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Alberta Government Survey Shows Support for Voluntary CWB, CWB Responds 'Survey Flawed'

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Report Highlights:

A survey conducted for the Alberta provincial government showed that the majority of the province's barley growers (68%) and wheat growers (64%) would like to have a voluntary Canadian Wheat Board. The CWB has responded that the survey was flawed, and that the only solution is for either the current CWB monopoly or a completely open market. The experience in Ontario of gradually moving from a mandatory marketing agency to a completely voluntary one refutes the argument given by the CWB.

Includes PSD Changes: No
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ALBERTA WHEAT, BARLEY PRODUCERS SUPPORT END TO CWB MONOPOLY

According to a news release from the Alberta provincial government, a poll conducted for the Alberta government proves farmers want marketing choice. The province-wide poll of Alberta farmers shatters Canadian Wheat Board claims of monopoly marketing support, says Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Shirley McClellan. "Without a shadow of a doubt, the majority of Alberta wheat and barley growers want marketing choice for their grain," said McClellan. "We hear it every day from our producers. Now the Canadian Wheat Board can hear it loud and clear from them too." The Alberta government released results of an Ipsos-Reid poll, conducted in September and October 2003, which showed 68% of Alberta growers want the option to sell their barley to anyone, including the Canadian Wheat Board, while 64% of producers want the same option for wheat. Only a quarter of growers surveyed support single desk selling for both wheat and barley. McClellan said the survey showed wheat and barley producers believe marketing choice will give them better prices and greater market access. "We call on the federal government and the Canadian Wheat Board to immediately implement a grain marketing system for Alberta producers so that they can enjoy the same benefits as farmers in eastern Canada," said McClellan.

The full report of the survey may be viewed at the following Alberta Agriculture web site:

[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agc6751/\\$file/marketing_choice_fall_report.pdf](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agc6751/$file/marketing_choice_fall_report.pdf)

CWB SAYS ALBERTA SURVEY FLAWED

The Canadian Wheat Board (CWB), on November 12, refuted the conclusions reached by the Alberta Government on results of a survey done earlier this fall. The survey was intended to gauge farmers' views on marketing wheat and barley, asking farmers to choose between the current single-desk system and, in the opinion of the CWB, an "unworkable mix" of open market and single-desk selling. "The conclusions drawn from the survey conducted for the Government of Alberta are flawed and lead farmers down the garden path to an outcome that is not feasible or realistic," said Ken Ritter, chair of the farmer-controlled board of directors. "The real option for farmers is to market their wheat and barley through the single desk or through a completely open market. You can't have both at the same time." Ritter also noted that efforts should be directed towards other key efforts. "The CWB and governments should be focusing on issues that can improve farmers' returns. There are a number of large issues on which the CWB and governments can work together," Ritter said. Working to reduce ongoing subsidies by the United States and European Union, increasing competition between railways for moving farmers' grain and establishing a framework for the possible introduction of genetically-modified grain are key to the future success of Canadian agriculture in a competitive world market. He also welcomed the fact that the Governments of Canada, Alberta and Saskatchewan have joined the CWB in an attempt to reverse part of the ruling that has closed the U.S. border to Canadian exports of hard red spring wheat.

COMMENTS

The Ontario Wheat Producers Marketing Board (OWB) introduced voluntary marketing of wheat over a several years, gradually increasing the volume that farmers could voluntarily market. The option proved to be so popular that elected directors made the decision to open up the Ontario wheat market completely. While the incremental changes in marketing

options for Ontario farmers ultimately resulted in a completely voluntary OWB, the fact that the farmer-direct (voluntary marketing) program was running concurrently with the mandatory selling by farmers into the OWB wheat pools refutes the CWB argument that there must be one system or the other -- not both.

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