

TPP agreement imminent and rumours of major concessions at the expense of supply management: Quebec's agri-food industry mobilizes

Longueuil, September 28, 2015 — With just two days to go before the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) ministerial conference in Atlanta that could result in a final agreement, Quebec's agri-food industry leaders are mobilizing and making an urgent appeal to Stephen Harper, Canada's Prime Minister. Pierre Paradis, Quebec's Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Marcel Groleau, President of the Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA) and spokesperson for the Coalition for a Fair Farming Model, Supply Management, Denis Richard, President of La Coop fédérée, and René Moreau, Vice President of Agropur Cooperative, in addition to several stakeholders of Quebec's agri-food industry, are demanding that he stand by his promises and keep supply management fully intact in the TPP negotiations. Essentially, this means that no new concessions should be made to allow additional access to supply-managed commodity markets and that customs tariffs should be kept at their current level.

"Supply management is the fairest system for producers, processors and consumers, and we cannot afford to do without it. In July, during the meeting of federal, provincial and territorial agriculture ministers in Charlottetown, the ministers agreed unanimously to defend supply management in its entirety. Now as we get nearer to reaching a Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement, we know that Canada is being put under huge pressure in an attempt to chip away at our supply management system. The federal government has pledged many times to defend the supply management system in its entirety, and it should know that we support it more than ever before. Although the Quebec government is in favour of signing trade agreements, these agreements must still benefit our economic development. Agricultural enterprises in the supply management system are major economic actors in our province, and they should know that we will highlight their contribution to Quebec's prosperity. Given the importance of the issues, I will be in Atlanta with my colleague Minister Jacques Daoust to defend Quebec family farms," stated Minister Pierre Paradis.

"We will be in Atlanta but also very present in Quebec all week to make sure that the government holds strong and stands by its promises to keep supply management fully intact at the outcome of the negotiations," said Marcel Groleau.

Not only producers are quite concerned, but the entire industry as well. New concessions in the dairy and poultry sectors would be very harmful, even disastrous for our family farms, local production and the tens of thousands of jobs generated by supply managed-commodities. Quebec would be specifically affected since 43% of farm incomes depend on supply management. The dairy sector was already sacrificed in the Canada-Europe Trade Agreement. The 17,700 tonnes of new cheese imports conceded by Canada equal over 30% of the fine cheese market here and will cause annual losses of around \$300 million to cheese makers and milk producers in Canada. "We've already given enough!" added Mr. Groleau.

"Supply management is very important to the stability of Canada's agri-food sector. New market access concessions for our markets would have a very negative impact on Quebec's economy. Supply management system is profitable for all agri-food industry stakeholders. Thousands of jobs and several hundred millions of dollars in economic benefits are at stake at every level of the agri-food industry," stressed Ghislain Gervais, First Vice President of La Coop fédérée.

Supply management is an important tool for Agropur Cooperative. As revealed by a Boston Consulting Group (BCG) study published in July, not only the majority of Quebec dairy farms, but also many production and processing jobs, would be compromised if supply management was endangered. “Any new concessions would really hurt our company and the some 2,500 Agropur members, all Quebec and Canadian producers, local communities and the jobs generated by our industry,” stated René Moreau, Vice President of Agropur Cooperative.

Supply management is subject to a broad consensus in the Canadian public, particularly because Canadians want to have access to quality, locally-produced dairy and poultry products. Quebec’s dairy and poultry sectors alone bring in nearly \$8.2 billion every year for the GDP, generate 92,000 jobs and contribute \$1.38 billion in tax receipts. In Canada, they contribute over \$30 billion to GDP and generate more than 300,000 quality jobs. It is in Canada’s best interest to protect this major contribution to its economy. For more information, go to WWW.FORTSETUNIS.CA/EN/.

About the GO5 Coalition

Coalition GO5 is an alliance formed by the many people and organizations that believe in strong agriculture and a prosperous food sector in Quebec. Its goal is to keep supply management fully intact by the end of the various national and international trade negotiations. The supply management system provides Quebecers with high-quality local egg, poultry and dairy products and farmers with a fair income from the market, without subsidies.

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