



WESTERN BARLEY GROWERS ASSOCIATION

A strong voice for a vibrant, market responsive barley industry in western Canada

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CANADIAN WTO POSITION UNACCEPTABLE

March 17, 2007, Airdrie, AB.- The Western Barley Growers Association (WBGA) has today sent a letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Trade Minister Emerson and Agriculture Minister Strahl over the ongoing Doha round of World Trade Talks. "We are seeing renewed talks and momentum building in the current round yet Canada will be sitting on the sidelines in these talks due to our stance on Supply Management", states Jeff Nielsen President of the WBGA. "Canada was once an influential presence in these talks, yet to garner support of SM producers (mostly in eastern Canada) they put at risk the 90% of Canada's agricultural producers who depend on a sound deal at the WTO to grow and survive. We fell out of favor back in Hong Kong in December of 2005 when, at the 11th hour, we pulled out our support for an agreement - at Prime Minister Martin's request, purely to support the Canadian supply manage sector. This severely damaged Canada's reputation and that continues today".

In its letter to Agricultural Minister Strahl and Trade Minister Emerson, the WBGA calls on the Ministers and the Canadian government to immediately become fully engaged in these negotiations. Comments by Minister Strahl in a recent issue of the Western Producer in regards to supporting supply management at "whatever the cost" then going on to state that Canada will, (once a final agreement is reached), sign an agreement at the end of the day, continue to damage our once respected reputation.

This is a complete abdication of the government's responsibility to defend all agriculture at the WTO. "We will have to live with the implications of this trade deal for an entire generation", says Tom Hewson Vice President of the WBGA. "If we are not at the table defending our position, the trade deal will reflect that. We will have to live with decisions that were based on someone else's best interest."

"The 10% of agriculture that is represented by domestic supply management is continuing to dictating national trade for the 90% of agriculture that is completely trade dependent." says Doug McBain Past President of the WBGA, "Who is running this program?" asks McBain "This is absolutely incredulous. Do the grain, oilseed, cattle and hog producers have to go to the dairy, chicken and turkey producers and ask for permission to allow the Canadian agriculture negotiators into a WTO meeting?"

"I completely resent the fact that we are now forced to lobby the Conservative government to even participate in the WTO, let alone negotiate for us" concludes an exasperated Nielsen. "Canada's negotiators must work on behalf of Canada's entire agricultural sector and not protect one at the cost of the other".

WBGA will continue to work with our friends in CAFTA, and its members to ensure a strong viable trade deal is reached that will work for all sectors of Canadian agriculture.

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