



Media Release

Barley Commission urges Parliament to support Colombia agreement

September 25, 2009 (Calgary, Alberta) — The Alberta Barley Commission is supporting the Canadian Wheat Board's call to have Parliament to quickly ratify a free-trade agreement with Colombia. Delaying the agreement, initially signed in November 2008, threatens \$135 million of barley and wheat exports annually.

"Our industry has worked tirelessly to establish trading relationships with Colombia," Commission CEO Mike Leslie says. "Our producers do not want this opportunity to evaporate. And they especially do not want to see this business go to competitors in the U.S.A. and Argentina."

About 40,000 tonnes of Alberta malting barley and 400,000 tonnes of wheat are exported from Western Canada to Colombia annually.

The Canada/Colombia agreement was introduced into the House of Commons in March. It has remained there, stalled after second reading. Colombia has since implemented a 15-per-cent trade tariff on wheat imports, although Argentina has duty-free access to the country. This puts Canadian grain producers at a \$40/tonne disadvantage.

The United States has also negotiated a free-trade agreement with Colombia, which, when ratified, would also give its wheat and barley producers duty-free access to the South American country.

"We depend on export markets for the long-term sustainability and economic viability of our industry," Leslie says. "We depend on Members of Parliament, regardless of their party, to support producers and legislation that paves the way for this to happen."

Canada's only barley commission, the Alberta Barley Commission (www.albertabarley.com) is a not-for-profit corporation organized, funded, directed and controlled by the province's 17,000 barley producers. The Commission coordinates and sponsors research, market development, technology-transfer and policy development on behalf of its producers.

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