



What follows WTO collapse?

by Ron Bonnett, President
Ontario Federation of Agriculture

The recent collapse of negotiations at the World Trade Organization was probably no great surprise to anyone familiar with agriculture's international face. As Canada's chief negotiator at the WTO told a meeting of Canadian Federation of Agriculture delegates following the collapse, the talks have achieved little in five years.

Two of the key issues for negotiators have been the over-generous domestic support programs provided by the United States for its

farmers, and the European Community's reluctance to provide market access. Developing nations, while anxious to get their food products into world markets, have resisted non-agricultural products from the rest of the world, also contributing to the WTO collapse.

Following the collapse of the negotiations, many parties looked for ways of blaming each other. Regardless of fault, the future of agricultural trade is now very unclear, and there

isn't a whole lot of time remaining to re-start negotiations. The United States requires a comprehensive agreement by year end to meet the deadline of its Trade Promotion Authority, and with no apparent will to work through an agreement, there isn't much hope of that happening.

Both France and the U.S. have some key elections in the near future – another disincentive for them to work toward any agreement.

However, miracles have been known to happen, so anyone counting on the WTO to resume talks and come up with an agreement may still have some hope.

The alternative to that would appear to be a proliferation of bilateral agree-

ments – deals put together to try to create beneficial trade arrangements between two or more countries. Canada, as an example, is pursuing such agreements with Japan, Korea and several other countries right now.

We should not be surprised to find countries issuing challenges to trade practices at the WTO in an effort to fix what the negotiations could not. Clearly, Canada and Ontario farmers are in a particular need to take a hard look at challenging the U.S. support programs for grains and oilseeds. Most of the U.S. support for production agriculture goes to grains and oilseeds farmers, and this support is devastating Ontario's production base.

In addition to that, Ontario's rural economy is being seriously damaged by the U.S. practices. We cannot let this issue fade as simply a lost opportunity due to failed trade talks.

It is imperative for the Canadian Federation of Agriculture to consider pushing the federal government towards an aggressive trade strategy that will pursue this and other challenges at the WTO. We need action that will secure beneficial bilateral agreements and that will ensure strict enforcement of agreed-to trade regulations in such areas as product identification, labelling and consistent production standards.

Canada has a lot riding on a successful outcome of a

new set of trading rules through the WTO. Agriculture provides a significant contribution to Canada's economy, so we should support further efforts at securing a successful outcome.

As the latest round of WTO talks came to a screeching halt, Canadian producers were reminded that we must not tie producer profitability only to the outcome of international trade talks. The maintenance of strong producer marketing organizations, renewed development of domestic market opportunities and the continued development of appropriate farm support mechanisms are clearly more necessary now than ever.

Farmers Feed Cities! Campaign partners with the World's Longest BBQ

August 5, 2006 marks the 4th anniversary of The World's Longest BBQ – a grassroots initiative that spans 5,515 kilometres, 6 time zones and 33 million guests. Created by culinary activist and renowned food writer Anita Stewart, the event was originally intend-

ed to draw attention to beef farmers' struggles during the BSE crisis.

This year, Canadians will collectively celebrate the efforts of farmers, fishers and front-line peacekeepers – those who, by their profession, provide our most basic needs and defend our most

basic values.

That's where the Farmers Feed Cities! campaign gets involved. "It's a natural fit," said Leo Guilbeault, chairman of the Ontario Grain and Oilseed Safety Net Committee, the group that currently leads the Farmers Feed Cities! campaign. "We all have access to safer, more reliable food because it's grown right here at home. That's something to celebrate."

Campaign organizers are hoping the profile of this event will raise awareness about the cash crunch in

agriculture. For months now, farmers from across the province have been sounding the alarm about the farm income crisis gripping Ontario's grain and oilseed sector. Despite recent funding announcements, immediate needs have not been met and there is still no commitment from government for the long-term program farmers have been asking for.

"We know there is sup-

port in the community," Guilbeault says. "We're blown away by the calls, letters and emails we get. People are asking us how they can help." According to Guilbeault, joining in the World's Longest BBQ is a great way to show your support of the Canadian agriculture industry. "Just be sure to wear a Farmers Feed Cities! t-shirt while you're flipping burgers and enjoying fresh, Ontario produce."

The premise is simple: wherever you are – campground, cottage or right in your own back yard – light up your BBQ at 6:00 on August 5th and serve up a delicious 'made in Canada' meal. The party can be big or small, the most elaborate menu or a basic burger. Visit www.farmersfeedcities.com to purchase Farmers Feed Cities! supplies and to register your event.

Final payments accelerated for grains and oilseeds farmers

(Ottawa) – Final payments through the \$755 million Grains and Oilseeds Payment Program are now being delivered. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Chuck Strahl made the announcement July 28.

Final cheques started going in the mail last Friday to 16,000 producers and, when all cheques have been sent, more than 120,000 producers will have received a final payment.

According to a press release, the payments are being released two months earlier than expected.

"One of the first things this new government did was to increase the amount of money paid to producers under GOPP, so they would receive as much money as possible with their first payment," said Strahl. "I am pleased that we are now

sending out final payments two months earlier than anticipated."

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