

MEDIA RELEASE

Wheat Growers Disappointed in Short-Sighted Farm Bill

May 15, 2002: Western Canadian Wheat Grower Association President Art Enns denounced the new US farm bill as a step backwards in efforts to liberalize agricultural trade and a major blow to trade-dependent farmers in Canada and throughout the world.

“The grains and oilseeds sector is already suffering from overproduction and record low prices,” says Wheat Grower President Art Enns. “This farm bill, with its massive increases in crop subsidies, will make a bad situation much worse.”

Enns predicted that the legislation will also sacrifice the long term health of the American farm economy by making it even more dependent on government handouts. He added that U.S. farm policy is creating a generation of farmers that won’t know how to adapt to market conditions and whose primary skills will be how to get the most money out of the farm programs.

Past President Ted Menzies notes that the farm bill has been widely condemned by Canada, the European Union, Australia, Brazil and developing countries who will be most hurt by the renewed American protectionism evident in the farm bill.

“It is astounding that a country that professes to be a leader in trade reform and waves the flag of market economics would implement a farm bill like this,” says Menzies. “We are extremely disappointed that President Bush signed the bill against the better judgment of his own administration for reasons of political expediency.”

Menzies advised that the Canadian government has jurisdiction over international trade matters and thus has an obligation to stand up for Canadian farmers who will be hurt by the U.S. farm bill.

“Now that the farm bill has been signed it won’t be long before the damage to grains and oilseeds farmers as well as pulse growers becomes evident,” says Menzies. “We expect the government to seriously consider the Trade Injury Compensation Program developed by the Grain Growers of Canada and take action to help Canadian farmers until the U.S. and the EU finally get a grip on their agricultural policies.”

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