



Ag Flexibility Fund backs canola market access plan

Canada's national canola industry organization plans to put \$9 million into development of a strategy for opening and reopening markets to Canadian canola.

The Winnipeg-based Canola Council of Canada has put up \$1.2 million for the project, leveraging an investment of up to \$7.8 million from the federal government through its Agricultural Flexibility Fund.

Announcing the federal pledge Monday in Saskatoon, Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz said the funding will help put together a "targeted market access strategy that will make sure Canadian canola producers have full and fair access to international markets so that they can get more buyers bidding on their product."

The strategy is expected to help Canada's canola industry open new markets and examine "current legislative, regulatory and administrative trade barriers."

The strategy is also expected to outline a "rapid joint industry and government approach to be implemented when market access challenges arise," plus a plan to avoid potential market access challenges.

As well, the strategy is expected to highlight industry best practices farmers can use to meet the standards of importing countries, the government said in its release Monday.

"Canada's canola sector needs a well thought out, strategic, proactive plan for ensuring market access in the future," council president Joanne Buth said in a separate release, noting Canadian canola growers rely on foreign trade to take up about 90 per cent of their annual production.

Dubbed the Canola Market Access Plan (MAP) 2015, the plan is "a comprehensive approach to addressing export market issues that threaten the health of Canada's canola industry, the livelihoods of Canadian canola growers, and the ability for our industry to reach our 2015 targets," Buth said.

"I absolutely believe the target -- 15 million tonnes of market demand and sustainable canola production -- is achievable," she said.

Federal funding for the project is subject to it meeting all eligibility requirements and the signing of a contribution agreement, the government noted.

Among the organizations hailing the plan was the Saskatchewan Canola Development Commission, whose chairman, Kelvin Meadows of Moose Jaw, noted in a separate release that "international market access and export of our crop is imperative."