Fédération
des producteurs
de lait du Québec

News Release

Annual General Meeting of the Fédération des producteurs de lait du Québec (FPLQ)

Ottawa must keep supply management intact in trade negotiations

Québec City, April 10, 2013/CNW – "We expect the Government of Canada to keep its word and to preserve supply management and our markets in their entirety in the negotiations under way, in particular with the European Union. This means no new access to our market beyond the tariff quota of 20,400 tonnes of cheese already conceded by Canada." This call was launched by the Chairman of the Fédération des producteurs de lait du Québec (FPLQ) at the organization's Annual General Meeting at the same time as he thanked the Quebec and Canadian governments and parliamentarians for their unanimous support of the dairy marketing model so far.

"The negotiations with Europe are not being conducted on an individual sector basis. They are comprehensive negotiations and the overall outcome must be balanced," recalled Letendre. In this regard, he said that he has learned from several sources that Canada's offers are already very generous overall. Europe is apparently making important gains in several negotiation areas such as public markets, intellectual property and geographical indications. Canada therefore has no reason to make concessions on the cheese issue.

It should be recalled that Europe already exports more than $160 million of cheese to Canada annually. Its agricultural market is one of the most tightly closed markets on the planet, for all products combined, and one of the most heavily subsidized. For Quebec, in particular, which produces over 60% of specialty cheese in Canada, any additional access would result in direct losses for producers and cheesemakers, both big and small. Each percentage of market share conceded represents $150 million in losses for producers and processors but, most of all, any additional concession would send a very bad signal to the other free trade negotiations under way.

"We have shown the governments that supply management is a fair farming model that contributes to our food sovereignty and also provides major economic benefits without costing the public treasury a cent," said Letendre. He added that it was the best model in the world to guarantee agricultural producers fair returns, without subsidies. "**It is the best system that exists to feed our people, our fellow citizens, with local, high-quality products at reasonable prices. Unfortunately, despite all our political support, pressure to open the Canadian market and deregulate production is great. The pressure comes mainly from the Trans-Pacific Partnership talks and the negotiations between Canada and Europe,"** he recalled.

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Consumer confidence

The FPLQ Chairman was delighted with the results of a recent Ipsos Marketing survey that showed 97% of Quebec consumers have confidence in milk producers. However, he encouraged dairy farmers to maintain and to strengthen the bond of trust with the population by publicizing best practices implemented by producers in the areas of environment, quality, control of food safety risks, traceability, animal welfare and biosecurity. **"In general, in life, we want to advance, improve our ways of doing things and our lot in life. It's the same thing on our farms: we want to do better, do more and operate sustainably in order to make a good living from our commodity and feed our fellow citizens,"** concluded Letendre.

About the FPLQ

The Fédération des producteurs de lait du Québec speaks for the province's 13,000 milk producers and 6,100 dairy farms. Quebec dairy farmers produce nearly 3 billion litres of milk annually and generate farm cash receipts exceeding $2 billion. Milk production provides 60,000 jobs in Quebec and contributes $5.1 billion to the Gross Domestic Product.

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