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national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FARMERS TAKE FIRM STANDS ON GMOs, ILOs

GANANOQUE, Ont.—"The debates about intensive livestock operations and genetically modified foods are not unique to us in Ontario," said Peter Dowling, Ontario Coordinator for the National Farmers Union. He continued: "At our National Convention in Regina last week, farmers from across Canada expressed concerns about the intrusive nature of industrial agriculture and its effects on our communities."

Ontario NFU delegates attended the five-day celebration of more than one hundred years of the farm movement in Canada. The NFU's western heritage goes back to the 1901 founding of the Territorial Grain Growers Association in Indian Head, Saskatchewan.

The Convention passed resolutions carrying on the NFU's tradition of activism by and for family farmers. Among the strong positions adopted were proposals that would make the corporate owners of intensive livestock operations (ILOs) or genetically-modified (GM) seed patents more accountable to the communities they disrupt with their presence.

Delegates from across Canada called for legislation to make the holders of patents on GM seeds liable for any genetic pollution by GM crops in farmers' fields. They renewed the NFU's demand that before any GM variety is released, there be rigorous long-term testing that addresses marketability, agronomic factors, health and safety, organic production and the environment. They also called for mandatory labelling of GM foods to enable domestic and international customers to know what they are buying.

In addition to concerns over GM foods, there were numerous resolutions dealing with ILOs and their negative impact on family farms. NFU delegates agreed that ILOs should be classified as industrial-commercial operations.

Under the policy advocated in other resolutions, ILOs would be subject to provincial labour laws that regulate matters such as workplace health and safety, overtime hours and statutory holiday pay. Provinces would establish minimum standards for the siting of ILOs, while local governments would have the final say based on local considerations. A portion of the liability for the manure generated in vertically-integrated ILOs would be assigned to the meat packers that own the animals. Properties close to mega-barns or their manure spreading locations would have their property tax assessments reduced.

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