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significant source of income for Canada. In 1992 exports were worth \$13.7 billion.

• (1110)

Our platform, the famous red book, says that our sector has unique opportunities for growth and places great emphasis on security for Canadian farm families. It recognizes that Canadian farmers want that security to be built on the development of solid domestic and international markets, on staying at the forefront of innovation, on stewardship of our natural resources and in the confidence consumers have in the safety and the quality of our food.

I would like to take some time to review the work that we have done to live up to our commitments, to follow up perhaps on the intervention of the parliamentary secretary some minutes ago.

I would like to begin by reaffirming as a government our commitment to research and to innovation. This is an area where our government feels that the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food can work closely with other government departments to build a framework that will make it easy for firms in the agriculture sector to bring products successfully to the marketplace.

Successful agriculture is a knowledge industry. Studies have shown that the return on investment in some key areas of agri-food research can exceed 50 per cent. This is one area where Ralph Goodale is very keen to see government continue to emphasize—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I hesitate to interrupt the Minister of Finance. I just want to remind us all to refer to each other by our titles or positions, such as the minister of agriculture or minister of this, unless of course that member is no longer in this Chamber, which is always regrettable. For all those of us here in this 35th Parliament I know it is a tradition that we will want to maintain.

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, I am suitably admonished. It is just that I am so enthusiastic about the work the minister of agriculture does that I sometimes get carried away.

In any event, this is one area, that is to say agri-food research, in which the government is very keen to see us place even more emphasis. Therefore, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada will give a very high priority to innovative research and to collaboration with private research partners.

In our agenda for creating opportunity we have endorsed the idea of providing matching funds for research proposed jointly by the public and the private sectors. My colleague is looking at a variety of options, collaboration with the private sector and the

public sector, including a plan to work with industry for additional co-operative investment funding.

As for trade, which the critic discussed, from the day we took office it has been our top priority. The focus of our government's platform has been economic renewal, growth and jobs. A number of the initiatives so far have been aimed at encouraging small business, stimulating innovation in research and development, providing stability for the future and in particular, restoring confidence and stability in the agri-food sector.

In pursuing these goals we have set out two priorities: concluding the trade deals and getting absolutely the most out of new trade opportunities. That again is what the parliamentary secretary referred to. Let us not only look at the problems but let us look at change as something that will provide a very dynamic agricultural sector with the opportunity to develop new products and create new opportunities.

We hit the ground running by negotiating a successful GATT agreement that will bring fairness and predictability to international trade which Canada is so dependent on.

On January 1 we saw the introduction of the North American free trade agreement which will provide an even greater opportunity for our industry in North America. A more secure trading environment will over time provide better stability for our farm families and for our agri-food entrepreneurs. Our challenge now is to take the utmost advantage of the opportunities presented by these agreements.

• (1115)

We already have a commitment from industry to work toward the goal of exporting \$20 billion in agri-food products by the year 2000. That is a considerable leap from the \$13.7 billion we are now realizing. I am confident, as are the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the government, that we can do it if we all work together. I would ask the opposition to join us in that great effort.

The Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food is reordering its priorities to increase support for export initiatives. We have placed agri-food specialists in selected embassies abroad to provide better service for our exporters. The first ones are in place in Mexico, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. The response we have had to their work has been very good.

To further consolidate our trade efforts in Mexico, we will soon open a Canada business centre in Mexico City to promote our exports and to offer trade related services to our new NAFTA partners.

Canadian farmers are very supportive of this focus on trade. They want to earn their incomes from the marketplace, not from the high subsidy levels that have prevailed over the past few years. They repeatedly tell us that they do not want subsidies, that they just want a decent price from the market.