



*Canadian farmers stand united with farmers around the world  
Multi-country declaration backs supply management*

December 14, 2005 (Hong Kong) - Canadian dairy, poultry and egg farmers have joined farmers gathered here from both developed and developing countries in calling on the World Trade Organization (WTO) to adopt trade rules that promote the stability of food supplies and prices, including supply management.

The WTO is holding its Sixth Ministerial Conference this week with agriculture trade negotiations highlighting the agenda. Producers from the majority of the WTO member countries want the WTO negotiations to fill a variety of needs, including saving family farms world-wide.

In a joint declaration signed by farm leaders representing hundreds of millions of farmers from developed and developing countries, these same farm leaders stressed that the negotiations must be about farmers and their livelihoods. Given that only 10% of agricultural production is actually traded on the world markets, the farm leaders feel that WTO rules should not negatively impact the 90% of agricultural production that is produced and consumed domestically.

Rather, farmers need to meet their societies' legitimate expectations concerning food security and safety as well as environmental, animal welfare and rural issues, the declaration states. "We believe that every country has a right to ensure that the concerns of its own citizens about food and agriculture, which extend far beyond purely commercial considerations, are met," it continues.

Laurent Souigny, Chair of the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency, one of the signatories to the declaration, said the majority of WTO member countries have sectors which must be given special consideration by recognizing them as sensitive sectors. "Canada is no different with its dairy, poultry and egg supply-managed production," he said.

The declaration says countries need the freedom to determine which products shall be treated as sensitive and the rules governing these products must be flexible. A WTO agreement must be well thought out to secure a fair living for farmers around the world.

Jacques Laforge, President of Dairy Farmers of Canada, another signatory to the declaration, said supply management has world-wide support among farmers. "We, too, maintain predictable imports through the use of tariffs while still guaranteeing access to our markets for imports of dairy products, chicken, turkey and eggs," he said. "Supply management is supported by farmers throughout the world and by our federal and provincial governments in Canada."

Research shows Canadians are also backing farmers. Research conducted in late November and early December demonstrates that a vast majority of Canadians, 90%, believe Canadian farmers have a right to organize themselves to collectively sell and market their products if that is what they choose, even if other countries do not like it. A full 85% say the federal government should not agree to changes demanded by other countries if this will hurt Canadian farmers.

"We are standing together with farmers from many other countries, both developed and developing, and know that the vast majority of Canadians are also behind us," Laforge said.

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