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**Canada's meat processing industry lauds new duty-free access for Canadian beef in European Union market**

**OTTAWA, Ont.,** - Canada's meat processing industry is grateful for the hard work of Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz and International Trade Minister Peter Van Loan in reaching an agreement with the European Union (EU) for Canadian beef.

Canadian beef producers will now have duty-free access to a 20,000-tonne quota for beef exports to the European Union market; access which is estimated to be worth more than \$10 million annually for Canada.

"The European Union represents an incredible opportunity for increased trade in beef and beef products for Canada," says Canadian Meat Council President Brian Read. "We have gone from a shared Canada-United States 11,500-tonne access to the European Union, which operated on a first come, first served basis - with 20 per cent duty - to almost twice the access, with zero tariffs. It's a great leap forward for Canada."

The agreement with the European Commission sets the path towards the resolution of the long-standing WTO dispute between Canada and the EU on beef hormones. An additional 3,200 tonnes will be added to Canada's new 20,000-tonne access to the EU by 2012.

Canada and the EU have a long history of economic cooperation. Comprised of 27 Member States with a total population of nearly 500 million and a GDP of over C\$19 trillion last year, the European Union is the world's largest single market, foreign investor and trader. As an integrated block, the EU represents Canada's second largest trading partner in goods and services.

The Canadian meat industry is the largest of our food processing sector with some 67,000 employees and gross annual sales of over \$21.4 billion. Last year Canada exported over \$1.3 billion of beef and \$2.4 billion of pork to over 150 countries around the world. Canada's meat processing industry is made up of over 400 federally registered establishments, often located in rural settings adding jobs and important economic activity to the life of rural Canada.

The Canadian Meat Council has been representing Canada's federally inspected meat processing industry since 1919.

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