



News Release

For immediate release

Government of Canada grows new opportunities for sunflower sector

Winnipeg, Manitoba, January 27, 2012 – Canadian sunflower growers will benefit from higher yields and increased competitiveness thanks to the support of the Government of Canada. Parliamentary Secretary Pierre Lemieux, on behalf of Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz, announced today an investment of \$1.1 million to the National Sunflower Association of Canada to develop and market new seed varieties.

“Our Government’s top priority remains the economy, and our sunflower growers are a great example of the hardworking agriculture producers that help keep our economy strong,” said PS Lemieux. “This investment will help our producers develop and grow new sunflower seed varieties capable of taking on new domestic and international markets, which will boost their bottom lines and help strengthen the Canadian economy.”

The National Sunflower Association of Canada, a non-profit producer funded organization that represents 650 growers, identified the need for new seed varieties in a strategic plan put out in the fall of 2010. Over the last decade, growers of confection sunflowers (which are different from sunflowers grown for oilseed) have seen a decline in yields largely due to their reliance on foreign seed supplies that are not ideally suited to the terrain and climate in Canada.

This investment under the Canadian Agricultural Adaptation Program (CAAP) will provide growers with access to new seed varieties that have characteristics specially suited for northern growing conditions. Sunflower growers expect the more adaptable and disease resistant varieties will improve farm yields and find favour with processors who supply confection seeds to the manufacturers of healthy snacks and baked goods.

Confection seeds account for roughly 75 per cent of Canada’s sunflower production, while the oil seeds account for the rest. In 2010, total sunflower seed production in Canada reached 68,000 tonnes, of which almost 45,500 tonnes was exported, for a total value of \$33 million.

“This is great news for the sunflower industry,” said Kelly Dobson, President of the National Sunflower Association of Canada. “At present, there are no sunflower breeding programs – public or private – in Canada, and this project will address the long-term need for new, adaptable sunflower varieties.”

CAAP is a five-year (2009-2014), \$163-million initiative that aims to help the Canadian agricultural sector adapt and remain competitive. The Next Phase of Canada's Economic Action Plan, coupled with other Government of Canada programs and initiatives such as CAAP, continues to help farmers by focusing on creating jobs and strengthening the economy. Investments in new and emerging market opportunities will help build an even stronger agriculture industry and Canadian economy for the future.



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