

MEDIA RELEASE

Wheat Growers Encouraged by Federal Plan for Agriculture

June 24, 2002: The Western Canadian Wheat Growers welcome the federal government's announcement of a significant new direction for the agriculture sector.

"For the past several years we have been urging the government to move away from crisis management in agriculture and to develop a plan for ensuring the long term profitability and sustainability of the sector," says Enns. "The Agricultural Policy Framework package is a good first step. However, we do have some concerns about the lack of details."

The federal government announced a total package worth \$8.18 billion to implement the Agricultural Policy Framework objectives including environmental sustainability and investments in agricultural innovation. Bridge financing worth \$590 million to help farmers deal with challenges like drought and to help them bridge to a new generation of more effective risk management programs is part of the package.

"The 2 year transition program worth \$1.2 billion is of particular interest," says Enns. "This money, along with what the federal government claims is the provincial share of \$800 million, is similar to what the Wheat Growers and other industry participants have been asking for to offset the hurt in the grains and oilseeds sector from foreign subsidy programs."

Details on program delivery have not been worked out yet nor have the provinces agreed to cost share some of the program components. "The federal government has admitted that much of this funding will be used to develop the programs of the Agricultural Policy Framework. We would like to have more information as to how this will benefit producers," Enns continued.

Wheat Grower past President Ted Menzies notes that there are other policy changes the government should explore to further help the grain and oilseed sector.

"Archaic grain marketing and transportation policies continue to plague our industry," says Menzies. "We encourage the federal government to make the changes we have been pushing to give farmers the tools we need to prosper and diversify and to fully realize the objectives of the Agricultural Policy Framework."

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For more information contact:
Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association, 306-586-5866