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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Certified Seed Best Opportunity to Restore European Market

Winnipeg, Manitoba - The Flax Council of Canada said today that a plan to require all flax shipments to Europe to be grown from certified seed represents the best opportunity to restore access to the largest export market for Canadian farmers.

Canadian flax sales to Europe have been severely restricted since traces of CDC Triffid, a genetically modified (GM) variety, were discovered in some shipments. The Council believes that implementing a certified seed protocol for all European bound flax is the only feasible option for testing and ensuring the seed supply is Triffid free.

While certified seed is subject to rigorous quality standards and can be efficiently tested, there is no effective way of testing all farm-saved seed from all 12,000 flax growers in western Canada in a timely manner or ensuring the reliability of the samples.

The Council developed a comprehensive testing protocol and explored a variety of potential alternatives before concluding that certified seed was the best solution.

“We must act quickly and send a strong signal to our European customers that we are doing everything we can to eradicate Triffid from Canadian flax,” said Flax Council of Canada President Barry Hall. “With Europe accounting for over 70 per cent of flax exports, the very future of our industry is at stake.”

The Council said the policy would only apply to sensitive markets and would only be required until it is determined that Triffid has been removed from the seed supply.

The policy is supported by the Manitoba Flax Growers Association (MFGA) which believes the certified seed protocol will create a timely and manageable process.

“We will be dealing with a professional organization where all the names and places are documented and can be easily contacted versus thousands of producers scattered across the Prairies,” said MFGA Chair Garvin Kabernick. “We may have only one opportunity to restore the confidence of our European customers, so it is crucial that we get it right.”

The Council also took issue with those who have misrepresented the plan as a move to restrict farmers from replanting their own seed.

“This is not an issue of certified seed versus farm saved seed. This is a critical market access issue that affects growers, seed companies and grain companies as well as our end use customers. To resolve it requires extraordinary measures,” said Hall. “Now is the time for all stakeholders in the flax industry to work together and seek solutions.”

For Further Information:

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