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national farmers union

In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**WTO SHOULD NOT BE USED AS EXCUSE TO KILL FARMERS'
MARKETING AGENCIES**

Canadian farmers should not be forced to sacrifice their marketing boards for the benefit of multinational agribusiness corporations, says the President of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

Stewart Wells, NFU President, said comments by Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister Bob Bjonnerud at the World Trade Organization (WTO) talks in Geneva earlier this week are “completely offside.” Bjonnerud told reporters July 24 that Canada will have to make “concessions” on supply-management agencies for eggs, dairy and poultry, as well as the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB), in order to achieve a trade deal.

“Bjonnerud’s claim that western Canadian farmers will receive higher net incomes as a result of increased trade and higher exports is a myth,” stated Wells. “The reality is that despite steadily rising exports over the past thirty years, realized net farm incomes in Canada have not kept pace. In fact, they have fallen dramatically.” Over that period, however, multinational agribusiness companies have experienced record profits as a result of higher trade volumes.

NFU Youth Vice-President Kalissa Regier pointed out that neither the supply-management agencies nor the CWB can be labelled as subsidies, since their day-to-day operations are financed entirely by the farmers on whose behalf they operate. They also operate on market principles and have been proven to be non-trade distorting.

Bjonnerud’s assertion that sacrificing supply-management and the CWB single desk will lead to cuts in US farm subsidies is misleading, concluded Wells. The US has allegedly offered to cap farm subsidies at \$15 billion annually, compared to its current cap of \$48.2 billion. “However, even the \$15 billion is well above what was actually paid last year, so in reality, the US is not making any cuts at all. Canada, on the other hand, would be sacrificing something very real – market power for farmers.”

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