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Press Release
For immediate release

Publication Launch: Toward Supply Management 2.0 in Canada

Lachute, Wednesday, february 04, 2015 – The Union paysanne is proud to release the English version of its new discussion paper advocating a thorough overhaul of the Canadian supply management system: “Towards Supply Management 2.0 in Canada” (*“Vers une gestion de l'offre 2.0 au Canada”*).

The elements on which this paper is based have led us to the conclusion that the supply management system is in danger. Unless we take action, the system will become drastically weakened in the coming years. Its eventual collapse will open wide the doors to a free market in agriculture, a situation that will be to the benefit of neither consumers nor farmers. The threat is two-fold ...

In the first place, the supply management system has been cartellised by the producer boards. As a result, those who are excluded from the system now outnumber those who are included within it, and opposition is growing day by day. The boards' refusal to open up the sector and to make a real space for the new generation reinforces this cartel-like situation. We note that the boards were entrusted with the management of the system, and that this constitutes a rare societal privilege.

In the second place are the actions of the federal government, which, regardless of its rhetoric, under the cover of international trade agreements, is gradually turning the supply management system into something resembling a Gruyere cheese. If one wanted to choke the supply management system to death, that is the way one would go about it.

The Union paysanne is refusing to stand idly by and witness the death throes of a system, which, despite its faults, remains an excellent means of working towards the ideal of food sovereignty.

We are not setting ourselves up to give lessons. We began by listening, for more than ten years, to the farmers who live within the system, to the farmers who would like to be part of it, and finally, to those who are seeking a place alongside it. This paper is the result of these numerous exchanges, conferences and debates. It is the beginning and not the end of the discussion process. Rather than presenting a complete package of proposals, it targets

promising opportunities for change, particularly for Quebec, which appears to be the province with the most rigid approach to supply management.

We give priority to two proposals: firstly, that the federal government should organize a national commission on supply management in order to enable all Canadians to express their opinions on this matter. After more than 40 years, it is time to take stock. If there is no action at the federal level, we invite the provinces to initiate discussions on this topic.

Secondly, there should be an increase in outside of quota production in each sector, in order to give space to the younger generation, to small farmers, to new types of production and to the regions. This recommendation is particularly important for the provinces that are lagging behind the western provinces, which are making a major effort in this respect. Decisions regarding outside of quota production, which concern the entire population of a province, should no longer be made by producer boards, but rather by the respective provincial ministries of agriculture.

Today, in releasing this discussion paper, we become pilgrims setting out on a mission. Supply management began in Quebec and slowly spread to the rest of Canada. As we seek to reform the system, we hope that the process will be the same today.

Finally, we wish to note the calibre of the people who have read the paper and agreed to write prefaces for it: Jacques Proulx, former president of the Union des producteurs agricoles and of Solidarité rurale; Jean Pronovost, who presided over the Commission on the Future of Agriculture and Agri-food in Québec; Jean-Pierre Léger, president and chief executive officer of Groupe St-Hubert; Jean Nobert, lawyer and former president of the Federation of Milk Producers. These individuals reinforce the message delivered by the Union paysanne: **supply management must be remodelled.**

We consider it urgent to find a new way, a new direction which will both protect supply management and provide space to youth, to the regions, to organic farmers, to local agriculture and to small farmers. It is therefore on these specific issues that we are focussing.

Towards Supply Management 2.0 in Canada

<http://unionpaysanne.com/supply-management-2-0>

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