



912, 350 Sparks Street
Ottawa, ON, K1R 7S8
Ph: 613-233-9954

www.ggc-pgc.ca

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Grain Growers suggest some last minute New Year's Resolutions for Federal Ministers

Farmers' wish list for the upcoming new year

(January 2012) - In a time of economic uncertainty, looking forward in 2012, the Grain Growers of Canada has a few last minute resolution recommendations for the Federal Government and farmers to consider which would improve our competitiveness.

Minister Ritz

In anticipation of federal belt tightening, the Grain Growers urge Minister Gerry Ritz to consider a better and improved agriculture research funding formula. In a hungry world, research needs to remain a top priority, so we suggest the Federal Government consider allowing all royalty streams generated by Agriculture Canada discoveries to be added on top of the current research budget. Even without any new Government cash, the agriculture research budget would grow by five or six million dollars next year.



*Grain Growers of Canada's
Executive Director, Richard Phillips*

Minister Fast

An excellent New Year's resolution for Minister Ed Fast will be a successful conclusion to the Canada-EU trade negotiations. This would be ideal for Canadian farmers and agri-business. Outside of NAFTA, the European Union trade agreement is the greatest trade opportunity we have seen in decades. With a population of 500 million people, Europeans have an appreciation for the high level of quality we grow and manufacture, and their tastes are very similar to our own. This is a market where we have a lot of room to grow and despite the recent news on Greece, it is a market that has cash to pay for quality.

One important part of the EU negotiations and all trade deals, is a Low Level Presence (LLP) policy, so that minute quantities of genetically modified crop cannot become a trade barrier. As science has advanced, you can seemingly find trace amounts of anything anywhere. Regulatory authorities need to concentrate on genuine health and safety risks rather than GM witch hunts.

Bilateral trade deals with countries like India, Japan and South Korea are also important. Canada joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership is another strategic move that will strengthen our trade and investment relationship in the Asia-Pacific region, which is a priority given its growing economic importance.

Minister Lebel

For Transport Minister Denis Lebel, we hope his resolutions include continued speedy action on the Rail Service Review. This fall Jim Dinning was appointed to chair the Rail Service Review and recently a Crop Logistics Working Group made up of key producer groups was formed to ensure farmers' interests are being represented. Detailed Review recommendations are actually expected early this spring. Once these recommendations are finalized, we anticipate the Federal Government will implement the service improving measures, including the tabling of legislation that will give shippers the right to service agreements with the railways and to provide a dispute resolution processes. Legislation should be tabled later this spring, or very early in the fall.

Agriculture Canada

In early 2012, a series of farmer consultations will be happening to review some “straw man” ideas on where business risk management and other pillars of Growing Forward may fit in the new “5-year plan”. AAFC’s New Year’s resolution should include improved predictability and bankability for farmers in BRM programs.

All Wheat and Barley Farmers

A good New Year’s resolution for all prairie farmers will be to set aside past differences and work together for the future of the wheat and barley industry. We have a lot of work to do in 2012: possibly provincial market development commissions, a wheat council of Canada -similar to other successful industries like pulses and canola, and we need to iron out research issues. Farmers, grain elevators, malting companies, flour mills, grain companies and consumers are all counting on us, so now is the time for everyone to pull together.

Hunger in the World

The Grain Growers also hopes farmers across Canada will resolve to help those less fortunate by supporting the Canadian Foodgrains Bank in the upcoming year. We encourage farmers who are not part of a local Foodgrains community growing project, to think about pledging a few acres of their upcoming harvest to help those in need. For more info or to make a pledge visit www.growingproject.ca or send your contact info and the amount of acres pledged to office@ggc-pgc.ca.

On behalf of the tens of thousands of successful wheat, durum, barley, canola, oat, corn, pea, lentil, rye and triticale farmers, the Grain Growers of Canada represents, we wish everyone a safe and prosperous year in 2012. Please visit www.graingrowers.ca for more info.

Sincerely,



Richard Phillips
Executive Director
Grain Growers of Canada