



CANADIAN AGRI-FOOD TRADE ALLIANCE

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Farmers and Exporters Call on Agriculture Minister to Support an Ambitious WTO Deal

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The Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance (CAFTA) is calling on the Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Gerry Ritz to speak out on behalf of Canada's agriculture and agri-food exporters.

"The WTO (World Trade Organization) negotiations are at a critical stage," said Alanna Koch, CAFTA President. "For Canadian agriculture and agri-food exporters, a liberalized trade environment will generate significant benefits through increased market access and an overall reduction in market distorting subsidies."

"Our members have been disappointed with recent comments by Minister Ritz that focus solely on Canada's defensive interests," said Koch. "Over 90% of Canadian farmers produce commodities that are exported or sold domestically at international prices. Canada is the world's fourth largest exporter of agriculture and agri-food products – so Canada has significant offensive interests. The recent comments by the Minister seem to ignore that reality."

"The WTO member countries have been in intensive negotiations since Labour Day working to get a deal finalized," said CAFTA Executive Director Keith Lancaster. "A lot of progress has been made during that time that will be beneficial for Canadian agriculture – for example, the US and EU have both acknowledged they can make huge reductions in their domestic farm spending and export subsidies."

"Our members, and by extension the over 210,000 Canadian farmers that are dependent on international prices, need to know that the Government of Canada is also supporting their interests through an ambitious WTO agreement," said Koch. "Canada committed to pursuing an ambitious deal at the beginning of the Doha Round; as recently as last month, the Prime Minister spoke to the need for an outcome that systematically reduces trade distorting barriers."

"Canada's agriculture and agri-food industry is dependent on trade. Without trade, tens of thousands of cattle and hog producers, grain and oilseed growers and other farmers would need to find another way to make a living. The processing industries that make up the rest of the value chain also need a healthy trade environment to operate in," said Koch. "We are calling on Canada's Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food to speak out on behalf of the entire industry and to reaffirm the Government's support for Canada's export interests."

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The Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance represents producers, processors and exporters of agriculture and agri-food products, as well as suppliers of agricultural inputs. Accounting for over 80% of Canada's agriculture and food exports, and more than 60% of farm cash receipts, CAFTA's members are united in their dependence on trade, and in their need for a liberalized international trading environment.

For further information or to schedule an interview contact:

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