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**national farmers union**

***In Union Is Strength***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **NFU URGES CONSUMERS TO BUY LOCALLY-GROWN FOOD AT EASTER**

Canadians should take the upcoming holiday weekend as an opportunity to celebrate a “Grown-in-Canada” Easter, says Colleen Ross, National Farmers Union (NFU) Women’s President.

Ross, who farms near Iroquois, Ontario, says grocery stores across Canada will register their highest daily sales volume on Easter Saturday, April 15. Many grocery stores are closed on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. She added that Easter is “one of the few occasions during the year when families across Canada gather to share a traditional meal.”

“In my community in Ontario, you can buy locally-raised meat,” said Ross. “You can also find locally-grown apples, squash and even wines. Carrots and other vegetables grown in this country and stored over winter can be found across the country. The list of high-quality Canadian foods that are available is endless. Unfortunately, it’s not always easy to find Canadian-grown on the shelves.” She suggests consumers ask specifically for Canadian-grown produce and Canadian-raised meat products.

The appeal to buy Canadian coincides with farmers’ protests at food terminals in Ottawa and Toronto. Ross said these protests are aimed at encouraging consumers to consider how their spending habits impact Canadian farmers. Farmers are dismayed at the high volume of food, including dairy products, coming into Canada.

Canadian agricultural exports totaled \$25 billion in 2005, but the average net farm income in Canada was negative \$20,000. In 2006, that income is expected to drop even lower. Meanwhile, imported food is not translating into lower prices at the retail level. Large grocery chains, like other large agribusiness corporations, have been enjoying record profits. She said farmers’ lack of economic power is a function of a dysfunctional marketplace that puts profit ahead of food security.

Ross said Canadian family farmers can meet all the dietary and culinary needs of the country’s population. When combined with supply-management marketing systems such as those for dairy, eggs and poultry, which are designed around Canada’s production capability and marketing requirements, family farmers can make a good living while supplying quality food to consumers at reasonable prices.

“The bottom line is that Canadian consumers want to support Canadian farmers, and family farmers want to provide high-quality food to our nation,” she said. “As summer approaches, I encourage everyone to visit locally-run Farmers’ Markets across Canada, where the money goes directly to the grower.”

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