



CCA Participates in Minister Ritz's Trade Mission

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Calgary, AB – Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA) President Brad Wildeman and staff travelled to Colombia and Mexico with Federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz in support of his efforts to open markets for Canadian beef.

"Improving access to international markets is extremely important for adding value to Canadian cattle. We appreciate the Minister's tireless efforts to promote Canadian beef and eliminate barriers," commented Wildeman.

In Colombia, potential import customers and Colombian officials were treated to a feast of Canadian beef at a barbeque to celebrate the lifting of trade restrictions. Once the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement is implemented, further opportunities will emerge as the 80 per cent import tariff on Canadian beef is eliminated. The CCA strongly supports that Agreement and encourages Parliament to ratify it as soon as possible.

In Mexico, the Minister's and the CCA's efforts were focused on achieving the expansion of market access to include beef from cattle over thirty months (OTM) of age. Following the CCA's meetings with its Mexican industry counterparts and the Minister's meetings with the Mexican Secretaries for Agriculture, Health and Trade, Wildeman highlighted the need to remain fully engaged and establish a timeline in which access will be achieved.

Wildeman stated: "I am pleased that the Minister delivered a diplomatic, yet strong message that the patience of the Canadian cattle industry is running out. I believe the Mexicans understood that we need to make progress in expanding trade in beef. Now the job is to ensure we capitalize on this momentum."

The CCA is also very pleased that Minister Ritz attended the conference of State Agricultural and Rural Legislators (SARL) in Orlando and drove home Canada's concerns over the U.S. mandatory country of origin labeling law (COOL). Since that law came into effect a little over a year ago, we believe it has cost Canadian cattle producers over a quarter of a billion dollars.

With the support of the CCA, Canada has requested the World Trade Organization (WTO) to rule on the consistency of COOL with U.S. trade obligations. A first level decision in the case is expected by late spring or early summer at the earliest.

"We felt that a WTO case was needed to get the attention of U.S. legislators and make them aware that this provision has negative repercussions for the United States' best export customer: Canada. The Minister's participation at SARL tells me that they are starting to pay attention," said Wildeman.

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For further information, contact:

Gina Teel
Communications Manager
Canadian Cattlemen's Association
403-275-8558, ext. 406
teelg@cattle.ca