



## COMMENTARY

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## Markets a Priority for Agriculture Industry

*By Ian Wishart, KAP President - Cell: 856-6964*

Recent disturbances in markets of Canadian exports have been deeply troubling. Most recently we have seen the impact on canola markets from China’s announcement that it intends to suspend purchases of whole canola seed until we can certify it free of certain weed seed and blackleg. It is probably unrealistic to expect this to happen. This comes so soon after the flax market disruption from GMO markets, mustard market disruption due to rumor, and new tariffs on durum into Italy. Also the US mandatory country-of-origin labeling (COOL) impact on both the cattle and hog industries has us seriously worried about our export markets.

Canada, especially Western Canada, is very export dependant. Huge surpluses in production beyond domestic needs make market access to growing economies a necessity. However, in today’s protectionist trade climate, how can we protect ourselves from these technical trade barriers? Both WTO and NAFTA are supposed to protect us, but the long dispute settlement process makes it more like “shutting the barn door after the horses are gone” than any real dispute settlement process.

The federal government has already established the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Market Access Secretariat to help open new markets for red meats. Perhaps its mandate should include a “swat team” approach to these problems—but for certain a more aggressive response is required. Producers are easy victims to these types of trade actions that often appear from our end to be little more than market manipulation, which is not good news for us.

Keystone Agricultural Producers is Manitoba’s largest general farm policy organization, representing over 7,000 farm families and 22 commodity groups throughout the province. Our strength is our democratic structure, and our mission is to represent and promote the interests of the province’s farm families.