

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Report Highlights:

Moving Day for Ministers * Canadian Agriculture and Trade Bills Stalled During Prorogation * Inspection Agency Will Continue Food-Labeling System

Moving Day for Ministers

Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced a broad cabinet shuffle that involved eleven ministers and one senior official. The changes were described as part of a deficit-busting, cost-cutting initiative. Gerry Ritz remains as Minister of Agriculture. Stockwell Day, formerly the Minister of International Trade, will lead the cost-cutting program in his new position as President of the Treasury Board, the cabinet minister responsible for government spending policies and largely responsible for the civil service. Peter Van Loan moves to become the Minister of International Trade. Principal cabinet changes that affect FAS activities include:

- Peter Van Loan (Ontario): Minister of International Trade from Minister of Public Safety

- Stockwell Day (British Columbia): President of the Treasury Board from Minister of International Trade
- Christian Paradis (Quebec): Minister of Natural Resources from Minister of Public Works
- Lisa Raitt (Ontario): Minister of Labor from Minister of Natural Resources
- Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Quebec): Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture) from Minister of National Revenue
- Marjorie LeBreton (Ontario): Remains as Leader of the Government in the Senate from Minister of State (Seniors)

* Ministers of State do not attend meetings of the full cabinet but participate in meetings of some committees of the cabinet.

Canadian Agriculture and Trade Bills Stalled During Prorogation

Prime Minister Stephen Harper's recent decision to prorogue (suspend) Parliament has left a number of farm bills on the shelf, including amendments to the *Canada Grain Act*, that would end the requirement for inbound inspections at grain terminals, and introduce a new system to compensate grain growers when a grain buyer defaults on payments due. A bill to approve Canada's proposed free trade agreement with Colombia has also been suspended and will need to be reintroduced in a new session of Parliament scheduled to begin March 3, 2010. In addition, a private members' bill on genetically modified crops was scheduled for its first debate on February 2, 2010. This will now be postponed until March at the earliest. Private members' bills don't often pass into law, but they do allow for public debate on issues important to individual members of parliament. Also stalled is a bill which would provide for protection of the Canadian Wheat Board at the World Trade Organization, (WTO). The current text of the Doha agreement would see the end of the Canadian Wheat Board by 2013. Finally, another possible casualty of the prorogation may be the Common Agriculture Committee's study on the competitiveness of Canada's farm sector. Common Committees will have to be recreated when Parliament resumes in March.

Inspection Agency Will Continue Food-Labeling System

A food-labeling approvals system designed to catch misleading claims or incomplete nutritional information before products hit grocery stores will not be killed, after all. The flip-flop at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, (CFIA) comes after Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz and the federal cabinet got behind the idea to eliminate the pre-market label approval program for domestic and imported meat as well as domestic processed fruit and vegetable products. No official announcement about eliminating the label registry was ever made, but the initiative was outlined in a confidential November 2007 submission to the Treasury Board obtained by *Canwest News Service*. The plan, meant to save C\$87,000 beginning this past fiscal year, was part of CFIA's 2007/08 strategic review. When the plan became public in 2008, Minister Ritz championed the move to eliminate the pre-market approval of some food labels. Separately, the agency prepared internal talking points to sell the idea. After two years of internal wrangling and public criticism from key industry players, CFIA has decided to keep the program running. CFIA officials declined to be interviewed about the decision, but released a statement describing improvements in the program, including "reasonable turnaround time" for label reviews.

Exchange Rate: Noon rate, January 21, 2010 (Bank of Canada): U.S. Dollar = C\$1.05.

