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## **Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario**

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

Subject: **New approach needed for regulating environmental stewardship**

Guelph, February 2005. The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario believes the provincial government needs to go back to the drawing board on legislation designed to preserve and protect the environment.

The CFFO says that current provincial legislation and associated regulations, while well intentioned, are simply too burdensome and confusing for Ontario's farmers. The Federation maintains that the province urgently needs to evaluate the wide variety of rules, regulations and protocols that are being implemented, reduce their number and restructure them so that they are practical, affordable and meaningful to farm families and farm businesses.

The problem with the burden of provincial legislation began after the province adopted the Nutrient Management Act. Originally a commitment by Ontario's farmers to develop environmental farm plans, the initiative mutated into a piece of legislation that tries to do too much through a wide variety of strategies and plans. The CFFO has been critical of the legislation's approach to compliance, which focuses on monitoring and results in paper trails rather than actual initiatives that improve agriculture's relationship to the environment. Farmers are expected to undertake a lot of activities and accept permanent additional cost for very modest gains for the environment.

"The Nutrient Management Act, by itself, has problems enough but there are a host of other initiatives that have created a piecemeal, fragmented and convoluted approach to agricultural-environmental stewardship," says John Kikkert, the CFFO's President. "In addition to the Act are new pieces of legislation dealing with safe drinking water, source water protection, municipal amalgamations, species at risk, property assessments, a revised Provincial Policy Statement under the Planning Act, Ontario's Rural Plan, Places to Grow in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Agricultural Advisory Team Advice and the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt."

As an alternative to the province's legislative approach, the CFFO is advocating the adoption of a streamlined stewardship framework for regulating agriculture's impact on the environment. This framework advocates the following steps:

- **The province needs to do more with good land use planning.** In particular, the government needs to create permanency for productive farmlands so that farmers can undertake long-term agricultural/environmental initiatives that are important to society.
- **The province needs fewer, sensible provincial rules.** For example, the government needs to replace the current Nutrient Management Act with an Agricultural-Environmental Standards of Operation Act.

- **The province needs better environmental risk and opportunity assessments.** In particular, the government needs to establish a comprehensive environmental risk and opportunity assessment program.
- **The province needs to establish cost-shared action plans with farmers.** Plans will be action plans for specific reductions in risks through physical or management changes. They are not paper trails to demonstrate compliance with regulations. If a plan is in response to a regulation or standard there must be federal/provincial/municipal cost-share available at 70 to 90% depending on the significance of the concern and landowner need. (No compliance required without adequate cost share.)
- **The province needs to establish whole-farm annual environmental payments.** In particular, the government needs to create a program of whole-farm annual environmental payments based on the opportunities identified in environmental risk and opportunity assessments.

For a copy of the eight-page document, *A Stewardship Framework for Agricultural-Environmental Regulation*, contact the CFFO office, or download it yourself from [www.christianfarmers.org](http://www.christianfarmers.org)

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