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## **Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario**

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

Subject: **Farmers should retain the right to save and use seed**

Guelph, February 2005. The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario believes that plant breeding companies should not be allowed to prevent farmers from saving and using their own seeds.

The agricultural community has been debating this issue since the Canadian Food Inspection Agency recently began proposing amendments to the Plant Breeders' Rights Act. The government agency is proposing the amendments to enable Canada to ratify an international agreement called the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants.

"The CFFO supports the idea of universal access to new varieties of plants and seeds, with a legislated right for plant breeders to receive a royalty fee for a certain period of time," says John Kikkert, President of the CFFO. "However, we strongly object to plant breeders having exclusive rights under the PBR Act. These exclusive rights for plant breeders are not necessary for guaranteeing a reasonable return on their research."

The CFFO is concerned that exclusive rights not only guarantee plant breeders the ability to collect a royalty when the seed is originally sold, but could conceivably restrict universal access to the new variety. According to CFFO, an exclusive right for individuals or firms to use plant life degrades the intrinsic value of that life form and it lays a claim on the created environment that goes far beyond our role as stewards.

Kikkert made the comments at a meeting of the CFFO's Provincial Council. At that meeting, delegates from across the Federation's 22 districts endorsed a new position statement in response to the CFIA's proposed amendments. The CFFO position statement makes the following points:

- ❑ The CFFO supports legislation that provides for the payment of a compulsory license fee to breeders by all those who wish to use a new life form during its first seven years of registration. As such, it objects to proposed PBR Act amendments to extend the duration of protection on all plant varieties, including vines, forest, fruit and ornamental trees and rootstock.

- ❑ The CFFO supports the continued right of farmers to save and use their own seed. Saving propagating material of a protected variety for a farmer's own use should not be against the law.
- ❑ The CFFO supports the extension of compulsory licensing to essentially derived varieties, defined as predominately derived from the initial variety.
- ❑ The CFFO objects to the extension of plant breeders rights to include the production, reproduction, conditioning, exporting, importing and stocking of propagating material; the harvested material; and the products of harvested material.
- ❑ The CFFO objects to the removal from the international agreement a ban on double protection for plant breeders --- protection under both the PBR Act and the Patent Act.

For a full copy of the CFFO position statement, please log on to the Federation's website at [www.christianfarmers.org](http://www.christianfarmers.org)

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