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**national farmers union**  
*In Union Is Strength*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DECEMBER 15, 2005**

## **FARMERS' PROTEST AT WTO DRAWS ATTENTION TO TRADE INJUSTICE**

National Farmers Union (NFU) Women's President Colleen Ross was one of 50 farmers, trade unionists and representatives of civil society organizations who peacefully protested the opening of the World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial meeting in Hong Kong on December 13.

During the opening speech by WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy, civil society delegates unveiled a banner saying "No deal is better than a bad deal" in a number of languages while chanting: "Development yes, Doha no". The protestors, led by Professor Walden Bello of the University of the Phillipines, who serves as Executive-Director of Focus on the Global South ([www.focusweb.org](http://www.focusweb.org)), talked to reporters outside the main conference hall following the incident.

Ross told reporters there are many legitimate reasons to question the so-called "Development Agenda" of this round of WTO talks. "The WTO has had more than ten years to alleviate global poverty and create a level playing field," stated Ross. "But yet farmers and society at large have not benefited from liberalized trade. On the contrary, farmers are continuing to slide further into poverty as they are displaced from their land in growing numbers. The big winners are transnational corporations that dominate global trade."

Ross described the experience as "quite nerve-wracking", but added it was important to put the farmers' message front and centre on the global stage. She and NFU President Stewart Wells are in Hong Kong as part of a Canadian delegation of farmers who are defending supply-management and the Canadian Wheat Board – agencies which have been targeted by negotiators from the US and EU at this round of talks.

While the protest took place in the main conference hall, thousands of farmers from around the world marched peacefully in the streets of Hong Kong. Approximately 100 farmers from South Korea braved the icy waters of Hong Kong's Victoria Harbour. Wearing lifejackets and carrying their country's flag, they attempted to swim across the busy harbour to the main conference centre, but were surrounded by about a dozen police boats before they reached the shore. Other farmers from South Korea, including a prominent legislator from that country, endured pepper spray during an hour-long confrontation outside the main conference hall.

Ross and Wells are in Hong Kong until December 18, when the WTO ministerial meeting is slated to end.

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Contact:

Please note that there is a substantial time difference between Canada and Hong Kong. For example, 10:30 AM CST Monday in Canada is 12:30 AM Tuesday in Hong Kong
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