

National Office
2717 Wentz Ave.
Saskatoon, Sask.
S7K 4B6
Tel (306) 652-9465
Fax (306) 664-6226
E-Mail: nfu@nfu.ca



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DECEMBER 8, 2009

**NFU PRESIDENT TESTIFIES BEFORE COMMONS AGRICULTURE
COMMITTEE REGARDING GM CONTAMINATION**

The devastating and sudden closure of the European market for Canadian flax exports due to contamination by a Genetically-Modified (GM) flax variety proves the current regulatory system needs to be strengthened, says Terry Boehm, President of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

In testimony recently before the House of Commons Agriculture Committee in Ottawa, Boehm said Canadian farmers have borne the financial brunt of the market collapse. While the flax market disruption is bad, the potential for even worse calamities exists. With the possibility of GM wheat on the horizon, he said the likelihood of GM contamination in that crop could spell unprecedented disaster for the large Canadian export wheat market.

“It is critical that the system be reformed to prevent further market disasters,” stated Boehm. “It is imperative that new and existing GM crops be looked at through the lens of potential market harm. Recent changes to the variety registration system could accelerate these market disasters for Canadian farmers. We have seen what GM contamination of flax has done, and surely no one should doubt what would happen to wheat if we allow GM varieties to be registered.”

Boehm said the current regulatory system would not stop any new GM varieties from “killing our markets.”

The NFU President said the recent approval of “Smartstax Corn” means this new GM variety of corn will likely be grown in Canada. “Smartstax has eight combined genetically-engineered traits. These GM traits have all been approved on an individual basis, but they have not been assessed with regard to the effect of those traits when combined with each other,” Boehm stated. “There has, so far, been no firm recognition on the part of the regulators that mixing genes might require further detailed scrutiny. If you mix two or three chemicals, which are perfectly safe individually, you can get toxic results in combination. Could this not happen with mixing genes?”