



*For Immediate Release*

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## Western Canadian Farm Leaders to Press for Freer Trade in Geneva

A delegation of western farmers will make the case to advance agriculture trade liberalization during a World Trade Organization (WTO) session in Geneva, from April 18th to the 22nd, 2005.

The group includes representatives from the Alberta Barley Commission, Alberta Grain Commission, Western Barley Growers Association and the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association.

"The current round of WTO negotiations must make major reductions, if not elimination of tariffs and distorting subsidies," says Eugene Dextrase, Chairman of the Alberta Grain Commission and farmer from High Level, Alberta. "The status quo is not an option."

Today, global agriculture markets are heavily distorted by tariffs and subsidies. Canada's grain farmers are losing \$1.3 billion annually at the hands of European and American subsidies. Tariff protection adds to losses by reducing market opportunities.

"There are no export subsidies, no price support programs, or meaningful tariffs protecting grain farmers in western Canada," notes Doug Robertson, Chairman of the Alberta Barley Commission and farmer from Carstairs, Alberta. "Canada's grain farmers are prepared to compete in a free and open marketplace."

The delegation believes that the negotiations are at a critical juncture before the planned WTO Ministerial meeting in Hong Kong in December 2005. To move forward, all WTO members must embrace and build on the Framework Agreement signed last July.

According to Doug McBain, President of the Western Barley Growers Association and farmer from Cremona, Alberta, "The Framework has potential if we can continue to push for more market access, eliminate export subsidies, and get substantial reductions in trade distorting domestic support."

"WTO rules directly affect my farm's profitability," states Randy Hoback, Saskatchewan farmer and Chair of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association. "Canada should be a positive voice for change that opens markets and lets competition take place on a level playing field."

The group of western farmers traveling to Geneva grow wheat, barley, canola, peas, oats — all of which are plagued by distorting subsidies and punitive tariffs. The farm leaders plan to communicate western Canadian interests to international colleagues and work with Canada's trade negotiating team in Geneva.

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