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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NFU SIGNS JOINT LETTER ASKING FOR GM FOOD LABELLING

GANANOQUE, Ont—The NFU has joined the Polaris Institute, the Council of Canadians, Greenpeace, and several other organizations in signing a letter to Prime Minister Jean Chrétien asking that he “take timely legislative action on behalf of Canadians and enact a mandatory labelling regime for foods produced through genetic engineering.” The letter was copied to the Ministers of Agriculture, Public Works, Industry, and Health.

The letter decried the slow progress on labelling and the misguided move toward voluntary labelling. The Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB) Committee on the Voluntary Labelling of Foods Obtained or Not Obtained Through Genetic Modification has been working on voluntary standards for three and a half years.

The joint letter stated: “From its inception, the voluntary mandate and bias of the process towards the food biotechnology industry made it clear that the concerns of the Canadian public and non-governmental organizations would not be adequately addressed. This is why on November 16, 1999 over twenty-five health, environment and consumer organizations came together to collectively reject the voluntary process favoured by industry and to call for mandatory labelling of foods produced through genetic engineering. While 42 months have passed since this process began, there are still no labels on such foods. In fact, we have moved backwards as major retailers in Canada have forced the removal of labels on foods which are produced from non-genetically engineered sources.”

“We are writing you today to reassert our call for mandatory labelling of foods produced through genetic engineering and to call into question the purpose and integrity of the current CGSB process,” said the joint letter.

Polls have consistently shown that over 90% of Canadians want labels on genetically engineered foods.

The NFU is working with rural and urban organizations on issues surrounding GM food. In addition to the joint letter, the NFU is one of four organizations conducting an 11-community tour in western Canada to call attention to the risks and costs associated with genetically-modified wheat. On January 29, 2002, NFU President Stewart Wells presented a brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture calling for mandatory labeling for all genetically-modified food products.

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For More information

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