to export its soybeans without profiteering on pressing humanitarian needs of a hungry world or export disease free beef. The Johnson-Enzi Bill is a helpful step in the right direction toward making Argentina accountable to the basic standards of the international community.”

The National Grange also calls for additional co-sponsors to this key legislation. In addition to Senators Johnson and Enzi, current co-sponsors of the “Foot and Mouth Disease Prevention Act of 2008” include the following: Jon Tester (D-MT), John Barrasso (R-WY), Claire McCaskill (D-MO), Pete Domenici (R-NM), Byron Dorgan (D-ND), Ken Salazar (D-CO), and Wayne Allard (R-CO). “Senators from across the United States must add their support to this important legislation to protect America’s family farmers and ranchers,” the Grange Legislative Director concluded.

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*Founded in 1867, the National Grange is the nation’s oldest agricultural and rural community organization. Additional information is available at:*  
[www.nationalgrange.org](http://www.nationalgrange.org)