



Celebrating Ontario Agriculture and the Local Heroes Behind It - Industry Launches Campaign to Raise Consumer Awareness -

April 17, 2008 – Guelph, ON – Everyone has a stake in the future of agriculture. That's the message of a new TV advertising and web campaign launched today by leaders of Ontario's major agricultural organizations.

"Consumers have a significant role to play in contributing to the long-term sustainability of agriculture in this province," says Greg Devries, Chair of the Presidents' Council, the group spearheading the campaign. "They are increasingly disconnected from farming and rural traditions; more than 80 percent of Ontario's population lives in urban areas. We have an opportunity today to bridge that widening gap and help ensure a healthy future for all of us in this province."

The campaign, "Farming Grows Ontario's Future", encourages all consumers to look at farming differently and consider how they can contribute to the industry's sustainability.

"It starts with raising awareness, but the biggest impact comes when consumers look and ask for locally produced foods from their retailer," says Rob McLaughlin, who sits on the Presidents' Council Communications Advisory Committee. "That can mean selecting fresh seasonal produce that is clearly marked as grown in Ontario, but it also includes products on grocery shelves. Roughly 25 percent of dry goods are produced using Ontario-grown crops, but they aren't always labeled that way. "

"I congratulate the Presidents' Council for the tremendous work they are doing to educate consumers on the value of Ontario food products. Their campaign complements the investments that our government is making through our Buy Ontario Strategy," said Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

The TV campaign and website are the result of a three-year effort by the Presidents' Council to identify the issues and opportunities that are central to agriculture's future in Ontario and the role that consumers play.

The campaign strategy is built around a research effort that helped prioritize the aspects of agriculture consumers expressed were most relevant to them. The execution of that strategy is designed to give a face and a voice to Ontario's farmers and convey the message that everyone has a stake in the future of agriculture – producers and consumers alike.

The campaign includes four 30-second TV spots, each focusing on a different theme related to the overall objective. Those themes include:

- **economic importance** – agriculture is the second largest sector of Ontario's economy and third largest employer; it contributes to job creation in such areas as transportation, food processing, science, education, banking and retail
- **food independence** – 52 percent of the country's prime farmland is found in Ontario helping farmers produce high-quality, nutritious food close to home

- **environmental stewardship** – farming contributes environmental benefits to everyone in the province by contributing important green space and providing a plentiful source of local food
- the connection between **family farms and values** – despite the fact there are 10,000 fewer farms in Ontario than there were 10 years ago, 92 percent of Ontario’s farms are still run by families, supporting a strong Canadian tradition of self-sufficiency that is the bedrock for many communities across the province

The TV ads began appearing on Wednesday, April 16 on most major television networks across Ontario, primarily during primetime schedules. The campaign will run in intervals until the winter of 2009. The website also went live on Wednesday, April 16.

Consumers are also invited to visit www.growourfarms.ca. The website provides a greater level of information about the role that agriculture plays in Ontario by going into detail on the four primary themes. Other sections in the website include:

- “Who we are” – in addition to background information on the Presidents’ Council, the member organizations and links to their websites, this section provides more general information on the Ontario farmer and the industry; the objective of this section is to paint a modern and accurate picture of the people involved in farming and how they go about their business
- “What we grow” – a comprehensive summary of the major crops grown and livestock raised in Ontario as well as their various uses
- “Where we farm” – an overview of the major food production areas in the province and links to other related organizations (e.g. Foodland Ontario, Farmers Markets Ontario, etc.); the section also includes information on where to find Ontario products – from biofuels to fresh meat and produce

The Presidents’ Council was formed in 2004 as a venue for the Chairs and Presidents of Ontario’s agricultural organizations to discuss the broad issues and challenges facing Ontario agriculture. Funding for this project was provided in part by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the Agriculture Adaptation Council’s CanAdvance Program, the Ontario government and member cash contributions.

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Note to media:

- The first two TV spots can be viewed at the campaign website (www.growourfarms.ca)
- Those TV spots and images from the campaign for reproduction by print media are also available on request