



NEWS RELEASE
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HayEast 2012: producers helping producers

(WHITEHORSE) – Farm and livestock groups from Alberta and Saskatchewan will be working in partnership with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Mennonite Disaster Services, the Quebec Farmers' Association, organizers of the 2002 Hay West assistance campaign, and countless local farmers to move much-needed hay to Ontario and parts of Quebec.

Called *HayEast 2012*, the coalition's program will assist producers cope with the impacts of severe drought conditions in eastern Canada. It was announced Wednesday afternoon during the Canadian Federation of Agriculture roundtable at the federal, provincial and territorial agriculture ministers' meeting in Whitehorse.

"We clearly have a pressing need, and farmers in Alberta and Saskatchewan are prepared to assist our livestock producers," said Ontario Federation of Agriculture president Mark Wales. "Now we require the support of our federal and provincial governments, the railways, corporate partners and other stakeholders to make this effort have a real impact on the ground and sustain our livestock herds through this winter."

Wales also called specifically on the federal government to provide support in the form of public relations, logistics and the triggering of AgriRecovery funds to assist with transportation of hay from the western Prairies.

He said the first step, however, in calculating the true scope of the problem and its solution, is to establish a database of producers in need and the size of their herds.

Meanwhile, staff and executive from a number of farm organizations are already meeting with provincial agriculture ministry officials, corporate partners, trucking companies, railway officials and others to begin co-ordinating the various agencies and processes required to ensure HayEast 2012's eventual success.

Norm Hall, president of the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, one of the western farm and livestock groups working to co-ordinate the 2012 program, remembers what it was like for Saskatchewan producers to be on the receiving end of hay assistance.

“In 2002, eastern farmers shipped us thousands of bales of hay to help save our herds from starvation,” Hall said. “It’s 10 years later and the time has come for us to give back to the people who helped us when we needed it.

“As we head into the final stretches of harvest across much of Saskatchewan and start turning our thoughts towards Thanksgiving, it’s time for all of us to take a moment to think of those less fortunate than ourselves.”

HayEast 2012 organizers will look for assistance from those involved in Hay West’s successful efforts.

“In 2002, we assisted Hay West with distribution of hay throughout Alberta,” said Bruce Banks, CEO of the 4-H Foundation of Alberta. “We witnessed the generosity of our eastern neighbors in helping Alberta livestock producers and the difference it made, and we are eager to assist in any way to be able to give back to our eastern friends.”

Lynn Jacobson, president of Wild Rose Agricultural Producers in Alberta, is confident that western Prairie farmers will do what it takes to help livestock producers in eastern Canada.

“The online forums are already filled with farmers and their urban cousins lining up to help with second cuts or stored hay – or even cash,” he said. “We have long memories here in Alberta and we’re proud to be able to help.”

Farmers who want to register for hay or wish to supply hay should go to www.hayeast2012.com .

For more information:

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National Farmers Union - Ontario
Mennonite Disaster Services
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario
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Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development
Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture
Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association