



For Immediate Release

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Wheat Growers Determined to Gain Marketing Freedom

The Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association is determined to gain marketing freedom for prairie farmers, despite the surprising and adverse ruling in Federal Court yesterday. The court has overturned the federal government's attempt to implement a free market in barley.

"This is a devastating economic result for those farmers who were ready to capitalize on good prices being offered by the private trade," says Cherilyn Jolly-Nagel, President of the Wheat Growers. "Many of these excellent deals will now vanish."

The Wheat Growers fear that barley prices will now fall sharply, given that farmers and grain companies no longer have direct access to good prices in world markets.

The Wheat Growers call on the federal government to appeal the decision and to immediately implement a free market in barley by other means, including the issuance of no-cost export permits, and by providing domestic processors with an unlimited exemption to buy barley direct from farmers.

The industry is reporting that over 500,000 tonnes of export feed barley sales had already been booked by the private trade in anticipation of the open market.

"The government needs to give grain companies the opportunity to complete these sales," says Jolly-Nagel. "It can't simply turn these contracts over to the CWB, because the Board is not in a position to attract barley supplies from farmers," says Jolly-Nagel. Very few farmers are willing to contract barley to the CWB given its dismal historical performance."

The Wheat Growers realize the CWB can use its contingency fund to offer cash prices to farmers, however it will most likely require all of these funds to pry malt barley out of farmers hands in order to fill the low-priced malt barley contracts already on its books.

The Wheat Growers note the CWB monopoly for barley remains in place only because of the courts – the majority of farmers don't want it, nor is it in place because the CWB is doing a good job. Jolly-Nagel adds, "It's a tragic irony that the economic fortunes of so many farmers can be adversely affected by the views of an individual judge when the decisions over our livelihood should properly rest in the hands of each individual farmer."

"Today is a setback for those of us fighting for the farmer's right to sell his own grain," admits Jolly-Nagel, "however there's no turning back. The ship has sailed. Farmers have tasted the higher prices that a free market will bring, and so the demands for marketing freedom will only grow stronger."

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