



For Immediate Release

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Federal Action Needed to End Dysfunctional Barley Market

The Wheat Growers are pushing the federal government to move forward with legislation that would give farmers a free market in barley by August 1, 2008.

“Providing farmers with marketing freedom will ensure barley supplies are always available to meet good sales opportunities, whether those are in export markets or the domestic malting industry,” says Cheryl Jolly-Nagel, President of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association.

Yesterday, the CWB issued a release begging farmers to deliver feed barley to meet export sales. The release urged farmers to deliver by May 26.

“Pleading with farmers to deliver their grain doesn’t cut it,” says Jolly-Nagel. “You don’t see grain companies or processors begging farmers to deliver canola, oats or other non-board crops to meet sales commitments. If a buyer gets caught short, they simply improve their prices to farmers until they get the supplies they need.”

The inability of the current marketing system to transmit effective market signals to farmers is at the root of the problem. Allowing maltsters and grain companies to buy direct from farmers would allow price signals to be reflected instantly and give all farmers the ability to capitalize on good market opportunities, whenever they occur.

The timing of the CWB’s special appeal also could not be worse, coming in the middle of seeding for most farmers.

“I had plenty of time to deliver barley when snow was on the ground two weeks ago,” says Stephen Vandervalk, Alberta Vice President of the Wheat Growers. “If they had put out a special price then, I could have considered it. Now with time running short, all our farm resources are dedicated to putting the crop in.”

The Wheat Growers are disappointed the federal government has not moved forward with legislation that it tabled in February that would free up the barley market.

"Minister Ritz promised barley marketing freedom by August 1 of this year and it's time for him to deliver on that promise, whether that's through a confidence motion, no-cost export licences or some other means," says Jolly-Nagel. "What's important is to get the job done, so prairie farmers can start capturing higher returns for their barley."

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