



MEDIA RELEASE

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Prairie Farmers Call for Change

Winnipeg – Prairie farm organizations representing farmers in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta are calling on the federal government to make meaningful policy changes that will ensure the growth and sustainability of the agricultural sector.

Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) President Greg Marshall, Wild Rose Agricultural Producers (WRAP) President Humphrey Banack and Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP) President Doug Chorney met face-to-face today to discuss the key issues affecting Prairie farmers including business risk management, research and innovation, ecological goods and services, Canadian Grain Commission services and rail transportation.

“We believe it’s important for our farm organizations to work together to provide a unified voice for agriculture,” said Doug Chorney. “This meeting is part of an ongoing initiative to work together as the Prairie Farm Leaders on behalf of our members.”

APAS, KAP and WRAP are asking the federal government to work with farm organizations in developing business risk management programs which would give farmers the time and financial stability necessary to adjust their operations to increased market volatility.

Under ecological goods and services, farmers need a strong, well funded program to compensate them for the practices which provide a variety of ecological benefits for rural and urban communities. These benefits include the reduction of greenhouse gases through carbon sequestration, supporting biodiversity through habitats for plants, birds and animals; and maintaining healthy soil and water quality.

“Business risk management programs must be predictable, timely, and adequately funded so we can meet the increasing demand to provide a safe and secure food supply,” said Greg Marshall, APAS President. “When it comes to issues like supporting farmers for the ecological goods and services they provide, we need a suite of programs that encourages participation.

Rail transportation is a key issue affecting Prairie farmers and the organizations want to see a commitment from the federal government to make changes that will benefit agriculture.

“Finding solutions regarding these rail issues is critical for Prairie farmers because we are captive shippers and we do not have an alternative means of transportation to move our products to our customers,” said Humphrey Banack, WRAP President. “We’re calling for a full costing review as an important part of significant rail service changes and we also look forward to the implementation of the Federal Rail Freight Service Review.”

Prairie farmers are looking for a balanced approach when it comes to cost sharing Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) fees. The CGC provides significant benefits to the Canadian public such as food safety and quality standards that are recognized internationally and the organizations stress that services which benefit the public must be paid for by government.

“The Prairie farm leaders are open to discussions on reviewing the cost recovery of the Canadian Grain Commission, but we want an approach that is fair and sustainable,” said Doug Chorney, KAP President. “It is clear that the public, the grain industry and farmers benefit from these services and all stakeholders should pay their respective share.”

APAS, KAP and WRAP will continue to work together to ensure the issues that are important to Prairie farmers are front and centre and to highlight the integral contribution agriculture makes to Canada.

The next meeting of the Prairie Farm Leaders will take place in Regina, Saskatchewan in October 2011.

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