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national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BARLEY PLEBISCITE QUESTION, VOTING RULES NEED TO BE FAIR

Farmers have scored a major victory by forcing the federal government to conduct a plebiscite on barley, says the President of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

Stewart Wells said the barley plebiscite announcement by Agriculture Minister Chuck Strahl is proof that public pressure is forcing the government to respect the law and abide by Section 47.1 of the Canadian Wheat Board Act. Prior to Strahl's October 31 announcement, the government had steadfastly refused to discuss the possibility of a farmer vote on the future of the CWB.

However, Wells said the question on the plebiscite must be clear. He called on the Minister to use the question recommended by four farm organizations on October 17. That question asks farmers to select between realistic choices. In the case of barley marketing, the two-part question is as follows:

A) I wish to maintain the ability to market all barley, both malting/food, with the continuing exception of feed barley sold domestically, through the CWB single desk system.

B) I wish to remove the single desk marketing system from the CWB and sell all barley through an open market system.

The farm groups, which include the NFU, Keystone Agricultural Producers Association (KAP), Wild Rose Agricultural Producers Association (WRAP) and the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS), also called for the same question on the issue of wheat marketing.

The NFU President said a major concern with the proposed plebiscite is whether the present government will run a fair vote. "Because of government tampering with the CWB Director elections, we don't have much confidence this government will run a fair vote on this plebiscite. The NFU will work to ensure the barley plebiscite is a fair vote." concluded Wells.

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