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national farmers union

In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NFU REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT FARMERS' VIEWS AT WTO MEETING

National Farmers Union (NFU) President Stewart Wells and NFU Women's President Colleen Ross will be attending the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong December 13-18.

The NFU officials will be promoting policies which focus on raising the net incomes of Canadian farmers. In particular, they will be promoting supply-management agencies and the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB), and stressing the need for strong Crop Insurance programs, Cash Advance programs, and disaster (BSE-type) programs.

The NFU officials will be attending briefing sessions with the Canadian government, as well as working extensively with other farm organizations from around the world during the course of the five-day Ministerial Meeting. The NFU is a member of Via Campesina, a world-wide network of family-farm based organizations. A number of events organized by Via Campesina aimed at promoting the interests of family farms will be taking place in Hong Kong during the WTO Ministerial meeting.

The NFU representatives will be making public presentations about supply – management, Terminator technology and other seed supply issues, and how to make international trade operate in the public interest.

NFU Women's President Colleen Ross will be part of a panel on supply-management December 16, along with George Naylor of the US-based National Family Farm Coalition, ALtemir Torelli of Brazil, Ibrahim Coulibaly of Mali, and Daniel de la Orre Ugarte of the University of Tennessee.

“I want to use data on the dairy sector to show that farmers and consumers fare better under supply-management,” Ross said. “I also want to dispel the myth that deregulation is good for the consumer. In the US, for example, farmers earn less but consumers pay retail price that are higher than those in Canada.”

Ross said if supply-management is undercut at the WTO, Canada risks going the same route as Australia, which deregulated its dairy sector over a two-year period beginning in 2000. “Australian dairy farmers are now getting a mere 30 cents a litre for milk, but the price of milk and other dairy products has not gone down in the stores,” she said. “Prior

to deregulation, farmers in Australia could rely on getting 55 cents per litre in most states.”

Ross said Canadian farmers are concerned about the future of their supply-managed sectors. “Farmers in my dairy community have never been so concerned,” she stated. “I have farmers stopping me and pleading with me to please not allow our government to pull the rug out from under their feet. It would mean an end to many sustainable family farms across Canada.”

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