

100,000 Canadian farmers unite to call for investment in agriculture research

Farmers across Canada are uniting to form **Farmers for Investment in Agriculture (FIA)**, to demand greater investment in agronomic research from the federal government.

“Agriculture as an industry turns every dollar of research investment into a 10 dollar economic benefit for Canada through the growth of the domestic food sector, increased exports and lower food costs,” said William Van Tassel, vice-chair of the Fédération des producteurs de culture commerciales du Québec.

At a time when most industrialized countries are making huge investments in farming to capitalize on growing world food demand, public research funding for agronomics in Canada has dropped 40 per cent since 1994 after adjusting for inflation, resulting in a serious loss of both research infrastructure and scientists.

In response to this crisis, four major agricultural organizations are joining forces to call for an increase in agronomic research. Over 100,000 Canadian farmers are represented by the group, which includes the Grain Farmers of Ontario, the Fédération des producteurs de culture commerciales du Québec, the Atlantic Grains Council and the Grain Growers of Canada.

“The government must develop a national strategy on agriculture that puts the needs of Canadian farmers at the top of its list,” said Don Kenny, chair of the Grain Farmers of Ontario.

Farmers for Investment in Agriculture is calling on the Government to double core agronomic research over the next 10 years. The proposal would bring funding back to 1994 levels by 2020. By increasing research funds, Canadian farmers would gain a competitive edge in the global market and help stimulate the struggling Canadian economy. It is also estimated that agronomic research yields 40-60 per cent economic returns for the whole society.

“There is no better investment for Canada than an investment in food,” said Doug Robertson, president of the Grain Growers of Canada. “We have some of the most fertile farmland in the world with access to the third largest supply of the world’s fresh water and we are not maximizing our crop production,” he said.

Research is more important today than it has ever been. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations predicts that global agriculture has to grow by 70 per cent by 2050 to feed an additional 2.3 billion people, creating a demand that Canadian farmers need to be prepared to capitalize on.

Increased public research funding helps develop crops that are more efficient, higher quality, healthier and more resistant to disease, pests and extreme weather conditions. At a time when demand is expected to rise significantly and wheat supplies are being threatened worldwide by an outbreak of Ug99, the time for government to invest is now.

- 30 -

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