

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



national farmers union

In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FARMERS CHALLENGE CORPORATE CONCENTRATION IN BEEF PACKING

National Farmers Union (NFU) Board members from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba as well as representatives from farm organizations from Mexico and the US are in Billings, Montana to build a common strategy for dealing with corporate power in meat and livestock markets. Livestock farmers from all three nations met the media today to discuss progress on forging a North America-wide response to common challenges.

NFU Board member Neil Peacock told reporters: “Canadian cattle farmers and Canada’s National Farmers Union have come to Billings to help build a tri-national mobilization to change the way the business is done in the livestock and meat markets. Farmers and the NFU have also come to help to build fair and sustainable alternatives to the corporate-controlled, export focused system that is destroying family farms and communities across North America.”

The NFU believes that that best way to advance cattle farmers’ interests is through collaboration with US and Mexican farmers and organizations. The areas of common concern and common struggle include the following:

1. Working toward legislation that bans meat packer ownership and control of cattle—so-called “captive supply.” Large packers use captive supplies to push down prices to independent livestock producers.
2. Pushing back against the imbalance of power within the food system: challenging corporate concentration; building sustainable, democratic, local food systems; and focusing on food safety, security, and sovereignty as alternatives to far-flung, corporate-controlled systems.
3. Critiquing and reforming export-oriented agriculture policies—showing policy-makers and farmers that trade-focused agriculture and food policies hurt farmers in both the exporting and receiving nations.
4. Working locally, nationally, and tri-nationally toward a renegotiation or elimination of trade agreements (NAFTA and WTO) and toward the creation of a fair-trade system that fosters family farm prosperity and local and regional food systems rather than eroding both, as is now the case.

Peacock stated: “Farmers from Mexico, the US, and Canada are united. And farmers in all three nations are united with non-farm families who purchase food. All are united in calling for structural changes to current agricultural policies within the three nations with the common objective of improving food safety, farm incomes, environmental protections, and access to food across of the North American continent.”

The National Farmers Union is broadening and accelerating its work toward reforming cattle, meat, and food markets. Forming a tri-national coalition to pursue common objectives and speak to governments with a common voice is a critical step toward success for all North Americans—farmers and non-farmers, rural and urban, Canadian, Mexican, and American.

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For more information, contact Neil Peacock, National Board Member, National Farmers Union. (780) 505-2962.