



## **Canadian farmers call on their government to push for a WTO trade deal to protect Canada's vital agri-food exports**

**Punta del Este, Uruguay, April 20, 2010** — With Canada's position as a leading agri-food exporter increasingly under threat, the Canadian Agri-food Trade Alliance (CAFTA) urges the Canadian government to actively press WTO member countries to return to the negotiating table and conclude an ambitious WTO agriculture agreement.

CAFTA participated in this week's meeting of the Cairns Group Farm Leaders in Punta del Este, Uruguay where the WTO was the main topic of discussion. This coincided with a meeting of the Cairns Group Ministers, which included Canada's agriculture minister and his counterparts from 18 other top agricultural exporting nations. "CAFTA supports the Canadian government's aggressive trade agenda but bilateral trade deals cannot fully address the distortions and barriers hampering global agricultural trade," says CAFTA president Stan Eby. "A multilateral agreement is vital to the future of Canada's competitiveness as an agri-food exporter and our government needs to do all it can to promote a transparent, rules-based system through the WTO."

CAFTA welcomes the Canadian government's plans to host the Cairns Group Ministers meeting next year. "We appreciate Minister Ritz's leadership in offering to host the 2011 Cairns Group Ministerial," says CAFTA Executive Director Kathleen Sullivan. "We also look forward to hosting the Cairns Group Farm Leaders at that time and to showcasing Canadian agriculture to our international colleagues."

Canada's agriculture sector is heavily reliant on trade, with 92% of farms directly dependent on export markets. CAFTA echoes concerns expressed by all Cairns Group Farm Leaders (in an April 19 news release), who warn against any lowering of ambition from the WTO positions negotiated in 2008. The 2008 WTO draft text would eliminate export subsidies, substantially reduce trade-distorting domestic support, and expand access to export markets.

The potential gains for Canada's agri-food exporters are significant. "It's estimated that Canada's agri-food trade could increase by at least \$3 billion a year under a reformed WTO agricultural agreement," Eby says. "A new trade order offers tremendous opportunities for Canadian farmers. We must get this process back on track and reach a multilateral agreement that liberalizes trade and increases rules and discipline in export markets."

As the world's fourth-largest agri-food exporter, Canada has much at stake in these critical multilateral negotiations and an important role to play in reviving the political will to reform the rules for global agricultural trade. CAFTA is calling on the Canadian government to encourage meaningful engagement on the Doha Development Agenda when it hosts world leaders of the G8 and G20 countries this June in Toronto.

CAFTA is a coalition of national and regional organizations, associations and companies which support a more open and fair international trading environment for agriculture and agri-food. CAFTA's members include producer organizations, processors, marketers and exporters from the major trade dependent sectors in Canada. Together, CAFTA's members produce almost 80% of Canada's agriculture and agri-food exports, conduct about \$40 billion in business annually and directly employ close to 500 thousand Canadians.

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