

December 10, 2002

Introductory remarks by Colleen Ross-Weatherhead

Welcome Minister VanClief (*and Secretary of State Mitchell*) to this meeting of the Farm Women Leaders' coalition. Many of our members here today have altered their flight schedules in order to meet with you today, since the cancellation of our meeting with you yesterday.

We represent farm women's groups, farm organizations and are farmers in our own right. We understand agricultural and rural issues from the grassroots through to policy making and implementation. As a coalition we have identified issues which will be presented to you today.

At this time I would emphasize the importance of the Farm Women's Bureau in making important events such as this happen for us. The FWB assists farm women with necessary networking across this vast country. FWB facilitates opportunities for farm women to speak to such initiatives as the Agricultural Policy Framework and the provincial and federal agricultural policies which ultimately impact the farms we live and work on and the multitude of farm women we represent. The positions that those of us hold bears upon us a responsibility to bring forward issues of importance and concerns which you need to understand today.

I will now introduce the women you are meeting with today (*list of names attached*).

At this time I would like to invite you to listen to our coalition members. We represent diverse groups and diverse farm operations, yet here today we speak as one voice, as an umbrella group. The concerns and issues which we face in Canada are varied and many. Today we will focus on the **APF** and its 5 points as we see them. We have consensus on these presentations and they are our direction to you.

After the presentation Hon. Vanclief (*and Sec. State Mitchell*) will have an opportunity to respond, after which we will in turn reply and ask questions.

NATIONAL FARM WOMEN LEADERS

**MEETING WITH HONOURABLE LYLE VANCLIEF
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD CANADA**

December 10, 2002

FOOD SAFETY AND FOOD QUALITY

We believe that Canadian agriculture policy must focus on small to medium sized, Canadian owned and Canadian operated family farms. This concept needs to be promoted with public education and public dollars.

These family farms are best suited to benefit all Canadians because Canadian owned, Canadian operated family farmers have a deep commitment to their land, to their animals and to quality of life. That concern for quality of life is extended not only to themselves but to all Canadians who eat the food they produce.

Improvements in the area of food safety and food quality can help create public support of the agriculture industry.

Unbiased research needs to be undertaken by independent researchers, with no profit or control by “for profit companies”.

Taxpayers’ money should not be used by government to partner with “for profit companies” to develop new products.

Government regulation and inspection is needed and appropriate. Canadian farmers are held to regulation and enforcement to Canadian standards and importers of food products into our country should be held to these same standards and which should include mandatory country of origin labelling. It is expected that government will need to increase resources and inspectors to ensure these standards are adhered to.

We feel that public consultations should be that, public and open, not just by invitation. Consultation is necessary so that all views may be heard and must include women farmers. Government consultations must accommodate primary producers when discussions and decisions concerning agriculture are made. This includes appropriate and sufficient time be given to allow producers participation.

Costs associated with improved food safety and quality should be borne by those who are the beneficiaries, not by the small and medium sized primarily.

It is imperative that the good reputation of Canadian farm products be preserved and maintained. However, branding Canadian products will not guarantee that the primary producer will receive anything more for his product.

Canadian farmers have an established reputation for high-quality, safe, agricultural products. This has been accomplished by Canadian owned and Canadian operated family farms. We have a close relationship with our land and our animals.

It is the farm family, whose sweat goes into planting and harvesting the crop, birthing and raising the animal. Farm families are the ones who shed the tears when a crop fails or an animal dies.

Canadian farm families are the ones who will best protect the health of their families, their communities and Canadian citizens.

SCIENCE ET TECHNOLOGIE

Nous exigeons de la recherche indépendante des multinationales et du gouvernement sur les OGM afin d'évaluer les risques et conséquences pour les consommatrices et consommateurs.

Nous voulons que les nouvelles biotechnologies soient évaluées en fonction de respecter la santé, la qualité de vie et l'environnement des Canadiennes et des Canadiens.

Avec les OGM les multinationales fabricantes vont prendre le contrôle de l'agriculture canadienne.

Les OGM sont un danger majeur pour la biodiversité de la planète.

Nous voulons que l'étiquetage soit obligatoire tant sur les produits canadiens que ceux importés de l'étranger.

La science de base est perdue ou oubliée et il n'y a aucun budget pour protéger notre patrimoine biologique de nos produits naturels sans OGM.

Il faut augmenter substantiellement les budgets et la recherche d'une agriculture durable, renouvelable et biologique, afin de protéger et promouvoir la diversité et la biodiversité canadienne.

ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Vanclief,

We are sorry we do not have time today to discuss our deep concerns regarding the details not included in your agriculture policy framework. We feel we only have time to set precedents for each element of the APE.

For the **environment** as well as the other elements, the bottom line is.... We want to **regain** a Canadian owned and operated family farm industry that **we can be proud of** and which **consumers can trust**. (*Pride in ownership is a great motivator – we see an esp that is incentive and rewards oriented rather than regulated*)

We want a **domestic agriculture policy** component added to the policy framework. Family farm history has proven our farmers have provided food in a **sustainable environment** for our families and that is recognized world wide. (*We have a problem though with farms that mass produce, but leave polluted environment in Canada, without compliance results*)

We want a **social component** added to Canadian agriculture policy, the need for which has been recognized in Europe and the United States.

This is necessary because farming is **more than a business**, it is everyone's "bread and butter"; it is directly related to our health.

