

**04-10**

## **STATEMENT OF POLICY**

### **Healthy International Trade**

#### **Policy**

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) supports trade agreements that give comparable consideration and priority to public health and safety issues as the agreements give to economic and financial interests.

- NACCHO advocates for policies, programs, and communication strategies that ensure that the public's health is not compromised in the pursuit of economic interests.
- NACCHO supports vital health and human products and services (such as personal health and public health services) and supports preservation of critical natural public resources (such as safe food and water, clean air, and clean energy) and supports avoiding compromise of these services and resources in all trade negotiations.
- NACCHO supports an ongoing assessment of the impact on the public's health of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement, Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), Trade and Investment Framework Agreements (TIFAs), Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) and similar international trade agreements. Based on such assessments, NACCHO supports modifications ensuring that these agreements do not have an adverse impact on the public's health.
- NACCHO supports transparency and full disclosure in trade negotiations and agreements to ensure accountability and to inform parties that may be affected by their measures.
- NACCHO supports trade negotiations and agreements that include public health standards, with each party to the agreement accepting the most restrictive standards to minimize global risk to the public's health.
- NACCHO supports the inclusion of appropriate public health representation in negotiations to ensure that regulatory protections and enforcement of standards (including international standards and standards of other treaty or agreement signers) regarding health, vital human services, and the environment are not compromised in trade agreements.

#### **Justification**

The General Agreement on Trade Services (GATS), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and similar trade agreements have placed economic and financial interests above health and have preempted a wide range of US laws, rules, policies and programs that protect or enhance the public's health and safety (including those related to tobacco control, the



environment, infectious disease, food safety and security, and occupational safety and health), the affordability of vital human services, and the integrity of them.<sup>1</sup>

The process for negotiations for these agreements (including the current Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and others under negotiation) does not clearly prioritize the public's health and fails to include input from the public health and environmental community. The World Trade Organization, based on these trade agreements, has overturned government decisions that protect the environment and public health but conflict with a nation's trade interests.<sup>2</sup> Inclusion of public health in the discussion of trade policies is an important step to ensure healthy and sustainable economic growth. There are substantial opportunities for progress by harmonizing health and trade policies both nationally and internationally.<sup>3</sup>

With an increasingly globalized economy, there are both tangible and direct threats to local public health. Concerns include those related to importation of goods and services that may influence infectious disease, tobacco control, and food safety.<sup>3</sup> An emerging threat is the spread of antimicrobial resistance, due in part to the widespread use of antibiotics in industrial livestock production.<sup>4</sup> In addition, invasive species introduced and spread through international and domestic trade pose concerns to economies, environment, and plant, animal, and human health.<sup>5</sup>

Global trade has significant impacts on the production, trade, and use of healthcare products internationally. Forty percent of the pharmaceuticals consumed in the US are imported, with an even greater amount (80%) imported when including those whose bulk ingredients are imported and production takes place domestically.<sup>6</sup> With increasing trade around pharmaceuticals and healthcare come a need for maintenance and strengthening of regulations to protect public health. In addition, developing countries often rely on aid in the form of food, drugs, and supplies that can be affected by trade policies. Adequate access to global healthcare goods and services is essential for effective local public health infrastructure for domestically and abroad.<sup>7</sup>

Trade agreements that do not integrate health can have a direct impact on public health services and the ability to protect and improve the public's health at the local level. It is important to include and prioritize public health in the discussion of international trade to ensure protections for both international and local public health.

## **References**

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4. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, (2014). Antibiotic Resistance and Trans-Atlantic Trade. Retrieved Jul. 24, 2014 from <http://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-a-livable-future/news-room/our-stories/2014/Antibiotic-Resistance-Trans-Atlantic-Trade.html>.
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**Record of Action**

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