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PRESS RELEASE

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH: Beef Producers in Manitoba Need to Know What and When Aid is Coming

November 12, 2010 (WINNIPEG, MB) – The Manitoba Beef Producers (formerly known as the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association) have been dealing with the excess moisture crisis and actively lobbying for aid on behalf of their producers since the onset of the disaster this spring. The organization has long since presented the business case for a relief program that is essential for those affected producers to survive through the excess moisture disaster of this year. Regrettably, after months of continuous meetings, dialogue and exchange at both government levels, the producers of Manitoba still do not know what or when aid is coming.

Last week however, the first step toward aid was announced. The Government of Canada announced that it will be offering tax deferrals to those producers affected by excess moistures this year. “We wish to acknowledge and commend the Federal Government for this first step in providing aid for our struggling producers,” said Jay Fox, President of the Manitoba Beef Producers. “We’re encouraged that the excess moisture crisis of this year is being recognized as a ‘disaster’ and that the tax deferral program is being implemented as a first step. That said, we now greatly anticipate the swift implementation of the entire aid package that we have outlined and brought forward in our meetings to date. The tax deferral program does not 100% solve the crisis. The affected producers’ risk of failing continues to be high without the harmonization and quick implementation of the full recovery program, which includes a per head payment and freight assistance.

It’s also important to note the exclusion of the feedlot sector, according to Ray Armbruster, Vice President of the Manitoba Beef Producers. “The announcement of the tax deferral program is a positive, but there is a gap in that the program does not address the needs of the feedlot sector; only breeding stock.” Sheila Mowat, General Manager stated additionally that Manitoba Beef Producers submitted for a per head payment for the feeding industry as well. “They too are heavily impacted by the high costs to repair infrastructure to their feedlots due to damages caused by excess moisture and the loss of gain because of muddy feeding pens.” Armbruster additionally said they are hoping for resolution to the cattle feeding infrastructure that exists, stating that an immediate and extended strategy for feedlot infrastructure is needed.

Most importantly at this juncture, according to Fox, is knowing what aid is coming. “Our producers are simply not able to make the necessary management decisions to move forward. Winter is fast approaching and we are still in crisis. It is still a disaster. The frustration for our producers is that they are left in the dark and this could lead to their demise, as they are

not equipped with any information to make the decisions that could allow them the opportunity to hang on and get through it.”

On November 9, 2010, this frustration culminated to exasperation when the Province of Saskatchewan announced a Feed and Forage Program to support their producers and a per acre payment to reseed hay, forage and pasture land damaged by excess moisture.

“What’s hard for many of our producers is that they’ve been experiencing flooding hardship over the last number of years. The crisis in Manitoba must be viewed at a national scale as ‘unique’. Our situation is nothing like Saskatchewan. We have been hit hard this year, but for many of our guys, they’ve been hit hard for 3 or 4 years in a row. They have exhausted every avenue and this year will bust them,” said Fox. That very fact has been a key motivation as to why the Manitoba Beef Producers got a jump on their lobbying efforts early on, and were one of the first ones to the table. “We have exercised due diligence so that we could get the most possible for our producers. We therefore have met and worked with both levels of government in order to get this done. Within hours of the announcement in Saskatchewan, we again spoke with both the Province and Feds and have, as a result, made the decision to stay the course, as we believe that our work to date is going to get our producers the best possible package by doing so.” A meeting as planned continues to go forward with both levels of government for next Wednesday, November 17, 2010. “We’re looking forward to a real productive meeting and trust that after we meet we’ll have a better idea of timelines moving forward,” said Sheila Mowat, General Manager. “We have been given assurances that there is a commitment to get something meaningful in the hands of our producers,” said Fox. “We need to stay the course - as the best possible package for our producers means a package supported by both levels of government.”

Mowat reiterates, nonetheless, the deep concern to expedite the process. “We can’t state this strongly enough”, said Mowat. “We need to get moving. If the aid needed doesn’t start soon, there won’t be time left for some to try and stabilize, and turn things around. It will mean producers who are trapped and forced to sell because they have exhausted their savings to try to survive yet another year of loss. The only assurance we have had is that the Province is ready to move, and the first step of AgriRecovery has been put in place, but have been offered no details or timetable. Until producers get better answers than that, our organization will keep pushing and keep reminding Minister Struthers and Minister Ritz that we’re waiting for more than words. We’re urging both the Federal and Provincial Governments to devote urgent attention to this matter, make an announcement and fulfill the entire aid recovery package for our producers that is so desperately needed.”

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 10,000 beef producers across the province.

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