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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ANNOUNCEMENT OF FIRST SYNTHETIC LIFE RAISES RISKS FOR
HUMANKIND AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

SASKATOON, Sask.—The J. Craig Venter Institute of the USA has announced that scientists have created a 100% synthetic life-form. Scientists have used a computer DNA map to create a synthetic cell that has replicated itself over a billion times. “This new technology raises serious concerns about who controls it, what it will be used for, and its potential impact,” said NFU President Terry Boehm.

Unfortunately, humans have technical capacity far greater than their predictive capacity, especially in the area of long-term consequences for all species on the planet. Who would have imagined when the first combustion engines fired up, that this invention would be a major factor in altering the climate of the planet. We cannot imagine the implications of synthetic life technology. It would be irresponsible to allow markets, and patents to be the only control of a technology with this much potential power and unforeseen impact.

Over 65 years after splitting the atom, we still have not solved the problem of nuclear waste or the capability of nuclear weapons to destroy the world. Major leaps in technology have often first been adapted for military purposes and created new centres of power. “As we have seen in the past, the new emperors will not control the world with armies, but with new technologies,” said Boehm.

All too often, farmers and nature bear the brunt of the exploitive potential of these new technologies. Farmers have lost markets due to the introduction of genetically-modified plants into the environment. Farmers, workers, the public, and the environment, have been exposed to chemicals long before anyone knew of the long-term effects. “Have we not learned anything from the lessons of the past such as PCBs and DDT contamination?” asked Boehm. As we move up the scientific ladder, the risks are rising exponentially to all species.

“We need to very carefully consider with the precautionary principle: the regulations, ethics, and moral questions, raised by interfering with nature and creating new and unnatural life forms,” concluded NFU President Boehm.

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