

WESTERN BARLEY GROWERS ASSOCIATION

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WTO talks stalled, political leadership needed

August 2, 2005 – Airdrie, AB – “No movement in the latest session of talks have been made before the summer break for the WTO, forcing a critical shortage of time for this Doha round to be completed. Political leadership will be instrumental in making substantial progress this fall before the Hong Kong ministerial meeting in December” stated Jeff Nielsen, Vice President of the Western Barley Growers Association (WBGA).

Jeff Nielsen was in Geneva in hopes of hearing of a completed “first approximation of modalities” a text of what the final agreement might look like. As part of a team from Alberta Agriculture, WBGA’s VP had daily briefings with Canada’s negotiating team and met with our Ambassador to Geneva and various countries to push for an aggressive proposal to the elimination of trade disputes and barriers affecting Canadian farmers.

“It will be key now for all of Canada’s grain and oil seed producers to contact the Minister of International Trade, Jim Peterson and Minister of Agriculture, Andy Mitchell to press for a positive resolve that supports the reduction and elimination of subsidies and tariff distortions affecting us all”. “This will also allow, not just our farmers, but our processors to compete on a level playing field internationally”

“We continued to stress that over 90 % of Canadian agriculture relies on international trade. Market distortions due to subsidies, tariff barriers, restrictive market access need to be corrected”. “ For the Doha round of talks to be completed, high level political intervention must take place with in the US and EU”. With these two entities, market assess and domestic support, are key irritant issues.

Traditionally the WTO takes the month of August off, and no new negotiations are planned until mid September. Thoughts are that due to the lack of progress informal talks will be taking place prior to that time.

WBGA looks to this fall as very critical period of time, it was heard that a strong message from all the WTO members political leaders is needed now. “ If instructed WTO ministers and negotiators can be proactive in coming to a resolve before the Ministerial meeting in December, Canada’s team plays a big part in this and we stress them to be very ambitious for a effective completion”

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Western Barley Growers Association

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