**Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture Warns Domestic Food Supply Needs to be the Biggest Government Priority, Following Healthcare, in Fight Against COVID-19**

*Extraordinary times require extraordinary actions from the federal government to ensure Canada’s food system remains secure*

**EAST MOUNTAIN, NS –** **April 16, 2020 -** This afternoon Mary Robinson, President of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA), hosted a virtual press conference to address the extraordinary challenges being faced by Canadian farmers due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This press conference was exclusively sponsored by Food and Consumer Products of Canada.

Ms. Robinson warned that without immediate assistance from the federal government, the Canadian agriculture sector cannot ensure our domestic food supply will remain secure for the immediate and long-term benefit of all Canadians.

On behalf of the CFA’s 200,000 farming families, Ms. Robinson acknowledged government support to date, including the recently announced fund to help offset the significant costs of isolating temporary foreign workers when they arrive in Canada, but she said much more needs to be done.

As the unified voice advocating for Canadian farmers at the national level, the CFA highlighted the urgent issues farmers are facing today:

* **Ongoing labour shortage and market predictability and how that is impacting farms and food processing** – In addition to alarming uncertainty in their markets, unfortunately this spring many Canadian farmers do not have enough workers to consider planting a 2020 crop. Labour was already a critical issue before the pandemic and has now escalated to the point that both farmers and food processors are worried that even if planting does proceed, harvesting and processing may not be possible without sufficient labour. We face the possibility that crops will rot in the fields, as is now happening in other countries.
* **Unexpected and increasing costs for farmers due to COVID-19** – Canadian farmers are dealing with significantly increased costs associated with purchasing the necessary PPE for their workers. In addition, due to meat processing plant closures, farmers are being forced to keep and feed their livestock for an extended period of time. Canadian farmers are feeling increasingly stressed, with some farmers so worried about the mounting challenges, they are strongly considering stopping their farming operations to stave off financial disaster.

The CFA and its members are asking government to create an Emergency Fund or financial backstop so farmers in need can access funds to help them overcome these mounting costs. Canadian farmers need to hear a clear commitment from government to instill necessary confidence for the 2020 planting season.

**CFA President Mary Robinson said**, *“As farmers, we have carefully considered this message today. We do not want to create panic. At the same time, it would be irresponsible not to sound the alarm about the realities Canadian farmers are facing. In times of economic crisis and global uncertainty, Canadians have always been able to depend on farmers to do what we do best – grow food. Today, Canadian farmers need immediate, meaningful help from our federal government to continue fulfilling that responsibility. Agriculture, the foundation of our overall food supply is, at this very moment in time, at a tipping point. If we do not, as a nation, address the rising challenges immediately, Canadian consumers could see a decrease in the amount and variety of food at their local grocery stores as well as higher prices, in the months ahead.”*

**Robinson also appealed directly to the Canadian public**, “*The Canadian Federation of Agriculture stands united with all Canadians in the fight against COVID-19. We are asking Canadians – we are asking* ***you*** *- to contact your local MP and tell them how much you value our food supply system. Tell your elected representatives that Canadian farmers need support and backing now. We need to know government, as it has done for other industries, is there for our farmers, so that we can continue to do what we do best – grow food to feed all Canadians*.”

**To view a recording of today’s virtual press conference,** [**click here.**](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001WRstzVcU0jkipt1SdfYX9QfpNVyDPDDeIPlDS427RN7SF6W6rK75xM6FhrwFs0hJrJWN2faGm3IXDobm-OfOJB6XAWWYaAj7GPZewS-80k6PvvB7YVJkbBmBxhAxhxcbBAakau9w48-dcfCaYKsPME04lMhmOeS-Ggl9G64eADBGNubit5Rj0QSCUCvmJOv5&c=mN0bmDoaagkuaqRh0r9coU2YkhNC50MSyi-QEpcyeAb_yOVgMgqnNw==&ch=9arGf0Ir4OPS65ctsrpsSbE0dNBfhwxfcnrcP81yVF0OJXNHU0oGLg==)

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