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Foreign Trade Standards Often Ignore Science, U.S. Group Says, May 6, 2003

(Many standards, regulations are trade barriers, council reports)

Burdensome national standards and technical regulations imposed by the European Union (EU) and other major U.S. trading partners are trade barriers that often ignore sound science, according to a new report by a leading U.S. trade association.

"I don't think there is a real appreciation for the breadth of the application of unjust trade restrictions across a multitude of industries," Bill Reinsch, president of the National Foreign Trade Council (NFTC), said in a May 6 press release announcing the release of the report, ***"Looking Behind the Curtain: The Growth of Trade Barriers that Ignore Sound Science."***

NFTC gathered evidence of regulations and standards not based on sound science or subject to balanced risk assessment, those that are not based on or do not adhere to internationally agreed standards, and cases in which U.S. and foreign exporters are effectively prevented from fully participating in the regulatory drafting and review process.

"We're also seeing more and more attempts to dictate not how products perform but rather how they are made," Reisch said. "Both these approaches are clearly violations of the WTO [World Trade Organization] rules-based system.

Affected products include beef and poultry, fresh and processed fruits and nuts, food additives, vitamins and nutrients, wines, foods derived from biotechnology, aeronautics, automobiles, consumer electronics, computers, chemicals. Downstream industries affected include textiles, plastics and finished consumer goods, toiletries and cosmetics and household and industrial biocidal products, according to the release.

The report was released at a panel discussion featuring speakers from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the European Community and Mexico.

The full report and an executive summary may be accessed at: www.nftc.org.

Following is the text of the report's executive summary:
(begin text)

National Foreign Trade Council, Inc.

Looking Behind the Curtain: The Growth of Trade Barriers that Ignore Sound Science

Executive Summary