US farmers campaign against tariff

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Farmers for Free Trade, a bipartisan coalition leading US farmers' opposition to tariffs, launched a new initiative on Wednesday highlighting the financial cost of the levies to the agricultural sector in major rural communities, as trade frictions escalated following a fresh round of duties Beijing and Washington slapped on each other's goods.  
Joining the chorus of industrial groups in opposing the release of a fresh list of Chinese products subject to 25 percent tariffs starting on Aug 23, the agricultural group is distributing ads telling listeners "how decisions in Washington DC are hurting their farms, their neighbors and the economy of rural America", according to Sara Lilygren, president of the Farmers for Free Trade Board.  
The farmers' group, chaired by former Republican senator Richard Lugar and Democrat senator Max Baucus, will run the advertisements－a mix of radio, television and print－initially in Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.  
"We expect to reach millions of American farmers. This is part of an overall $2.5 million 'Tariffs Hurt the Heartland' campaign that will last until the end of October," Matt McAlvanah, a former official in the Office of the US Trade Representative and now a spokesman for Farmers for Free Trade, told China Daily.  
He said the new initiative follows a "Voice of the Farmer" national TV ad campaign in March when the organization aired 30-second slots on cablenews channels including Fox, CNN and MSNBC, calling on US President Donald Trump to protect the free trade policies American farmers depend on.  
In addition to the ads, the new campaign also includes town hall events on tariff impacts in states across the country, aiming to raise awareness about hardships tied to the ongoing trade spat, according to a news release from the group on Wednesday.  
American farmers, ranchers and consumers benefit greatly from free trade. Food and other agricultural products the US exports support at least 1 million US jobs, the group said on its website.  
The price of soybeans－the largest US agricultural export to China－has plummeted by at least 20 percent since March, according to earlier media reports.  
In one of the radio spots, Indiana soybean farmer Brent Bible said, "This is not a war that I signed up for. It's not a war I want to be drafted for. Our farm and many others like ours will be the first casualties of a trade war."  
The latest tariffs on $16 billion of Chinese goods followed the first round of additional tariffs on $34 billion of Chinese imports, which took effect on July 6. China has pledged to respond in kind to the US tariff moves with duties on an equivalent value of US products.  
"The current tariffs covering $50 billion in products will eliminate four US jobs for every job created－and the economic damage will be even worse if the White House adds another $200 billion in products to the list, and China continues to retaliate," said Gary Shapiro, president and CEO of the Consumer Technology Association.  
The new tariff list, covering major technology categories such as semiconductors and the equipment that makes them, includes 58 products association member companies say are critical to their businesses－and putting tariffs on them will cost American jobs, Shapiro said on Wednesday.  
"These taxes are especially dangerous for small and medium-sized companies," he said in a statement.  
Matthew Shay, president and CEO of the National Retail Federation, also said in a statement, "This is just another step toward throwing away the benefits of tax reform that have given our nation's economy a badly needed boost.  
"It's time to stop digging a deeper hole while we can still climb out," Shay said.

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