



**The National Farmers Union in New Brunswick
L'Union nationale des fermiers au Nouveau-Brunswick**

Board of Directors
National Farmers Union in New Brunswick
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MP Name
MP address

November 10, 2008

Dear Mr./ Ms. _____,

The National Farmers Union in New Brunswick would like to congratulate you on winning a seat in the recent federal election. You are the voice of our province in Ottawa and the future of New Brunswick's farmers is in your care. That's why we are asking you to speak up for the farmers who helped elect you to office.

This is a hard time for farmers in our province and across the country. New Brunswick farmers are hardworking professionals, many with university degrees and generations of successful family farm management. Yet in 2007, the total net income for NB farms averaged \$ **-24,746.00** (Statistics Canada Farm Financial Statistics). On most NB farms, this negative income means at least one family member must work another job off-farm to keep the farm alive. How can NB thrive and be sustainable if farmers can't afford to grow food?

Between 2001 and 2006, NB lost 258 working farms (Statistics Canada Census of Agriculture), over 51 farms per year, and the loss of family farms has increased annually since then. Once a farm is lost, the farmers and their children cannot afford to return to farming, so the knowledge base for growing food is also lost. Sadly, farmers are being forced to sell out or declare bankruptcy because of provincial, national and international factors beyond their control.

Farmers spend many hours a week filling out ever-increasing numbers of provincial and federal government forms that cost time and money. Most now must ship their product to large processing facilities in other provinces, also increasing costs and compromising food safety, as the nation-wide listeriosis outbreak shows. Meanwhile, international food

imports carry "Product of Canada" labels that mislead consumers into thinking foods have been grown in our country when they have not.

Something is severely wrong with Canada's approach to food production when hard-working farmers can't make a living and consumers are sick and dying from contaminated food products. New Brunswick consumers have shown they want meats, vegetables and fruits grown in our province because these products are fresh, tasty, healthy and safe. It's time for you, as our elected representative, to make sure that these local food products are available, affordable and properly labelled. To start this process, you can work to enact legislation to ensure:

1. **food labels** state where all food was **grown and processed** and New Brunswick-grown food products be labelled "**NB Grown**", so consumers can make food choices based on accurate information.
2. **all stores** that carry food products carry a **quota of Canadian and local food products**, so imported foods are not the only consumer choice.
3. **supply management** systems and/or **single desk selling** systems for farm commodities be **strengthened and expanded**, so farmers can receive fair value from the marketplace for their products.
4. all **farm support payments** are based on the true **cost of production**, and farmers are **reimbursed for income loss** when farm land is taken out of production due to government regulations.
5. **schools** teach about local **food production**, and **public education** materials are developed to inform consumers about **farming issues**.
6. provincial and national **food commissions** are established as **Crown Corporations**, so that the safety and well-being of farmers and consumers are protected.

Thank you for your willingness to hear about the concerns of family farmers in New Brunswick. Please contact any of the NFU in NB Board Members below if you would like further information. Good luck in Ottawa!

Sincerely,

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