



News Release

Canadian agricultural exporters seek ambitious outcome at WTO negotiations

January 9, 2008 (Geneva, Switzerland) – Canada’s agricultural and agri-food exporters are seeking an ambitious outcome in the World Trade Organization’s (WTO’s) six-year-long agricultural negotiations. Their goal: to see a WTO agreement that gives Canadian agricultural producers fairer access to markets around the globe and systematically reduces trade barriers.

“Canadian agriculture as a whole cannot afford to be excluded from these negotiations – our agricultural products, commodities and interests need to be included in whatever agreements may be reached,” said Mike Leslie, CEO of the Alberta Barley Commission. “Our largest barley customers, the beef and pork industries, need improved access to be competitive! We estimate increased access to market could generate billions of dollars of additional export value each year for Canadian agricultural producers.”

Leslie is at this week’s WTO trade talks in Geneva with Keith Lancaster, the executive director of Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance (CAFTA); Darcy Davis, of the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association; Martin Rice, the executive director of Canadian Pork Council; and representatives of the Alberta Government. The organizations are committed to seeing the Canadian government and Canadian agricultural exporters “at the table” during this week’s negotiations with other WTO member countries.

“Canada’s support for exports is critical to the over 90 per cent of producers that depend on the sales of export commodities,” said CAFTA’s Lancaster. “The negotiations are entering a critical stage and securing improved access to key export markets is essential to Canada’s ongoing competitiveness.”

Launched originally in 2001, the WTO’s Doha Round of on-again, off-again trade talks have been anxiously anticipated by agricultural producers in developing and developed nations alike.

“Like other agricultural exporters across the country, we’re struggling with the impact of a high Canadian dollar and uneven trade practices,” said Leslie. “A WTO agreement would help open up new markets for Canadian agricultural and agri-food producers.”

In Ottawa, Richard Phillips, executive director of the Grain Growers of Canada, said “for too long Canadian grain and oilseed producers have been penalized by other countries with unfair tariffs and market barriers. It is imperative that our need for fairer trade rules be reflected in the WTO’s final agreement.”

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Export and trade distorting subsidies cost Canadian grain and oilseed producers well over \$2 billion annually. Tariffs and tariff-quotas on Canadian cattle and beef alone cost that sector over \$1 billion annually, and the Canadian hog and pork sector an additional \$800 million. In Canadian malting, tariffs and tariff-quotas applied in Asia cost the malt sector about \$25 million annually.

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