



I.D.E.A. Industry Update - April 7, 2004

*****New Member Special for April 2004**

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*****Farm Group Disputes Cancer Claims**

It's farmers versus the media in Ontario, where environmental farm lobbyists are accusing Canada's multimedia news agency, Canadian Press (CP), of promoting "false and misleading information" about the connection between cancer and farm chemicals.

The group, AGCare (Agricultural Groups Concerned About Resources and the Environment), says CP was irresponsible by issuing a story early last month that repeats claims made by the anti-pesticide group Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) stating that chemicals are largely responsible for "soaring cancer rates" in Canada in recent decades.

"The allegations made in the report are simply not borne out by the facts," says AGCare chair Greg Hannam, a Guelph-area farmer. "The Canadian public deserves better from the journalists they rely on to provide accurate and accessible information."

AGCare says CP - which describes itself as "the source that Canada's newsrooms turn to for breaking and developing news and unbiased, timely reporting" - dropped the ball on the chemical-cancer story. AGCare cites information from the National Cancer Institute of Canada showing cancer death rates for both men and women and cancer incidence rates for men have dropped in the last 15 years. From 1988 to 2003, overall death rates for Canadian men dropped by 12 per cent, and 3.1 per cent for women.

Armed with these statistics, AGCare complained to Canadian Press officials, as well as the Ontario Press Council. Hannam says simple fact-checking by CP would have exposed the CCPA report, and "discredited" its allegations. "That should have prevented the dissemination of clear falsehoods," says Hannam. "Alarming the public with misleading information may get front-page headlines from coast to coast, but journalists and the agencies that profit from their work must be held accountable."

AGCare points to yet another report, the 1997 National Cancer Institute report published in the scientific journal *Cancer* and authored by Dr. Len Ritter, executive director of the Canadian Network of Toxicology Centres headquartered at the University of Guelph. He found that the increased consumption of fruits and vegetables that may contain minute pesticide residues does not raise the risk of cancer. Ritter's report said eating more fruits and vegetables can reduce the risk of cancer and far outweighs

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potential adverse health effects, if any, that result from their consumption.

AGCare represents 17 farm groups comprising 45,000 field and horticultural crop growers with an interest in crop biotechnology, crop protection, and related environmental issues. It says farmers' responsible use of effective pest control measures, including chemical pesticides, helps to ensure the availability of the affordable, high-quality produce essential for a healthy diet.. (By Owen Roberts; Reprinted in part from the AgExpert Express newsletter by permission of AgExpert Management Software and Farm Credit Canada.)

*****New Tool Will Help Farmers Manager Their Transportation Costs**

A new internet-based tool will help grain farmers estimate transportation costs in advance of delivery and select the local elevator that will net the most money for their grain. Developed by Quorum Corporation with support from the Government of Canada, the tool is known as the "Producer Netback Calculator." Quorum is the independent organization hired by the federal government to monitor the performance of the grain handling and transportation system.

By using the calculator, farmers can evaluate factors affecting their net return before delivering their grain to market. Farmers have traditionally relied on information received after sale on what are known as grain cash tickets. The calculator will provide them with that information in advance and allow them to make their delivery decisions with the benefit of that knowledge. "One of the major things we have heard from producers is that they want to know how changes in grain transport policy affect them at the farm gate," said Reg Alcock, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board. "This new tool will allow producers to better understand their costs and will help them save money."

The Producer Netback Calculator is the result of extensive consultations with farmers and will be provided free of charge. It is also an important new element of the Grain Monitoring Program.

It is hoped producers will also enter actual results into the netback calculator system, allowing Quorum to capture trucking information including distances and costs, data which is not currently available. Strict security measures are in place to ensure the confidentiality of information provided by producers.

The calculator is essentially a one-stop shopping point that allows producers to factor specific, personalized and local costing data into their delivery decisions.

For example, an elevator in close proximity to a farmer means shorter hauling distance and cheaper trucking costs. However, a larger elevator further down the road might receive bigger bulk freight discounts from the rail companies and offer the increased savings back to the producer through what are commonly known as trucking premiums. Also to be considered are dockage costs and the ability of some elevators to blend a lower grade with higher grades to offer better returns through grade promotions.

"We want to provide the best analysis possible for producers through the Grain Monitoring Program, especially the export basis and netback components," said Mark Hemmes, President of Quorum Corporation. "Developing a mechanism to gather ongoing data on producers' trucking patterns and costs will greatly enhance our ability to monitor the grain handling and transportation system. At the same time the Netback Calculator will provide useful information directly to farmers, to assist in their decision-making. Quorum appreciates the valuable input received from farmers and other grain industry stakeholders in the course of making the Producer Netback Calculator a useful tool."

The netback calculator is available online at www.netback.ca. Producers must first register to begin using the tool. (Source: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada media release)