



Farmers for Investment in Agriculture

For Immediate Release:

Farmers for Investment in Agriculture disappointed in Research Council's decision to cut agriculture

(Ottawa, ON., Friday, January 14, 2011) – Farmers for Investment in Agriculture, a national coalition of over 100,000 Canadian farmers is extremely disappointed in the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council's recent decision to drop food and agriculture as a strategic target area.

“At a time when the United Nations is expressing fears of a potential food crisis, countries like Canada have a responsibility to increase their commitment to food production,” says William Van Tassel, vice chair of the Fédération des producteurs de culture commerciales du Québec. “By cutting agriculture from its priorities, the Council seems to be disconnected from the current global reality.”

The United Nations, Forum on Food has said that farmers will need to produce as much food in the next 50 years as has been produced in the previous 10,000 years. The FAO has further identified food production will have to increase 70 percent by 2050 as the world population is expected to expand to 9.1 billion from the current 6.8 billion.

“Canadian farmers are today producing more food with fewer resources than ever before. That's a good news story because that's what sustainability is all about,” says Don Kenny, chair of the Grain Farmers of Ontario. “It is new research discoveries and new technology that have made this possible, but with increased world demand, we can only take it to the next level with more and better research.”

This decision taken by NSERC coincides with a tsunami of contributing factors holding back Canadian agriculture research and innovation. At a time when most countries are making huge investments in farming to capitalize on our growing world food demand, Canada has decreased public research funding for agriculture by 40 percent since 1994 and has lost over 10 percent of our research scientists. Farmers for Investment in Agriculture has recently called upon the House of Commons Agriculture Committee to undertake a thorough study of Canada's agricultural research commitment to determine our ability to keep up with the growing need for innovation in food production.

The Grain Growers of Canada feels the NSERC's decision will have a long-term and wide-ranging impact. When it comes to innovation in agriculture, it is putting our farmers at a disadvantage,” says Grain Growers of Canada president Stephen Vandervalk. “The Council controls the agenda for university research funding so this is a real set-back for Canadian farmers. We need more of a competitive edge and that means more research - not less.”

“With increased free trade agreements, new export markets are opening up for Canadian farmers, but this decision deprives us of the tools we need to compete in the global market,” says Allan Ling, Chair of the Atlantic Grains Council. “With the direction the Council is taking, and



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other coinciding factors, Canada is in danger of losing its agriculture competitive edge. We really need a Canadian vision that looks beyond the next harvest.”

Farmers for Investment in Agriculture (FIA), made up of the Fédération des producteurs de culture commerciales du Québec, Grain Farmers of Ontario, the Atlantic Grains Council, and the Grain Growers of Canada. Made up of over 100,000 farmers, it was formed in 2010 to address the need for greater investment in agronomic research.

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