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national farmers union

In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CHANGES TO “PRODUCT OF CANADA” FOOD LABELLING LAWS WELCOMED

The announcement that the federal government will introduce changes to rules governing “Product of Canada” labels on food products is welcome news, says Nigel Smith, Youth President of the National Farmers Union (NFU). The NFU has long advocated these changes.

Smith who farms near Elgin, Ontario, says Canadians want clarity and truth in food labelling, so that they can be confident that food labelled “Product of Canada” is actually produced in Canada by Canadian farmers.

Grant Robertson, NFU Ontario Coordinator, noted that under the current Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) guidelines, imported food products can be repackaged and labelled as “Product of Canada” if the cost of labour and/or additional ingredients represents 51% of its cost of production. Robertson said the NFU has raised this issue in Ottawa on numerous occasions. In a brief to the House of Commons Agriculture Committee in early April, 2008, the NFU clearly stated: “Only food that is produced by Canadian farmers should be allowed to be called ‘Product of Canada’.”

The new regulations would require virtually all the contents to be Canadian in origin. Products with imported ingredients would be required to state that fact on the label. Robertson said the NFU will be watching to see the details of the new regulations to make sure farmers and eaters get the kind of regulations they want and need.

While the full details of the new labelling guidelines have not been released, the government appears to be listening to the public on this issue. Smith says it is important for Canadian consumers to be able to purchase Canadian-produced food products, and truthful labels are an essential tool.

At the NFU national convention in London, Ontario last November, a resolution was adopted calling for improved clarity and accuracy in food labelling. “The NFU has led the charge on this issue,” stated Smith. “It’s rewarding to see progress made on this front.”

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