Consumers' dollars are not passed to the primary producer at a sufficient level that enables returns to cost of production and return on investment to Canadian farm families, let alone **environmental adaptation costs**.

We want to be business people, but we, also, need to grow food for the **world's critical** food needs. (*Food security is one of our concerns*)

We want to take back our industry from the hands of multinationals (*moratorium or ILO's*) and pharmaceutical companies who are **putting our environment** at risk. (*Small and medium sized farms have a good record for efp and have had less problems, as well – they are less of a risk on a wider scale – eg. More shelter belts, less water drainage, less pesticide use, more local contact to human health issue, live on our land*)

We want to enable our youth to enter farming on small and medium sized farms without being enslaved to banks and creditors for the rest of their lives because of the **social needs** of all society.

We want to be able to **farm at the size** where one natural disaster does not destroy the souls of our families and enslave our families to debt until we die!

In the social **policy component** relating to the environment we want to express our deep concern that **current farm income** will not enable farmers to pay any substantial portion of the capital cost and increased labour costs of new environmental adaptation programs and policies.

The new environmental strategies and liability measures that will need to be put into place for the benefit of all Canadians will not guarantee return of 1¢ more from the market place to Canadian farmers.

Constant monitoring of soil, water and air quality along with the detailed record keeping necessary at the primary agriculture level will create a **heavy responsibility** for compliance and accountability.

In most cases this will be an added responsibility of women farmers.

The knowledge and information needed to do this job will require increased **scientific and medical knowledge transfer** from specialists and researchers to these women farmers.

Canadian farm women cannot volunteer any more time to do unpaid jobs on their family farms. They, like everyone else, must be paid for the work they do so they can help provide for their families.

Many women farmers have very little time or money as they already work up to 50% of the

time off the farm in addition to being responsible for their homes, health care, child care and senior care in rural communities with inadequate rural services.

In light of these realities, Mr. Vanclief, we request that you, as federal Agriculture Minister, set aside time in the near future to carry out a **participatory consultation process** for in depth discussion to enable the **women farmers perspective** to be added to a national action plan for the environment in Canada on these and other critical issues.

The topics we want to discuss in detail will include:

1. Best management practices definition
2. Pesticide regulation and harmonization
3. Renewable fuels
4. Carbon sinks - Kyoto
5. Species at risk (Bill C-5)
6. Marginal land use
7. Fish habitat
8. Urban sprawl
9. Rural development and agriculture education
10. Research needs for baselines in water, air, soil
11. Laws for foreign ownership and compliance
12. WTO and the environment
13. GMO's and the environment
14. Intensive livestock operations moratorium
15. Incentives/rewards oriented compliance strategies
16. Recognition and inclusion of agriculture in rural development strategies
17. Studies on human health
18. Shelter belts
19. Water export

GESTION DES RISQUES DE L'ENTREPRISE

Les agricultrices demandent que le travail de l'agricultrice et des enfants dans les entreprises agricoles soit comptabilisé dans les coûts de production.

Nous demandons d'étudier les impacts sur la communauté rurale apporté par la situation de crise économique à la ferme : exemple – niveau de stress très élevé en agriculture avec un très haut taux de suicide.

Nous demandons un programme d'assurance qui couvrirait les désastres dans les fermes.

Nous demandons de sortir l'agriculture de l'OMC.

Nous souhaitons que les pays soient en contrôle de leur production.

Nous voulons que les consommateurs soient informés sur les modèles de production de nos produits et qu'ils soient incités à acheter les produits canadiens.

Nous demandons des formations ciblées pour les producteurs agricoles.

La ferme familiale a besoin d'un revenu décent. Les agricultrices souhaitent avoir un filet de sécurité des revenus qui couvrirait les coûts réels des productions incluant un retour sur l'investissement.

En conclusion, les agricultrices canadiennes veulent des fermes familiales viables, rentables et transférables de génération en génération.

RENEWAL

I have been chosen to address renewal since I am a young farmer.

There are two things we need for renewal of agriculture:

1. A return of cost of production and in that return on investments and with that will
2. Come a return of the joy/quality of life.

So how do we do this?

We need to promote and support small and medium farms so young people can afford to get into the business. Reward small farms that support their local communities and stay small.

We want a fiscal incentive program that gives preferential treatment to encourage young farmers to enter the business and stay. For example:

1. Interest relief for the first few years of loans for beginning farmers.
2. Tax relief that gives incentive to farmers who sell to the next generation of small and medium farms at lower value rather than selling at a high value to larger farms.

We want to discourage large corporate farms that suck money out of community like intensive hog barns and specifically the one in Brandon.

The Competition Act must be reviewed so that the effect of monopolies and oligopolies on inputs and marketing to small and medium sized farms is exposed.

We need to increase supply management, cooperatives, direct marketing to consumers and website marketing so that farmers have control over the marketing and production of their own products and the price of them so that they will have a cost of production and in that a return on investment. This will free up thousands of jobs across the country for other people increasing the viability of our rural communities.

I plan on still farming in 40 years. But the math of the current agricultural policies do not add up. Our agriculture policy is directed towards increasing agri-food exports and that has happened. At the same time, net farm income has stayed the same and in the most recent Census we have just registered the steepest decline in the number of farmers. Policies must be changed to support and ensure small farmers to enter and stay in the business.

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