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national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NFU PRESENTS BRIEF TO SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

Strengthening orderly marketing and supply-management systems are the key to restoring prosperity to Canada's farming community, according to the National Farmers Union (NFU).

In a presentation to the Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry in Ottawa May 30, NFU President Stewart Wells said corporate concentration in the marketplace has eroded farmers' economic power. As a result, prices do not reflect conventional "supply and demand" factors. The only way to raise farm incomes is to support mechanisms that strengthen farmers' collective marketing power, such as the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) and supply-management agencies.

"Three facts are clear," Wells told the Senators. "First, world food supplies are currently very low. In fact, by the end of the year, they may be at record lows. Second, realized net farm incomes and farm-gate commodity prices are at record lows. Third, the profits of large agribusiness companies are at record highs. It's time to connect the dots."

Wells said the regulatory framework in agriculture has shifted from protecting primary producers' interests to protecting corporations. "The government has granted multinational companies favourable regulatory changes such as increased patent protections, which are tremendous wealth-extraction tools," he said. "At the same time, these same companies are arguing that farmers' marketing boards have to be destroyed."

The NFU delegation to the Senate hearing included Stewart Wells, NFU Women's President Colleen Ross, former NFU National Board member Barry Robinson and NFU Carleton County Local President Jack Hoogenboom. The 90-minute hearing was recorded by CPAC-TV for broadcast at a later date.

NFU Women's President Colleen Ross said federal policies promoting free trade have not benefited farmers. Despite increased production and higher exports, farm incomes have deteriorated.

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