

--- FARM WOMEN'S VOICE HEARD IN OTTAWA ---

OTTAWA, Ontario – “Farm Women were united in their vision to Agricultural Minister Vanclief”, said Carolyn VanDine of the Farm Women’s Coalition after leaders from five farm women’s groups met with Minister Vanclief on Parliament Hill Tuesday. Far from validating the Agricultural Policy Framework, the farm women presented a vision of small and medium sized farms and their ability to excel in the areas of food safety and quality, environmental issues, science and technology, risk management and renewal.

Canadian farmers have a well established reputation for supplying high quality, safe agricultural products. We need to protect this reputation. Improvement in the area of food quality and food safety can help create public support of the agriculture industry with the costs being shared by all who are beneficiaries. Regulation and enforcement to Canadian standards must be upheld both by ourselves and those who import food products into our country. Canadian agriculture policy must bring its focus back to small to medium sized Canadian owned and Canadian operated family farms. 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 the 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.

We farm women want research on GMOs that is independent of the multinational organizations and of government, in order to objectively evaluate the risks and impacts on consumers. Basic science is lost or forgotten and there is no budget for the protection of our biological heritage of natural non-GM products.

Women farmers want a new approach to the environmental element of the Agricultural Policy Framework. Women farmers want a change in policy to promote small and medium sized farms owned and operated by Canadian farmers. This policy that benefits Canadian society should be funded by society as part of a social policy similar to Europe and the United States. The women farmers advised Mr. Vanclief they need to be part of a consultation process addressing about 20 critical environmental issues.

Family farms need to earn a decent income. Women farmers want an income safety net that will cover the real production costs and include a return on their investment. Canadian farm women want viable family farms which are transferable from generation to generation.

We will attract new farmers and generate renewal when we improve the quality of life in agriculture, by ensuring that farmers receive a cost of production. This will be achieved

by giving incentives to small farms and increasing supply management, cooperatives and direct local marketing so that farmers have control over their own product.

Carmen Ducharme concluded that “Farm women look forward to continuing the dialogue with Minister Vanclief.”

- 30 -

For more information contact:

Carmen Ducharme, Fédération des agricultrices du Québec (819) 394-2542

Irène Marais, Réseau des Entreprises Familiales, (450) 785-2950

Karen Pedersen, National Farmers Union, (306) 652-9465

Faye Mayberry, Federated Women’s Institutes of Canada, (403) 886-4129

Carolyn VanDine, Canadian Farm Women’s Network, (506) 328-3723