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**national farmers union**

***In Union Is Strength***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NFU ASKS MINISTER FOR FORMAL ASSESSMENT OF WESTERN DROUGHT**

In a letter to federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz, the President of the National Farmers Union (NFU) says drought conditions on the prairies warrant a formal assessment under the provisions of the “AgriRecovery” framework. AgriRecovery includes a mechanism wherein: “In instances where an event is national in scope and upon request from a national organization..., the federal government may initiate an assessment...”

Wells stated: “On behalf of the National Farmers Union, I am making the formal request for the federal government to initiate an assessment.”

Stewart Wells says current federal and provincial programs are inadequate to meet the severity of the looming crop and livestock disaster.

“For many farm families, the determining factor for whether they will be able to continue farming will be the adequacy and the timeliness of your government’s response under the AgriRecovery framework,” Wells stated in the letter. He added the government must “move with unprecedented swiftness to craft an AgriRecovery program that delivers funds rapidly.”

Wells said in order to speed up drought relief efforts, the federal government should cover the full cost of this disaster assistance. This would save time by avoiding protracted negotiations regarding multi-party funding. “While provincial governments must have effective input into solutions, a federal offer to cover all costs will dramatically speed implementation and provide affordability in provinces where there are relatively few people in proportion to the tens-of-millions of acres affected by this drought,” he said.

The NFU President pointed to Section 9.3 of the “Growing Forward” agreement that enables any AgriRecovery program funding splits to be assessed on a “case-by-case” basis in the event of a large natural disaster.

Wells said the government needs to “double” both the resources it is putting into the drought relief effort and the speed of implementation. He also urged the government to put out a “discussion document to farmers” outlining the range of available solutions,

including “immediate cash payments, debt-servicing relief, hay purchase and transport programs, cattle relocation programs, and other options.”

Copies of the letter are available upon request at 306-652-9465.

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