



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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Prairie Farm Leaders call on Ag Ministers to abandon “Wait and See” attitude

The three Prairie Farm Leaders representing the Wild Rose Agricultural Producers of Alberta (WRAP), the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) and Keystone Agricultural Producers of Manitoba (KAP) held a special conference call this morning to repeat their calls to both the federal and provincial governments for urgently needed support for struggling livestock producers contending with feed shortages resulting from excess moisture and drought conditions in 2010.

The Prairie Farm Leaders emerged from their meeting calling on Gerry Ritz, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and his three provincial counterparts to promptly open dialogue with a goal to jointly fund a program that will adequately support livestock producers who are facing increased feed costs this winter. Earlier this summer, grain and oilseed producers received a \$30/unseeded acre payment through the AgriRecovery program and the groups are seeking a similar arrangement for cattle producers.

“In some areas of Alberta and in a few isolated parts of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, hay and forage production is at normal to above-normal levels,” admitted Greg Marshall, President of APAS. “But across Saskatchewan and many parts of Manitoba, the moisture levels are so unusual that livestock producers will have a bleak feed situation this winter.”

Record-setting levels of rainfall have been recorded across the Prairies in 2010, especially in Saskatchewan and western Manitoba. Feed quality across the Prairies is projected to be extremely poor with numerous reports of farmers being unable to bale forage crops, make silage or even graze cattle due to wet fields. Cattle producers in all three provinces are voicing concern that the AgriStability program will provide them no relief due to their low reference margin.

According to an October 2 article in the *Manitoba Co-operator*, federal officials are saying that they can't assess the severity of the feed shortages because harvest isn't finished. "Once we basically know what the outcome of harvest is, where we sit in terms of forage and feed availability, governments will move quickly to complete the assessment and make a decision accordingly," one official told the *Manitoba Co-operator*.

Humphrey Banack, President of WRAP, says producers in the Peace River region are facing similar challenges due to multiple years of drought conditions. "October is nearly over; excess moisture in many areas of Saskatchewan and Manitoba and drought in the Peace River region are still problems and the hay harvest is still incomplete," said Banack. "These are all signs that cattle producers will be facing severe feed shortages this winter."

"Beef producers will be forced to exit the industry if no solutions present themselves soon," said Rob Brunel, KAP President. "We definitely don't want to see a '2010 version' of the downsizing in the hog sector like the one we recently experienced. Our communities are still reeling from that blow."

All three Prairie Farm Leaders have been in regular communication with their respective Ministries over the past months as well as local MPs, MLAs and Minister Ritz regarding the current crisis. They are hopeful that a comprehensive program to help their provinces' beleaguered ranchers will be announced soon.

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