



Western grower groups seek early Barley Freedom Day

May 29, 2007 -- The Western Barley Growers Association, the Alberta Barley Commission, and the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association have joined today in calling for the federal government to move up the date for the introduction of a free market on barley to June 15, 2007. Currently the federal government is proposing an August 1 implementation date.

"A key advantage of moving the date forward is that it would better enable our malting industry partners to source their needs directly from farmers," comments Jeff Nielsen, President of the WBGA. "This gives maltsters the market certainty they need to contract directly with producers for the rest of this crop year, as well as next year's needs."

The early introduction of Barley Freedom Day would also give farmers and grain companies greater ability to take advantage of export sale opportunities, in both feed and malt barley. The existing low returns projected under the CWB monopoly are currently undermining its ability to attract barley supplies to bid on these sale opportunities.

"An early implementation date gives more farmers a chance to lock in some good barley prices," says Cheryl Jolly-Nagel, President of the Wheat Growers. "The sooner we obtain choice, the sooner farmers can start reaping the benefits."

"This is the first year in ten that I plan to sell my barley for malt," states Terry Young, Chairman, Alberta Barley Commission. "There are many of my neighbours who feel a new era is opening up for us with the freedom to choose how to market our barley. Moving the date up makes economical sense for forward-thinking maltsters and financial sense for our producers. My farm is 25 miles from a maltster who supports marketing choice and I look forward to developing a long lasting relationship with them."

The Barley Growers, Wheat Growers and the Alberta Barley Commission have long supported changes to the Canadian Wheat Board that would give farmers more flexibility in how we market our grain. The proposed regulatory changes will continue to give producers the right to sell to the CWB if they choose. By working with farmers and entering into the cash market if necessary, the CWB can easily honour any outstanding contracts it has with maltsters.

Today's barley producers are fast adapters to change, who continue to develop new ways to increase production, quality and uses for barley. By moving ahead with marketing choice on barley by June 15, the federal government will spur faster growth and prosperity in the industry.

For further comment, please contact:

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