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PRESS RELEASE

Budget 2011 - Where are the much needed programs for livestock agriculture?

April 20, 2011 (WINNIPEG, MB) – Yesterday’s provincial budget is a disappointment for Manitoba’s beef producers as it failed to announce any specific insurance program for Manitoba’s struggling livestock sector. Manitoba Beef Producers’ President Major Jay Fox said that simply making reference to working towards livestock insurance programs reflects an indifference to the real needs of beef producers in this province.

“It’s very disappointing that no specific Business Risk Management program was announced for the cattle industry”, said Fox. “With cattle prices on the upswing, the time is now to implement insurance programs that will provide a base of stability for our producers and will result in a positive economic spin-off for our industry.” Two examples of the types of programs MBP has been steadily working on are the Hay & Pasture Insurance Program, and a Cattle Price Insurance Program. These programs will present producers with the ability to build reference margins, maximize market signals, and increase the overall value of the beef commodity.

The beef industry in Manitoba has been in crisis for almost a decade – for many reasons – not the least of which was the BSE crisis in 2003, as well as the increasing value of the Canadian dollar. The province’s beef cow herd has declined significantly in recent years and many producers have faced and continue to face the reality of a threatened Manitoba livestock industry in to the future. “Although the industry is beginning to see some positive movement, complacency is a luxury beef producers cannot afford. The need for these programs remains greater than ever”, said Fox.

Ontario has recently announced their BRM program, and their commitment to putting in place new permanent programs for cattle. “Our program requests as developed and proposed to government, did not make it to the Provincial Government’s list of priorities,” said Fox. “That is disappointing. It is time for government to move away from the implementation of these ad hoc programs and put into practice viable business risk insurance programs that work. After close to a decade of struggle, our producers deserve more than words. They deserve a program that will provide predictability, bankability, and stability,” said Fox.

Announced in Minister Wowchuk’s budget speech yesterday was funding for water management (drainage, control structures) in high need areas, such as the Interlake. MBP has lobbied for responsible drainage in the maintenance and creation of drains, and sees this increase as a positive. “Doubling the budget for drainage in high need areas is good,” said Fox, “We are hopeful the government will use this money responsibly to that end.”

With a budgetary increase to Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Initiatives of 13.2million, and an increase to Manitoba Conservation, we hope that the government upholds its obligations and allocate adequate funding to deal with TB in the Riding Mountain Eradication Area, and provide the necessary support to producers who continue to suffer losses due to the disease.

“Overall, we are disappointed the budget has not outlined concrete programs that will solve the many long outstanding concerns of the livestock industry in our province”, said Fox. “It has unfortunately not embraced or incorporated the visionary, viable programs that the MBP has developed and proposed for joint implementation and mutual benefit – for all Manitobans. The beef producers of Manitoba deserve better – they deserve to be heard.”

Manitoba Beef Producers is the exclusive voice of the beef industry in Manitoba. Our role and mission is to represent our beef producers through communication, research, advocacy and education. We provide this representation within industry, to government, to the beef consumer and general public. These efforts take place to strengthen our industry viability, improve prosperity and ensure a sustainable future for the beef industry in Manitoba for the benefit of all our producers. The Manitoba Beef Producers represents 8,000 beef producers across the province.

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