

Agri-food exporters urge federal government to stave off protectionism and secure the promise of CETA from EU Leaders

Ottawa, ON - May 14 - *Dan Darling, President of the Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance (CAFTA) today issued the following statement as the Honourable Mary Ng, Canada's Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade gets set to meet with EU Commissioner for Trade Phil Hogan tomorrow.*

"We applaud Minister Ng's steadfast support for the rules-based global trading system and being at the forefront of efforts to safeguard the WTO and keep global supply chains in agri-food open. As the COVID-19 pandemic has gripped the world for months, keeping global borders open to agri-food trade has been instrumental in avoiding food shortages and preserving supply chains around the world. Trade based on rules, science and transparency is essential in this regard.

"For a trading nation like Canada to prosper in the weeks and months ahead as economic recovery increasingly becomes the focus of governments, unfettered trade will be vital. This means maximizing and enforcing our free trade agreements so they can deliver on their promise. This is especially true of the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

"At the end of this summer, it will be 3 years since the CETA came into force yet our exports remain way below their potential as real access remains elusive. At the same time, EU agri-food exports continue their double digit increase into the Canadian market.

"This is directly because the EU has been slow to abide by the intent of commitments made to remove technical barriers which have effectively closed the door on the majority of Canadian agri-food exports.

"The world is moving towards the enforcement of trade rules. At a time of increasing protectionism in various forms, Canada too should step up its response and push for greater enforcement of bilateral trade rules.

"We are urging Minister Ng to press Commissioner Hogan to commit to real action that will enable true win-win outcomes that don't just benefit one side. It is time for the CETA to enable agri-food trade and growth for our farmers, producers, agri-food manufacturers and exporters seeking to tap into the huge opportunities the EU market promises.

"Such work includes achieving mutual recognition of meat inspections systems, addressing misaligned regulation of crop protection products, more predictable and timely review of seed technologies, ensuring country of origin labeling requirements are not applied in a trade restrictive manner and addressing production and trade distorting EU sugar subsidies.

"The persistence of these technical barriers is affecting a significant portion of Canadian agri-food exporters. Canada needs to be proactive, assertive and nimble in its response to the growing use of non-tariff barriers being used to block agri-food exports.

“Last week during a teleconference with Minister Ng we were pleased she committed to speaking to Commissioner Hogan about market access barriers affecting our agri-food exports. We look forward to securing a meaningful commitment that will unlock the potential and promise of CETA and finally create new opportunities for Canadian agri-food exports, which was a core benefit of the deal for Canada.

“As Canada and the EU work closely together to support WTO reform and modernization in defence of the rules-based global trading system, it is even more important to demonstrate that our free trade agreements work by abiding by the rules we’ve established in our bilateral pact, an agreement that remains a shining example of the level of ambition that should be sought in 21st century trade.”

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CAFTA is the voice of Canadian agri-food exporters, representing the 90% of farmers who depend on trade and the ranchers, producers, processors and agri-food exporters who want to grow the economy through better access to international markets. This includes the beef, pork, meat, grains, cereals, pulses, soybeans, canola as well as the sugar, malt, and processed food industries. The sectors CAFTA represents 90 per cent of Canada’s agri-food exports and support about a million jobs in urban and rural communities across Canada.

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