

**The Manitoba government is issuing this news release on behalf of the governments of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.**

July 22, 2008

Western provinces urge Canadian government to secure a strong WTO agriculture agreement

WTO agreement key to growth: western Ag ministers

Geneva... A successful World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement is essential for the growth and sustainability of our provincial and national economies.

Canada, more than most other developed countries, relies on international trade. A strong rules-based world trading system will foster continued growth, particularly in the agriculture sector.

At the same time, we recognize the importance of responding to the issues faced by developing countries.

Canada should engage in the agriculture negotiations strategically by focusing on what it can gain from a strong WTO agreement.

"Canada must play a leadership role that is consistent with its status as a major trading nation. It should engage in the agriculture negotiations to secure the maximum benefit for our industry," said George Groeneveld, Alberta Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

A breakthrough in agriculture is key to advance the negotiations in other areas. Western Ministers urge Canada to be flexible and engage constructively in all areas of the negotiations - market access, domestic support and export competition.

"Saskatchewan's agriculture industry is the most export dependent in Canada. For our industry to prosper, we need an agreement that will allow them to access international markets free of distortion," added Bob Bjournerud, Saskatchewan Minister of Agriculture.

"British Columbia's diversified agricultural industry will benefit from a successful WTO agreement that has the best outcomes for all sectors," said Stan Hagen, British Columbia Minister of Agriculture and Lands.

"Manitoba is encouraged the agriculture negotiations are continuing to progress. Every effort must be made to achieve real reductions in trade distorting domestic support and successfully conclude the Round," added Rosann Wowchuk, Manitoba Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives.

This week's ministerial outcome could decide the fate of the Round as a whole. The negotiations may be delayed for many years if ministers fail to reach an agreement this week. In the absence of a new agreement, trade distortion and protectionism will continue and worsen.

We believe an agreement that would benefit all of Canada is within our grasp. There is no better time than now to secure a deal.