



COMMENTARY

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Trade Barriers Cost Producers

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The unsettled times in the flax industry appear far from over. Despite best efforts from industry players such as grower associations, shippers and processors, it appears uncertain whether the exacting standards of producing a product containing no genetically modified organisms (GMO) markers can be met consistently.

This leaves producers facing substantially lower than cost pricing and feelings of uncertainty, frustration, and dissatisfaction. This situation led to a resolution at KAP's General Council calling for an examination of a potential consumer boycott of European Union (EU) products. Realistically, it is unlikely that anything can be done to change the minds of millions of EU consumers that any GMO products are "genetic monstrosities" that somehow—we are not sure how—will cause health issues or worse.

This is just another barrier in a series of technical trade barriers that continue to plague agriculture and continue to cost producers, and in this case some processors, many millions of dollars.

All we seem to be able to do is continue to try to meet the virtually impossible quality standards from a market that is probably already consuming products with GMO inputs from other sectors. Hard to accept, but even harder to change.

Consumers in the EU have been sold a bill of goods by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) pushing the GMO bogeyman, probably the same NGOs that a decade ago shut out beef that used hormones in production. You have to wonder if they have consumers' best interests at heart.

In other news, we hear that plant breeders in Alberta are starting work on another GMO flax. We hope it doesn't interfere with any other market.

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.