

December 21, 2020

Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario

Ernie Hardeman
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

VIA EMAIL

Dear Premier and Minister,

We are writing to you on behalf of the farmers we represent about the Federal Provincial and Territorial (FPT) Agriculture Ministers discussions regarding changes to the AgriStability program.

For some time, farmers in Ontario have asked for the AgriStability program to be returned to the pre-2013 levels including increasing the trigger to 85% and removing the reference margin limit (RML). As farm commodity leaders we were pleased to see the promise from your government, and from each of you personally, Premier Ford and Minister Hardeman, to fund this solution to AgriStability that would see farmers with the coverage they require.

We were proud that Minister Hardeman went into the November FPT meetings with preapproval from the Ontario Treasury for Ontario's portion of AgriStability program at the 85% trigger with no RML. These are much needed changes. This was an important message we were able to share with Members of Parliament when we reached out to get support for these changes from the federal government. However, we were disappointed that ministers could not reach an agreement to improve AgriStability especially when the federal Minister announced the intention to pay an additional \$691 million to supply managed sectors.

We were really pleased to see the House of Commons come out with their report, Facing the Unexpected: Enhancing Business Risk Management Programs for Agriculture and Agri-food Businesses. The report echoed our calls to have AgriStability changes be put in place immediately. Specifically, the report highlights the importance of returning the program's trigger to its pre-2013 level of 85% of the historical reference margin and removing the reference margin limit.

The proposal that was offered at the November FPT by Minister Bibeau falls short of the coverage recommended by the House of Commons Ag Committee and what is required for all farmers, the Minister's proposal provides additional coverage for some farmers and leaves other farmers without adequate coverage as they would never trigger a payment.

The need for meaningful coverage by farmers remains, regardless of whether or not an FPT consensus can be achieved. Many farmers will need the support this year to cope with the fallout of COVID-19, and many others will need it to have the stability to run their farm businesses and continue into these uncertain times shaped by the COVID-19 response as well as the uncertain trade environment.

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If a consensus on AgriStability enhancements cannot be reached, we collectively request that the funding that has been earmarked for AgriStability enhancements be redirected to augment the Ontario Risk Management Program / Self-Directed Risk Management Program starting in 2020 before the final program payments have been made.

Thank you for your continued commitment to this important matter for our farmers.

Sincerely,



Robert Lipsett
President
Beef Farmers of Ontario



Markus Haerle
Chair
Grain Farmers of Ontario



Bill George Jr.
Chair
Ontario Fruit and Vegetable
Growers' Association



Eric Schwindt
Chair
Ontario Pork



Marc Carere
Chair
Ontario Sheep Farmers



Pascal Bouilly
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Veal Farmers of Ontario

