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national farmers union

In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WTO TALKS ENDANGER CWB SINGLE DESK, WARNS NFU

The upcoming World Trade Organization (WTO) talks, scheduled to get underway in Geneva next week, are targeting the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) single desk, warns the President of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

The WTO negotiations are expected to be based on a draft text that would eliminate western Canadian farmers' single-desk marketing system for wheat and barley by 2013. Under the proposed "Annex K", which was adopted in December, 2008 at the WTO negotiations on "modalities", the "use of agricultural export monopoly powers" for "state trading enterprises" would be eliminated by 2013.

The CWB operates under fair trade rules and does not rely on export subsidies, noted NFU President Stewart Wells. "Under the proposed text, farmers stand to lose a critically important marketing tool that has allowed them to compete on the global market, while returning a larger share of the proceeds of the sales back to farmers themselves. If the CWB single desk is eliminated, this will have a devastating impact on farmers' bottom line."

"In the most recent CWB elections, farmers defied the interference and meddling from the Conservative government and voted to support the single desk selling of the Canadian Wheat Board. Why does the Harper government continue to act on the wishes of grain companies and special interest lobby groups working against the CWB while ignoring the interests of the majority of farmers? All that Canada has to do is stand up at the WTO talks and take the CWB off the table. It is likely that Canada would receive support from many other countries, but Canada needs to stand up and be heard at these negotiations," said Wells.

Wells stated that decisions regarding the CWB should not be delegated to the WTO. "Canadian farmers must make their own decisions regarding their own marketing agencies," he said. The resumption of the WTO talks follows last week's meeting of ministers and negotiators from WTO member countries in New Delhi, India.

- 30 -

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