PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

WTO Director-General to open Farm Foundation trade conference

OAK BROOK, IL March 28, 2019: The Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) will open the April 30 Farm Foundation trade conference, Agricultural Trade in a Time of Uncertainty. Director-General Roberto Azevêdo will address conference attendees via video at 8:30 a.m. at the DoubleTree Hotel Crystal City, Arlington, VA.

“Given the role of the WTO in international agricultural trade, it is most appropriate that the Director-General open this conference,” says Megan Provost, Farm Foundation’s Vice President of Policy and Programs. “His comments will set the stage for the day’s discussion of the issues and opportunities of global food and agricultural trade today.”

Azevêdo’s address will be followed by a panel discussion of U.S. agriculture and the WTO, including the international organization’s dispute settlement process and its long-term future given the current proliferation of bilateral and regional trade agreements. Joe Glauber, Ph.D., a senior fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute, will moderate the discussion. Panelists will include Ambassador Alan Wolff, Deputy Director-General of the World Trade Organization, Chad Bown of the Peterson Institute for International Economics, and Evan Rogerson of Nanyang Technological University.

This conference will also feature key leaders from Congress and the Administration. Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) has been invited to provide perspectives on the domestic policy landscape for U.S. agricultural trade. Invited to discuss the Administration’s approach to food and agricultural trade are Ted McKinney, USDA Undersecretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs, and Gregg Doud, Chief Agricultural Negotiator in the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

Other topics for the day-long conference include the intricacies of free trade agreements, the impacts of trade wars and retaliatory trade measures on the farm economy, and the trade implications of today’s geopolitical landscape. The conference agenda is available on the conference website.
This is the first conference hosted by Farm Foundation’s Food and Agricultural Trade Resource Center. The Resource Center was created to bring clarity to trade discussions and enable productive debate and dialogue on trade policy issues.

Trade issues—from tariff escalations and other trade barriers to proposed restructurings of long-standing trade agreements—have disrupted market flows around the world. U.S. agriculture, which exports more than 20% of its production, has been particularly hard hit and the ripple effects have been seen in farm cash receipts and rural communities. The U.S. food and agriculture sector exports nearly $140 billion in commodities and value-added goods, making it one of the nation’s only sectors with a trade surplus.

“Given these dynamics, a basic understanding of food and agricultural trade is critical,” says Provost. “With our 86-year reputation for providing objective information, Farm Foundation established the Resource Center to provide public and private decision-makers with informational tools and analyses. A solid foundation of basic trade education, as well as more detailed analyses of larger trade issues, will support quality dialogues on agricultural trade.”

Registration is open for the conference and be completed online using this link. The $75 registration fee is waived for the media and government employees.

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Farm Foundation is an agricultural policy institute cultivating dynamic non-partisan collaboration to meet society's needs for food, fiber, feed and energy. Since 1933, we have connected leaders in farming, business, academia, organizations and government through proactive, rigorous debate and objective issue analysis.