



For Immediate Release

April 27, 2005

Wheat Growers Return from WTO Symposium in Geneva

Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association (WCWGA) directors Doug Campbell and Randy Hoback return today from a productive trip to the WTO symposium in Geneva. During the symposium the Wheat Growers participated in direct talks with representatives of the U.S., Australia, Brazil, New Zealand, South Africa and China. They also attended the launch of the 38-member Global Alliance for Liberalized Trade in Food and Agriculture, which was spearheaded by the Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance (CAFTA).

"Canada has the potential to become a significant force in leading these talks to an ambitious outcome," says Doug Campbell, Alberta Vice-President of the WCWGA. "Canadian negotiators are viewed with high regard but seem handcuffed by the lack of political commitment to an aggressive outcome."

Randy Hoback, Chair of the Wheat Growers noted that all our trading partners previously viewed the Canadian farm community as protectionist. "All the groups we spoke with said we were a refreshing change from other Canadian farm groups who claim to represent all Canadian farmers."

The Wheat Growers noted that because of Canada's reputation, it has been left out of the group of Five Interested Parties (US, EU, Australia, India and Brazil), a key negotiating bloc, despite Canada being the third largest agricultural exporter in the world.

Hoback adds, "An aggressive agreement is crucial for the survival of the Canadian grains and oilseed sector as the status quo would force a large number of farmers out of business. If we remain on the outside looking in, it means we will have very little input into any eventual agreement."

Research performed by the George Morris Centre and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada indicates the direct benefits to grain and oilseed producers from an aggressive outcome would be \$44.50 per tonne on wheat (\$1.21/bu), \$35.89 per tonne on barley, and \$116.37 per tonne (\$2.64/bu) on canola. Hoback stated, "On my 2800 acre farm that would add another \$182,000 in revenue. This is why we need to do everything we can to get rid of export subsidies and trade distorting programs."

While at the symposium the Wheat Growers met with CWB representatives. "We took issue with literature they were distributing at the Symposium as it misled attendees as to what the CWB is and how it operates," says Hoback. "While we were disappointed with the distribution of this material, we agreed to work together to improve market access and reduce those trade distortions that would benefit grains and oilseed producers under any type of marketing structure." Hoback challenged the CWB directors to start thinking of how the Board should look and operate without government guarantees or single desk powers. He pointed out "there's too much at stake here. The potential net income gains for Canadian grain and oilseed farmers cannot be ignored."

The Wheat Growers believe it was important for them to be at these talks. "It's vital for us to be here with CAFTA to ensure the voices of export-dependent farmers are heard," explains Campbell. "We must remind our politicians that the majority of Canadian farmers (90%) rely on trade and need an aggressive outcome."

Hoback concludes "Canada shouldn't be scared to compete with any other country providing we have fair trade rules in place. That means our negotiators must be given more room to negotiate. It also means Canada must assist those farmers who will have to make structural changes for the benefit of the farm sector as a whole."

The WCWGA, an independent producer organization, has spent 35 years bringing forth innovative farmer-driven solutions and will continue to lobby on behalf of forward thinking, progressive producers in an effort to make farming sustainable and profitable.

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Innovative, farmer-driven solutions.