



WESTERN BARLEY GROWERS ASSOCIATION

A strong voice for a vibrant, market responsive barley industry in western Canada

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For Immediate Release -- News Release

WBGA supports Minister Strahl's commitment to Marketing Choice

September 14, 2006 – Airdrie, AB: The Western Barley Growers Association (WBGA) is supportive of the report released by the minister on the round table discussions on the future of the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB). Commitment to move to a "choice" marketing environment by the minister was echoed by the participants at the meeting.

The report demonstrated that all the groups present want to see the CWB play a role for farmers in the future, but only in a choice environment. The Western Barley Growers Association's proposal is similar to the conclusions in the report. "We seek a marketing environment where farmers truly have choice and one where the CWB plays a role as a marketing option for farmers", says Jeff Nielsen, President of the WBGA.

The federal government needs to move quickly to remove the monopoly powers on wheat and barley and allow the CWB to become a commercial entity. A truly commercial entity in that it is not funded or subsidized from the federal treasury.

The report calls for the creation of a technical task force to develop the timeline for implementation of marketing choice. The WBGA supports this recommendation, but calls on the federal government to immediately outline the terms of reference and timeline for the task force. The meeting consensus was that changes should happen as soon as the 2007/2008 crop year.

The recommendations were for the changes to start beginning the 2007/2008 crop year. Barley was noted as the crop that could be moved out of the monopoly almost immediately. "We need to move forward quickly, and the government must be proactive and show commitment to choice", states Rick Strankman, WBGA observer at the Saskatoon meeting.

"Its time the board of directors of the CWB focus their energy in developing a commercially viable entity in a choice environment", and to do so the federal government needs to demonstrate its commitment to choice for the 2007/2008 crop year", also states Rick Strankman.

"Barley as a commodity needs new marketing opportunities and investment to add value to western Canadian farmers. The uncertainty of the current marketing environment is clearly hurting that investment. For example there is extreme frustration by malt barley producers with low prices and no ability to contract directly with the major Malt companies," states Nielsen

Marketing choice is a much needed step to bring much needed value back to western Canadian grain producers. It will create a renewed interest and investment in value added projects, market development and genetic research. The Western Barley Growers is prepared to actively support the federal government in moving to choice for farmers and encourages the industry to support choice marketing as an important and necessary step toward and active and growing wheat and barley sector.

The Western Barley Growers position on choice is available at http://www.wbga.org/CWB7_26_06.pdf

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