

2. Environmental Groups Warn of Damage from NAFTA, 1993

For decades, the environmental community has fought for a clean and safe environment. Laws to promote recycling, prevent pollution, protect endangered species and ensure safe food are just a few of the cornerstones of environmental successes. But the North American Free Trade Agreement could significantly weaken or wholly reverse these actions.

Many environmental laws operate by ensuring that imported goods are safe for our consumption. A case in point is the Delaney clause, which says that certain foods must be 100% free of cancer-causing pesticides. Many pesticide residues that are prohibited in the United States are allowed on Mexican produce.

Under NAFTA, the Mexican government could challenge our law as a barrier to free trade. The safety of our food supply could be determined by a panel of bureaucrats behind closed doors without public input. That's undemocratic and unacceptable.

NAFTA could encourage companies to relocate to areas where both standards and enforcement are lax. To keep those corporations in their communities, local and state regulators within the USA will be pressured to give in to industry demands on environmental regulation.

These fundamental problems have not been fixed by the environmental side agreement. In fact, it is so tortuous and riddled with loopholes it's doubtful enforcement fines ever will be applied.

A broad-based coalition of environmental, consumer and conservation groups opposes NAFTA because it will assault the laws that protect our forests, wildlife, air and water, and that keep our food safe to eat. NAFTA may mean "free trade" to multinational corporations, but it means environmental headaches for the rest of us.