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ASI Joins Coalition to Promote Agricultural Exports

The American Sheep Industry Association (ASI), on Dec. 2, joined more than 100 other agricultural organizations as part of the Coalition to Promote U.S. Agricultural Exports in a letter applauding President Bush's statements concerning the importance of opening up foreign markets and expanding U.S. agricultural exports during his term. In addition, the letter urged the president to fully authorize funding the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development (FMD) Program as the administration's budget develops for the 2007 fiscal year.

The coalition requests that MAP be funded at no less than \$200 million and that FMD should be funded at its full level of \$34.5 million, the amount authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill.

"We greatly appreciate the strong support annually expressed by Congress in fully funding these vital export promotion programs and urge your administration to also propose full authorized funding in your fiscal year 2007 budget message," states the letter.

The American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) utilizes these matching-funds programs as a means of cost-sharing promotional and marketing activities overseas for wool and pelts.

"Farm income and agriculture's economic well-being depend heavily on exports, which account for one-third or more of domestic production," says ASI Executive Director Peter Orwick. "During development of the 2002 Farm Bill, Congress recognized the importance of U.S. agricultural exports by approving an increase in funding for MAP and FMD."

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