



“The Voice of Manitoba Farmers”

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Ag Census Shows Farmers' Challenges

Winnipeg – The 2006 Census of Agriculture reports that the average age of farmers is increasing, expenses are eating up the majority of farm incomes, and that fewer young people are choosing farming as their career. At the same time, Manitoba's farmers are doing their best to hold the line on costs, expanding and adopting new technology in an attempt to increase efficiency, and diversifying to help manage their own risks.

The message in the 2006 census data, according to Keystone Agricultural Producers, is that agriculture's slow decline has continued - despite government's record levels of assistance in the sector and despite the development of the Agricultural Policy Framework in 2001.

“As a farmer, the census tells me that something is still missing from the equation,” says KAP President David Rolfe. “There are government dollars being spent, and a framework that was supposed to help bring profitability back to agriculture. Instead, our industry is getting older and deeper in debt.”

Rolfe believes that the agriculture census reflects the policy failures of the last five years, highlighted recently by the Auditor General's report on the flaws of the Canadian Agriculture Income Stabilization (CAIS) program.

“Are the current programs working? Clearly the answer is no,” says Rolfe. “This needs to be a wake-up call to all levels of government. They have to do a complete shift in how they invest in agriculture, and they have to start listening to what farmers are saying.”

Rolfe notes that one of the most striking figures in the data released is the decline in the number of young farmers.

“We cannot afford to lose any more young people from the land. We have to make sure these intergenerational transfers take place, so we need the right policies to make it happen more easily,” says Rolfe. “It's time to rebuild some strength in agriculture, so that young people and their families will feel confident they can have a successful career as a farmer.”

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