

Private Members' Business

culture. The bureau, which is part of the Grains and Oilseeds Branch of Agriculture Canada, was opened in Winnipeg in April 1988. It is situated in the heart of the grain industry, and is positioned to forge those closer ties between government and industry which are essential, we believe, to the future of agriculture in this country.

Indeed, consultation with the industry is an important component in the agriculture policy review initiated by this government. By working together with industry and considering producers in all the areas of the country, we feel that we can develop fair solutions to the problems and issues facing the Canadian agriculture sector.

Instead, let's look at farm-fed grain stabilization as an issue in the broad context of all agricultural stabilization programs, carry on with this discussion and bring forth the options and suggestions noted in this speech earlier.

Mr. Greg Thompson (Carleton—Charlotte): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate regarding the inclusion of farm-fed grain in the Western Grain Stabilization Act and the Agriculture Stabilization Act.

Producers in different regions have raised the issue and questioned why grain fed on farms is not covered under these programs. They have cited this as a perceived inequity between grain farmers who market their grain and those who feed it.

Raising livestock is one of the best examples of value-added production. There is a need in the ever changing global market-place in which we find ourselves to look more at value-added processing, particularly in western Canada.

Agriculture in the west has been traditionally an industry built on the export of raw products. As the industry moves into the next century, the changing world market-place makes it necessary to diversify our agricultural base and export more processed products.

I bring this issue into the debate because it is one of the areas now under review by the federal government. Just as the whole area of safety nets for farmers is being examined by the government and industry, our approach to value-added and market development is also under review, as is food safety, supply management and other key areas.

In other words, we are in the midst of a comprehensive agricultural policy review. We are looking at programs and policies in a broad context. Now is not the time to be making fundamental changes to one particular program in isolation of the review work.

Just a few short months ago, 1,800 industry and government representatives met in Ottawa. They met to begin the task of reviewing the agricultural policies in this country.

Plans to establish a number of task forces in several areas were announced as a result of this national conference. One of those plans, as I mentioned, was farm safety nets.

The current federal-provincial working group on farm safety nets was in place before the conference and will continue its work. The group's key objective is to develop a long term, comprehensive safety net policy for all commodities and for all farmers. The group will prepare an interim report to the agricultural ministers at their annual meeting. Further consultations with farm groups and other interested parties will take place in the fall.

In the meantime, there is an immediate need to develop proposals to assist the grains and oilseeds sector with a national program framework for safety nets. That review is being led by the National Grains Bureau in Winnipeg and work is beginning immediately. It will involve extensive consultation with industry to develop proposals as quickly as possible for this new safety net program. In addition, action is being taken in the area of value-added. The National Grains Bureau again is playing a major role. Much work has already been done, but it will become part of an over-all strategy and policy review system on the part of this government.

A task force is being established to examine the competitiveness of Canada's productive capacity, and the challenges and opportunities in the global market-place. The task force will look at the respective roles of governments, producers, processors, retailers and, most important, the consumer, who is affected by any government proposal. This will allow it to set priorities and encourage consensus for future development and future programs.