

**Press release**  
*For immediate release*

**Imported diafiltered milk**

**A common front by the dairy industry to get Ottawa to act**

**Montreal, April 12, 2016** – Exasperated by the inaction of the federal government, Pierre Paradis, Quebec Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Marcel Groleau, President of the Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA), Bruno Letendre, Chair of Les Producteurs de lait du Québec, and Serge Riendeau, President of Agropur Dairy Cooperative, have demanded that the federal government enforce cheese compositional standards. Despite the fact that it has acknowledged that diafiltered milk is a milk ingredient whose addition to cheeses is limited by Canadian compositional standards, the government is taking its own sweet time to enforce its regulations. A list of 59 Quebec dairy processing companies that back the milk producers' demand that the federal government settle the problem quickly was revealed at a press conference.

“During the last federal election campaign, the Liberal Party of Canada formally committed to review the standards, rules and practices in effect as concerns imported food products, particularly milk proteins. In February, the day after one of my bilateral meetings with my federal counterpart, Minister MacAulay stated that the intention was never for diafiltered milk to be used instead of milk and that he was working on clarifying the rules for everyone. Even more recently, Prime Minister Trudeau said that his office and MPs were in regular contact with milk producers in an effort to find solutions to this serious problem. The federal government’s plan must be devised with its feet firmly planted on the ground. It must stop turning a blind eye to enforcing its own rules because this is really harming our milk producers and depriving consumers of correct, transparent information,” Minister Paradis said.

“In just a few months, this government has taken action on several issues in line with its commitments. Milk producers are fed up and do not understand why the government is not enforcing its own regulations and treating diafiltered milk as what it really is: a milk ingredient whose use in cheese is limited. They are running out of patience. Everyone knows the solution. It’s time to decide!” stated Marcel Groleau, President of the UPA.

The government has formally acknowledged that the problem exists. In fact, on February 5, *La Terre de chez Nous* published the content of an e-mail from the office of Minister Lawrence MacAulay: “We are aware of the industry’s concerns about the use of diafiltered milk in cheese production. Under the cheese compositional standards, the intention was never for diafiltered milk to be used instead of milk. We are working to make sure that the rules are clear for everyone. Canada recognizes the importance of effective import control measures and manages its imports in accordance with its international trade obligations” [translation]. This same statement had been made two days earlier during a speech by the Minister to Dairy Farmers of Canada delegates and processor representatives. Despite these repeated commitments, more than two months later, the government has still not announced any concrete measures.

“The exponential increase in imported diafiltered milk destabilizes supply management and has a very negative impact on producer income. If nothing is done soon, this breach, in addition to Canada’s major concessions in the free trade agreements with the European Union and the member countries of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), clearly threatens the sustainability of Canadian agricultural policy in the dairy sector. And while our sector generates major economic benefits for the Canadian economy, these benefits are now at risk,” added Bruno Letendre, Chair of Les Producteurs de lait du Québec. In 2015, Canadian producers lost a total of over \$220 million due to these imports.

“Diafiltered milk was created to circumvent import rules and Canada’s cheese compositional standards, which were established in 2007 by the federal government. The proof is that this product is not used to produce cheese in the United States. At the border, diafiltered milk is considered an ingredient (protein substance) by the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA), but once in Canada, it is considered milk by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). This inconsistency must be corrected. The government must acknowledge that producers and the majority of processors demand that it take action and apply its own rules,” insisted Serge Riendeau, President of Agropur Dairy Cooperative.

Representatives of the Centre d’insémination artificielle du Québec, the Association des transporteurs de lait du Québec, Valacta, the Centre d’expertise laitière québécois, Laiterie La Baie, Fromagerie du Champs à la Meule, and Wally Smith, a dairy farmer in British Columbia and President of Dairy Farmers of Canada, also attended the press conference to support these demands.

Milk production generates around 83,000 direct, indirect and induced jobs in Quebec and contributes as much as \$6.2 billion to the gross domestic product. Finally, it results in \$1.29 billion in tax receipts, including \$678 million for the federal government and \$454 million for the Quebec government. Quebec has 5,856 dairy farms, which deliver nearly 3 billion litres of milk every year, for a total of over \$2.4 billion in farm receipts.

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