



## Canadian Agri-food Celebrates Launch of Canada-Morocco Trade Talks

**Rabat, Morocco, January 27, 2011** — As Canada announces the launch of free trade negotiations with Morocco, the Canadian Agri-food Trade Alliance (CAFTA) commends the Canadian government for continuing to pursue an aggressive trade agenda for Canadian agriculture and food products.

CAFTA joined Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Agriculture and Agri-food Minister Gerry Ritz, and International Trade Minister Peter Van Loan in Rabat, Morocco as Canada and Morocco announced plans to negotiate a free trade agreement between the two countries.

“A free trade agreement with Morocco is of particular importance to Canada’s grain and pulse sectors,” says Kathleen Sullivan, Executive Director of CAFTA. “In 2006 Morocco finalized a free trade deal with the United States, putting our Canadian exporters at a competitive disadvantage and threatening the markets we have developed in this country. “

Canada’s exports to Morocco are largely agriculture based. Durum wheat accounts for over 90% of Canada’s agri-food exports to Morocco and 65% of total merchandise exports. Other significant agri-food exports include dried lentils, wheat, peas and canary seeds.

“We are pleased that Minister Ritz is championing a strong agriculture deal with Morocco that will maintain our competitiveness and secure our exports to this region,” says Sullivan. “Increasing disposable incomes, a relatively young population and a large tourism industry could also lead to growing opportunities for branded, packaged and processed food products in this country.”

Canada is a World Leader in Agriculture Trade. In 2008, Canada’s agriculture and food product exports totaled \$39 billion – close to 8% of the country’s total merchandise trade. Canada is also a major player on the international stage, ranking behind the EU, United States and Brazil as the world’s 4<sup>th</sup> largest agri-food exporter.

While CAFTA encourages the Canadian government to continue pursuing market access opportunities for Canadian agri-food products the WTO remains its top trade priority. “With the right political will, we could make real progress at the WTO and conclude the WTO Doha negotiations this year,” says Sullivan. “We continue to encourage Prime Minister Harper to make this Canada’s top trade priority and to press for the WTO’s resolution in 2011.”

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### About CAFTA

CAFTA is a coalition of national and regional organizations 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, these sectors produce almost 80 per cent 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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