

Chapter 6

Opening Doors to North America

The NAFTA Sectoral Approach

At the August 2007 NAFTA Commission meeting, the three North American trade ministers committed to continuing to build a more competitive North American business platform that will ease the flow of goods, services and capital among our countries. Specifically, the ministers approved focused work in four key sectors: swine/hogs, steel, consumer electronics and chemicals.

To help North America's swine sector compete more effectively, the trade ministers agreed to develop coordinated approaches to setting standards, regulations and performance objectives; to work on ways to prevent border delays; and to share research. The ministers also agreed to explore the possibility of developing protocols to ensure a predictable, coordinated response within North America in the event of an outbreak of swine-related diseases.

Through the work of the North American Steel Trade Committee, which comprises government and industry representatives, the NAFTA partners regularly exchange information and views on developments and emerging issues in the North American steel market, with the goal of identifying mutually beneficial solutions. The committee is currently undertaking a comprehensive analysis of trade barriers in this industry. Once the analysis is complete, the partners will make recommendations to enhance the competitiveness of North America's steel industry.

To help electronics firms succeed in all three countries, the North American trade ministers agreed to work together to lower barriers to trade in the sector and to ensure it has the tools and market access it needs. The ministers also agreed to work with the trilateral Commission for Environmental Cooperation to explore ways to address the environmental impacts of the disposal of consumer electronics.

With regard to the chemical sector, the trade ministers agreed to facilitate trade by developing a work plan to address trade impediments and to help make this industry more globally competitive and cost-effective.

NAFTA has helped to create new market and partnering opportunities for companies, as well as new and more competitively priced choices for consumers. It has established a strong foundation for our prosperity and has paved the way for the NAFTA partners to further advance their trade liberalization agenda.

Settling Disputes Under NAFTA

NAFTA provides a dispute settlement process to resolve the disputes that inevitably arise in such a large trade and economic relationship. Under NAFTA, our businesses can trade and invest with the assurance that rules are provided to ensure fair treatment and that procedures are in place to settle disputes impartially, on the rare occasions when they occur.