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Global Agricultural Information Network

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Report Highlights:

Canada Removes Enhanced Import Controls on Japanese Food * Manitoba Premier Launches Media Campaign to Preserve the Canadian Wheat Board * Quebec to Refocus Its Agrifood Policy on the Food * Manitoba Hog Farms to Face Tougher Rules * Prospects All Wet for Prairie Crops

This Week in Canadian Agriculture is a review of Canadian agricultural industry developments of interest to the U.S. agricultural community. The issues summarized in this report cover a wide range of subject matter obtained from Canadian press reports, government press releases, and host country agricultural officials and representatives.

Disclaimer: Any press article summaries in this report are included to bring U.S. readership closer to the pulse of Canadian developments in agriculture. In no way do the views and opinions of these sources reflect USDA's, the U.S. Embassy's, or any other U.S. Government agency's point of view or official policy.

Canada Removes Enhanced Import Controls on Japanese Food

Following the March 11 earthquake in Japan, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) implemented enhanced import controls on all food and animal feed products from areas affected by the country's nuclear crisis. These products were not allowed entry into the Canadian food and feed systems without acceptable documentation or test results verifying their safety. In addition, the CFIA launched a sampling and testing strategy to monitor radiation levels of products being imported from Japan. Recently, the Agency announced the removal of its enhanced food safety measures and the return to its standard food safety programs for the importation of products produced after June 13, 2011.

At the same time, since all food products tested so far were found to be well below Health Canada's actionable levels for radiation, CFIA also ceased the enhanced testing of respective imported food products. Currently, CFIA plans to sample and test fish off the coast of British Columbia to monitor for any presence of radiation, but the expectation is that these test results will also be well below Health Canada's actionable levels for radiation.

Manitoba Premier Launches Media Campaign to Preserve the Canadian Wheat Board:

Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger has stepped up the fight against the federal government and its plans to remove the Canadian Wheat Board's (CWB) monopoly powers over the wheat and barley grown for domestic consumption or export in Western Canada. On June 13, 2011, the Manitoba government issued a news release announcing a provincial radio, television and print campaign to preserve the CWB and the right of farmers to decide the future of their grain marketing agency. The campaign is scheduled to run for three weeks. The press release contains statements of support for the CWB from the Premier as well as from Allen Oberg, the CWB chair. The news release also states that Manitobans can sign a petition to support the Manitoba government's decision to attempt to pressure the federal government to reverse its decision to end the monopoly on August 1, 2012. The press release can be found at the following URL address: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2011/06/2011-06-13-102700-11743.html>

Quebec to Refocus Its Agrifood Policy on the Food

Quebec's first draft of a comprehensive public policy on agrifood proposes what the government calls a "major" cultural change by focusing the policy on the food and, by extension, the consumer. The policy document, called the Green Paper ("*livre vert*") for an Agrifood Policy and titled *Donner le gout du Quebec* ("Giving a taste for Quebec"), was recently released by Agriculture Minister Pierre Corbeil and

is expected to go first to the provincial assembly, then to the legislative committee on agriculture, fisheries, energy and natural resources. The document's various policy proposals aim to support agrifood in the context of consumer concerns, such as sustainable development, reduced pesticide use and increased awareness of locally-produced foods. The Paper proposes policy focused on distinguishing Quebec's agrifood products, strengthening farms' "competitive capacity" and developing rural Quebec's environmental assets, as follows:

- **Distinguishability:** Among the policy proposals to develop a distinct market for Quebec foods are to create an identification system for Quebec's farmed foods within the province; to position Quebec foods based on their distinct characteristics; and to develop new, value-added and protected brands for the foods themselves.
- **Competitiveness:** The paper proposes that a competitive agrifood sector in Quebec should have public policy supporting business know-how, including support for development of business plans, financial tools adapted to farms' economic situations, and support for a food processing sector.
- **Environment:** The policy paper also proposes measures to foster an atmosphere of sustainable development in keeping with public concern for the environment, such as support for on-farm adaptation of environmental best practices, improved water quality and "intensified efforts" to reduce pesticide use.

The province's general farm organization l'Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA) said it supports the tabling of the Green Paper as a way to launch discussions on future agrifood policy.

However, UPA president Christian Lacasse said, while "placing the food at the heart of the policy goes without saying, what of the producers?" Quebec's consumers, he said, don't want to see agriculture policy based on an American-style model of industrial agriculture. The Quebec model, he said, is best developed within Quebec, toward a diversified and dynamic agriculture sector that can best weather any future crises.

Manitoba Hog Farms to Face Tougher Rules

A news article informs that Manitoba hog producers will face greater restrictions with the onset of changes to the province's pollution targets. The province first announced in 2003 that it wanted to protect Lake Winnipeg from being choked by pollution and toxic algae blooms. The aim was to restore the lake to the way it was before 1970 by cutting phosphorus, nitrogen and ammonia levels. Earlier this month, Conservation Minister Bill Blaikie and Premier Greg Selinger announced a revised plan that would bring the lake back to pre-1990 levels, but with no nitrogen targets. "We're pursuing first and foremost phosphorus reduction," Selinger says. "Nitrogen is something that we have to continue to see if it's necessary." For hog producers that means new or expanded farms and processing plants will not be approved unless they incorporate advanced manure treatment such as chemical lagoons. The provincial government will also enshrine in law a ban announced two years ago on spreading manure in winter. The end goal is to cut the amount of phosphorus in Lake Winnipeg in half. Some specialists, however, remain skeptical. "I'm frankly not so sure that can be achieved," says Gordon Goldsborough, a biology professor at the University of Manitoba. "That's going to require considerable lifestyle changes on the part of pretty much everyone in the watershed." Such a sharp reduction might require homeowners to stop treating their lawns altogether, he says, and farmers would have to build sewage treatment plants for virtually every hog operation.

Prospects All Wet for Prairie Crops

Too much water will likely result in between six to eight million acres going unseeded across the Canadian Prairies is the news the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) delivered in a June 14, 2011 industry briefing. Rain in the fall of 2010, combined with unrelenting rain in the spring of 2011 across large areas of Western Canada has delayed or completely prevented seeding. As a result, risks of frost damage and higher risks of disease will threaten the crops that were able to get in the ground. The CWB is expecting that total all-wheat production acres to be 20.3 million acres which is slightly larger than in 2010, but this would be the second-smallest since 1971. Durum area is forecast at 3.4 million acres, while barley is currently projected at 6.7 million acres. The hardest hit areas are Manitoba and southeastern Saskatchewan. The CWB's industry briefing is available on the following URL address: http://www.cwb.ca/public/en/newsroom/releases/2011/news_release.jsp?news=061411.jsp

Exchange Rate: Noon rate, June 17, 2011 (Bank of Canada): U.S. Dollar = C\$0.9797

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