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national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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POLL RESULTS INDICATE MAJORITY OF FARMERS SUPPORT CWB

The results of polling data released May 24 confirm what the National Farmers Union (NFU) has been saying for years - the majority of western Canadian farmers support the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB), says NFU President Stewart Wells.

The polling results for the Spring 2006 Producer Survey were prepared by Innovative Research Group. The survey is conducted annually for the CWB to measure farmers' concerns and attitudes on a number of issues. A total of 1303 CWB permit book holders were interviewed for the survey.

Wells said the polling results clearly show that while farmers are pessimistic about agricultural policy direction in Canada, there is growing support for the CWB. "In fact, an increasing number of farmers believe the CWB's role should be strengthened," said Wells. "A total of 76% of farmers strongly support or "somewhat support" the CWB, a rise of 3% over last year. Even among the youngest farmers – those below age 35 – 66% support the CWB."

A total of 71% of farmers believe the CWB most effectively represents their views on agricultural and trade issues.

On the question of ending the CWB single-desk and implementing a dual market, 88% of farmers believe the final decision should be made by farmers themselves through a plebiscite or CWB director elections rather than leaving the decision to the federal government alone.

Wells said the survey questions regarding the dual market illustrate there is significant confusion out in the country regarding the consequences of ending the CWB single desk. "Unfortunately, the mythology of the 'dual market' still persists," he said. "Some farmers still want to believe that they can have the marketing and policy advantages of single-desk selling while at the same time stripping the CWB of those advantages. Clearly the proponents of this myth are not taking the time to think about this idea. The only true dual market system is the one that we have right now, where farmers can sell their grain through the CWB or sell it themselves using the Producer Direct Sales Program."

Wells said the Producer Direct Sales Program, combined with the other new marketing options that the CWB offers, provides farmers with direct sales opportunities while still protecting the CWB marketing advantages.

Farmers' lack of faith in the dual market is evident in the survey when farmers were asked what measures would make their farm more profitable. Creating dual markets for wheat and barley ranked the lowest on a list of 9 options. Also, when farmers were asked about the real options – the single-desk or the open market – farmers overwhelmingly support the single-desk

Wells concluded the survey proves that western Canadian farmers support the CWB, and are opposed to any move that would weaken or dismantle the Board's effectiveness as the farmers' marketing agent.

The NFU has prepared an analysis of the CWB's financial advantages to farmers. That analysis will be published this week.

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