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"Where Do We Go From Here?" is a feature service of the Prairie Centre.

The Prairie Policy Centre is an independent public policy think tank whose mission is "to advance ideas on wealth creation in order to enhance the economic and social well being of the prairie region.

The opinions expressed in this forum are those of the writer and do not necessarily represent the views of the Prairie Centre.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Restructuring Western Canada's Wheat Classes will make Canada more competitive.

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The following article by Harry Siemens was reprinted from his Siemens Says website www.siemenssays.com, July 10th, 2006.

Prairie swine producers are applauding a Canadian Grain Commission plan to restructure western Canada's wheat classes.

Last month, the Canadian Grain Commission unveiled plans to eliminate kernel visual distinguishability requirements on all classes of wheat except hard red spring and amber durum and introduce a new general purpose wheat class.

The changes, set for August 2008, will clear the way for the registration of high yielding wheat varieties suited for feed or industrial uses such as ethanol, currently not allowed because they resemble milling wheats.

Alberta Pork Producers general manager Ed Schultz suggests the issue revolves around Canada's ability to compete with areas like the Corn Belt in Iowa or the two-crop system in Argentina and Brazil, which can produce more mass per acre.

"This will free up the development of new cultivars that are higher yielding, more suitable for feeding to livestock that we haven't been able to grow in the past," said Schultz.

Canada has developed disease resistant varieties in the past, however, the system refused to license them.

"For example, there was a feed wheat variety in existence for many years, yielding about twice as much per acre as red spring wheat, fusarium resistant, but we weren't allowed to grow on the prairies," he said.

The change will make it possible to grow the existing varieties and encourage researchers to develop new higher yielding cultivars, allowing Canada to catch up.

With Iowa corn yields increasing every year and Brazil becoming more competitive, Canada was losing ground.

Now it's time to catch up and start meeting the global competition.

Schultz suggests the changes are all about freeing up the system so Canada can compete in what is essentially a very competitive global market.

Harry Siemens

Harry has spent over 33 years in farm communications as a broadcaster and journalist, farm advocacy speaker and corporate trainer to agribusiness.