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**national farmers union**

***In Union is Strength***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**PLAN TO DEAL WITH DROUGHT NEEDED BEFORE DISASTER STRIKES: NFU**

The extremely dry conditions across most of the prairie provinces could develop into a full-scale drought in the coming weeks, so federal and provincial governments should take steps now to set up a program to deal with the situation.

National Farmers Union (NFU) President Stewart Wells says the potential drought could affect between two-thirds and three-quarters of the area west of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border. "It's a very large area," he stated. "Over the past ten months, there has been a record shortage of rain and snowfall in the affected parts of the prairies, and unless there is a dramatic increase in moisture levels soon, we could be faced with a real catastrophe."

Wells said 80 to 90 percent of Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Peace River country of BC are experiencing "extremely low" or "record dry" moisture conditions (see Ag Canada Precipitation Map for September 2008 to June 2009).

The NFU President said before Parliament breaks for the summer, the federal government needs to declare its plans for emergency assistance. "It makes sense to have a plan in place well before the situation gets any worse," stated Wells.

Wells warned that the push by some commodity organizations for Canada to sign a trade deal at the World Trade Organization negotiations this summer is misdirected if any new agreement further constrains Canada's ability to help farmers in times of domestic emergencies. "The text of proposed agreements all limit the Canadian government's ability to step in with domestic support for Canadian farmers," he stated. "Let's not have any new agreements make the situation worse."

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