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national farmers union

In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CANADIAN FOOD POLICY INADEQUATE FOR FUTURE NEEDS

Thirty women farmers gathered in the community of Castor, Alberta, on November 6-8, 2009, to examine the current state of farming in Canada and to reflect on the implications of food policy on the collective future of farm families and all Canadians.

Through a series of facilitated discussions, the women from the four western provinces and Ontario shared their relationship to farming, describing the various aspects of their farm operations and the issues that affect the future and viability of the same.

Building on past work and analysis that has been done by the National Farmers Union's women, the group also reflected on the current Canadian Agricultural Policy Framework. Participants discussed the industry's current narrow focus on an agribusiness, export-driven vision. Most of the current agricultural and food policy is directed at large agribusiness interests and is not appropriate for family farms.

Farm families are exiting the industry, young farmers are not entering, good farmland is being lost at an alarming rate, and Canadian consumers have been challenged to provide nutritious and sustainably-produced food for their families. The women felt that more attention to a triple bottom line to include a social, environmental as well as a financial context would better position Canada to prepare for a future made uncertain by the effects of climate change and peak oil.

Kathleen Charpentier hosted the gathering at her farm near Castor. She is the Alberta regional NFU Women's Advisory Committee member. After the meeting, she stated: "I am very encouraged by the dialogue this weekend. Women have shared their stories and their desire to make family farms and rural communities viable sources of good food. Food is not a commodity to be traded at the World Trade Organization (WTO) talks. Cooking and food-preparation are not valueless tasks to be relegated to the fast-food and packaged-food industries. Food is our source of life and the fuel that creates an energized and resilient population."

"The time has come to develop a national food policy," asserted Joan Brady, NFU Women's Vice-President. "Canadians need a policy that recognizes the importance of food providers, the local community, and the natural resources our food system is built on. There is an increased interest and energy surrounding food issues and women farmers

have the passion, skills and knowledge to lead the campaign for policy change, locally, regionally and nationally.”

NFU members will gather in Ottawa on November 26-28 for the 40th anniversary convention. The program includes a historic account of women’s participation in the NFU, the global food crisis, the unveiling of a *Campaign for New Farmers* and more.

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