

*Private Members' Business*

Based on these principles, the paper discusses the issues and the need for change in seven key areas. They are marketing, trade development and value-added processing, financing and managing the family farm, safety net programs, supply management, agriculture transportation, food safety and quality, and sustainable agriculture.

These were the topics for sessions during the National Agri-food Policy Conference in Ottawa last December. Over 1,800 people were at the conference. All sectors of the agriculture economy were represented, from farmers to processors to consumers.

The federal government put the discussion paper and the conference together as a starting point. We wanted to find out if industry and the provinces were willing to work with us in developing policies for the future. Most of the delegates agreed that we should pursue a policy review, and that is what we are doing. Committees with representation from both levels of government and from industry have been set up to deal with the seven main areas that I just identified.

Let us talk about market development and value added. A government-industry committee has been established to look at how competitive we are and how we can become more competitive in a changing market-place.

Another committee will look at how Canada can lead in value-added production. The National Grains Bureau has been working on encouraging value-added production in the grains and oilseeds sector, and the bureau will continue its work.

Looking for value-added opportunities in the international market-place is important as well, but there are things we can do here at home to promote that kind of activity. First, governments have to ensure that their programs and policies do not discourage value-added activity. The Federal-Provincial Market Development Council will be suggesting ways to do this as well.

It may not be well known, but it is a fact that there are 169 barriers to trade between the provinces right now. We are taking steps at our level to eliminate those barriers. Agriculture ministers have signed a memorandum of understanding on the issue. Establishing a binding dispute settlement mechanism to deal with

interprovincial trade barriers on an ongoing basis is another important initiative in this area.

A government-industry task force has also been established to look at the management needs of farmers. Over the next six months the federal government will be consulting with industry to develop options for helping farmers improve their management skills.

In the area of supply management, two task forces are already in place: the dairy task force and the poultry task force.

A government-industry steering group has been established to deal with three key issues in the area of transportation policy: the Western Grain Transportation Act, feed freight assistance and minimum compensatory rates. We hope that decisions on these issues will be possible by the end of this year.

Food safety is another area of concern in the agri-food industry. More consultation and communication is needed so that consumers and industry understand the system better and are more involved in the policy-making process. A number of mechanisms are already in place for these consultations. They include the National Food Safety Advisory Group, the Salmonella Review Board and the Pesticide Registration Review Board, to name just a few.

Another important step is the Conference on Food Safety being organized. It will take place in just a few days in Toronto.

Finally, a federal-provincial committee on sustainable agriculture is in place. A discussion paper outlining the federal position and provincial perspectives should be ready by the end of June. Extensive consultations will be held on the paper and options will be tabled with the agriculture ministers at their annual meeting.

I have outlined the steps being taken in the policy review very briefly. We are facing a number of tough issues. For the purposes of this debate, how we include farm-fed grain in income stabilization programs is just one. We have to look at issues surrounding the Western Grain Transportation Act and the whole area of agriculture in particular.

As I said, in my area we have grain farmers, dairy producers and fruit farmers. They are very interested in this discussion. This is a debate in an area I have