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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **NFU RECOMMENDS AGAINST PROPOSED MANITOBA POTATO PLANT**

**SOUTHPORT, Man.**—“The Manitoba government has focused its attempts at agricultural development on expanding hog and potato production. However, if the government wants to slow the loss of farm families and increase prosperity on remaining farms, it has chosen exactly the wrong two sectors,” stated an NFU January 8 presentation to the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission hearings on a Simplot potato processing plant proposed for Portage la Prairie.

NFU presenters Fred Tait and Ken Sigurdson noted that Manitoba has only 130 producers of processing potatoes. Further, the number has fallen even as potato acreage has risen. “Not only will the expansion of potato acreage probably fail to slow the overall loss of farm families, it may not even slow the loss of potato farmers,” they said.

While increased potato production has the potential to help farmers, it will not—because production is increasingly industrialized. “The industrial model of production—in potatoes or hogs—expels family farmers, funnels huge amounts of taxpayers’ money to the controlling corporations, and extracts profits for distant, wealthy shareholders,” the NFU stated.

The NFU detailed governments’ plans to spend millions of taxpayers’ dollars on new irrigation infrastructure. In a draft report, the Manitoba government outlines a plan to contribute \$30 million over the next ten years with an equal amount coming from the federal government.

Given the small number of Manitoba potato growers, the NFU estimates that the total government contributions will probably exceed \$300,000 per farm. “Given the tens-of-thousands of family farms in Manitoba, it seems unwise to pursue a strategy of supporting farms that comes with a price-tag of \$300,000 per farm. It seems equally unwise to funnel scarce agricultural dollars to the largest farms in Manitoba. The proposed Simplot plant and potato acreage expansion must *not* be

taken as a sincere or effective attempt by the provincial government to slow the loss of family farms.”

The NFU brief also detailed probable environmental damage arising from increased industrial potato production: water depletion and pollution, soil degradation, and increased (weekly) spraying to control fungus and insects.

The NFU noted that the Manitoba and federal governments have failed to conduct key studies: the costs and benefits of increased potato production and processing and the environmental impacts. The NFU recommended that the proposed plant not be built.

The NFU is a national general farm organization with members across Canada. Many of those family farm members grow and market potatoes.

The NFU’s brief is available at [www.nfu.ca](http://www.nfu.ca) ([www.nfu.ca/potato-manitoba.pdf](http://www.nfu.ca/potato-manitoba.pdf))

— 30 —

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