

This is a proposed regional free-trade agreement that began in 2005. Twelve countries in the Asia-Pacific region have participated in discussions on the TPPA: Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States, and Vietnam.

Participating countries set the goal of wrapping up negotiations by 2012, but contentious issues such as agriculture, intellectual property, services and investments have caused negotiations to continue into the present, with the last round planned to meet in Ottawa from 3 to 12 July 2015. Implementation of the TPP is one of the primary goals of the trade agenda of the Obama administration in the United States of America.

On 12 November 2011 the nine Trans-Pacific Partnership countries announced that the TPP intended to, "Enhance trade and investment among the TPP partner countries, to promote innovation, economic growth and development, and to support the creation and retention of jobs."

Global health professionals, internet freedom activists, environmentalists, organised labour, advocacy groups, and elected officials have criticised the expansive scope, and controversial clauses in drafts leaked to the public.

From USA in February 2008. "The National Milk Producers Federation said it would seek the full exclusion of New Zealand's dairy products under the newly-announced Transpacific free trade agreement, because of the New Zealand dairy industry's unique structure and excessive manipulation of dairy markets globally and in USA."

Wikileaks' exposure of the Intellectual Property Rights and Environmental chapters of the TPP revealed "just how far apart the USA is from the other nations involved in the treaty, with 19 points of disagreement in the area of intellectual property alone. One of the documents speaks of 'great pressure' being applied by the USA."

Australia in particular opposes the USA's proposals for copyright protection and an element supported by all other nations involved to "limit the liability of ISPs for copyright infringement by their users."

Another sticking point is Japan's reluctance to open up its agricultural markets.

USA 50% subsidies to farmers means that their exports are being dumped, the term used for exporting subsidised items at below the cost of production, something that all countries are against.

USA doesn't allow cheese imports, and Canada doesn't allow any dairy products to be imported .

I believe that USA will control TPPA to suit themselves. 20 years ago they told New Zealand that they would eliminate subsides within seven years, but have not.

Effects on New Zealand

If TPPA goes ahead it could have a huge effect on the lives of ordinary kiwis. We risk damage to our innovative economy, our pristine environment, our health because of higher costs, and the ability to shape our own future.

From what we know so far, if the negotiations are completed it will become much harder for the New Zealand government to look after our environment, promote health, protect workers and consumers, and promote the public interest.

Big overseas companies will be able to sue the New Zealand government for millions in damages in secretive offshore tribunals, claiming that new laws and regulations (for example, a ban on fracking, smoking control laws, cap on electricity prices) have seriously undermined the value of their investments.

Medicines will become more expensive as big pharmaceutical companies gain more influence over PHARMAC, and restrictions are placed on generic medicines.

Copyright laws will be toughened and more harshly enforced, restricting internet freedom and access to information, costing libraries, schools, and businesses, and stifling innovation.

Foreign banks, insurance companies and money traders will gain more powers to challenge laws designed to prevent another financial crisis; and overseas property dealers could contest moves to burst the property bubble, such as a capital gains tax.

Our government tries to dismiss the critics of TPPA saying it is anti-trade and opposed to all foreign investments. These statements are not true, and they are disrespectful to the diverse communities across Aotearoa who fear the TPPA is being negotiated solely for big corporations, and not in the interests of ordinary kiwis or the country as a whole. My Japanese agent feels the same.

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4 Parallel importing will be banned, meaning that New Zealanders, especially the poor, will have to pay far more for all sorts of ordinary products.

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There are plenty of other things to be concerned about, and you can see them by Googling for TPPA.

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*Queen's honour for services to the farming industry.

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