

November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010

**Att: Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agrifood**

Farmers for Investment in Agriculture( FIA) is a national coalition of farm organizations including:

- Atlantic Grains Council
- La Fédération des producteurs de cultures commerciales du Québec
- Grain Farmers of Ontario
- Grain Growers of Canada

We are writing to respectfully ask you, as members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agrifood, to undertake a thorough study on research and innovation in our sector as your immediate priority.

Of specific importance and need is the issue of public research. Federal contributions to Agriculture and Agriculture Canada's research branch are only 60% of the 1994 inflation adjusted number. In addition to funding, there are a substantial number of AAFC scientists nearing retirement age and there not only needs to be replacements, but also a transition plan that allows an overlap to ensure knowledge transfer.

The private sector is a major investor in research in Canada, but over 90% of that money goes into only three major crops; corn, soybeans and canola.

Your study in addition to Federal spending levels, could also look into issues such as:

- Provincial research – What are provinces doing? Is it overlapping with private or federal work?
- Farmer-paid research check-offs – What levels are they at in various crops? How can we address issues of slippage? (in some crops only half the farmers fund all of the research) Is farmer money duplicating any of the Federal or Provincial research?
- Grains Innovation Roundtable is nearly done looking at research funding models. Should we adopt a different system? (seed versus end point versus a different model)

- Is there enough coordination between the Feds, Provinces, farmers and private?
- What can be done to ensure longer term commitments to research? A variety often takes 10 years to develop, but funding blocks are much shorter.
- What can be done to increase public-private partnerships?
- What can, or should be done to spur more investment, especially in cereals and pulses?

The work needed is not just for the agronomic needs of farmers. At a recent Senate Ag Committee meeting, the meat and dairy sectors were also asking for better feed varieties to improve their feed conversion and profitability.

We as farm groups in FIA are not always united on the concerns facing us, including some of the issues raised above.

However, we are united on the need for more and better research and innovation.

Getting our research and innovation right, not only benefits our entire value-added chain, but also improves the competitiveness of Canadian agriculture and agrifood over all.

We would be pleased to meet and discuss this further, but again, we would like to urge you to make this your number one priority for Committee work.

Sincerely,

Don Kenny, President of Grain Farmers of Ontario

William Van Tassel, Vice President of FPCCQ

Allan Ling, President of Atlantic Grains Council

Doug Robertson, President of Grain Growers of Canada.