

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MAY 6, 1999**

**NFU CALLS FOR PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO  
HEALTH CANADA'S ACTIONS ON GROWTH HORMONE**

**GANANOQUE, Ont.**—"The mess at Health Canada that has come to light around the review of Monsanto's Bovine Growth Hormone rBST still persists," said Peter Dowling, a dairy farmer and Ontario Coordinator for the National Farmers Union. He stressed: "The problem is not a lack of public confidence in the Health Protection Branch, it's a lack of integrity. We need a public inquiry with a mandate to investigate thoroughly, point fingers and lay blame."

Dowling took this message to the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry on May 3rd, when he appeared for a second time with other witnesses appalled by the flaws in the drug review process. "Food safety is of great concern to farmers," he said. He called for a return to the Precautionary Principle inherent in the Food and Drugs Act. Health Canada's switch to "risk management," he said, makes food safety "in the extreme, a case of how many dead bodies we are willing to accept."

In proposing a judicial inquiry, the NFU brief to the Senate Committee cited: reports that Health Canada managers routinely pressure scientists to approve drugs regardless of safety concerns; a continuing gag order on the scientists who refused to approve rBST; a seriously flawed report by an external panel on the hormone's human health effects; and a host of unanswered questions about the genetically-engineered production-boosting hormone.

Dowling also called for a legislated ban on rBST. "Given that the drug is harmful to cows and that scientists are still debating the human health effects, we want legislation to ban the product from Canada," he said. The manufacturer, Monsanto, is appealing last January's decision by a beleaguered Health Canada not to approve the hormone, and a trade challenge is also a possibility.

The NFU has taken a lead role in focusing the Canadian debate around rBST for almost ten years. Evidence before the Senate Agriculture Committee has cited possible links to cancer, diabetes and other human health problems, as well as severe effects on cows. Canadian farmers and consumers have said repeatedly that they do not want rBST used in Canada.

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