

# National Farmers Union

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**NOVEMBER 17, 2005**

## **NFU PRESIDENT OPENS NATIONAL CONVENTION**

**Ottawa Ont.**—In Ottawa today, NFU President Stewart Wells outlined the organization's priorities for the coming year, and its accomplishments over the past year. Wells was delivering the opening address at the NFU's Annual National Convention.

Wells said that the past year's biggest achievement was the NFU's leadership in successfully safeguarding citizens' rights to save, re-use, exchange, and sell seeds. "We held public meetings, we circulated petitions and collected 35,000 names, and we helped motivate over 1,000 citizens to write to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to make their objections known regarding proposed changes to the Plant Breeders' Rights Act," said Wells.

He also noted the NFU's success in protecting publicly funded research. He pointed to initial reports that the government planned deep cuts to ag. research, and to its subsequent reversal of that position. "I'm thrilled to say today that the government has put the closure of research facilities on hold. The government is now conducting consultations on the role of public research. I'm convinced that there would be no such consultations and that we may have lost critical facilities had the NFU not worked vigorously on this issue over the past year," said Wells.

Noting a range of other NFU work and achievements, Wells stated that the organization is a leader in identifying the issues critical to farmers. "The NFU is identifying the issues, defining the problems, pointing to solutions, and executing successful campaigns."

Among the NFU's other accomplishments, 2005 marked the fourth straight year of membership increases for the Union.

In the coming year, World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations will be a major focus for the NFU, with Wells and two other elected officials planning to make the trip to Hong Kong. "Current WTO talks endanger the single-desk powers of the CWB and the very future of supply management. If the Hong Kong meetings take place during an election, that danger is increased," said Wells.

Seed issues will continue to be a priority for the NFU. "Our work continues on this file, and we are now trying to get political parties interested in new legislation to protect the rights of citizens over their seed supply," said Wells. He also identified work on Terminator Technology (seeds genetically modified to be sterile after one generation) as a priority.

Finally, Wells noted the broadening and growing support behind Agriculture Canada's report "Empowering Canadian Farmers..." There is a need now to form a broad coalition to work to implement this government report. "This is the right report and now is the right time to create a situation where Canadian farmers can dare to hope again," said Wells.

The NFU Convention continues at the Travelodge West through Friday and Saturday.

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