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**Minister Blackburn and the New Farmers Network Ignores 41 Years of Young Farmers in Canada**

**Saskatoon, Saskatchewan** - The current federal government is demonstrating its concern for the future of the agricultural industry by forming the National Future Farmers Network. The inaugural meeting of the NFFN will be taking place November 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> in Ottawa. Surprisingly, the National Farmers Union has been left out of the network after a 41 year history of working for farmers across the country.

“We don’t have a firm grasp on what the reasoning is to leave our voices out of this network.” stated Kalissa Regier, Youth President of the National Farmers Union. “The federal government held roundtable discussions in 2009 which appeared to have a strong presence from industry and stakeholders of large agri-business. They also seemed to neglect the voices of young farmers who concentrate on alternative production and marketing models and small-scale, locally focused producers.” Regier, 31, operates a 1400 acre certified organic grain farm in Saskatchewan.

The National Farmers Union represents thousands of family farms across Canada and was established in 1969 by the amalgamation of the Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba Farmers Unions. In the past 41 years, the NFU has always included a space that increases the participation of youth and women in forming its policies.

Cammie Harbottle, NFU Youth Vice President says “The NFU is the only farm organization in Canada that allows room for alternative policies and thinking outside the status quo. It focuses on a strong need for social, economic and environmental sustainability as the foundation for a solid future.” Harbottle farms near Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia.

Young farmers and youth members of the National Farmers Union have been gathering together to exchange ideas and create positive change in agriculture for over four decades. This year’s Annual National Convention will take place in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan from December 2-4 and will include the 41<sup>st</sup> annual youth caucus meeting.

“The federal government has been experimenting with a new definition of democracy,” Regier concluded, “the evidence for this has been seen in many sectors, agriculture included. Continuing this trend of ignorance will undoubtedly have it’s consequences on our food, our environment and our rural societies. It’s an unfortunate side effect of current politics.” For now, the young farmers of the National Farmers Union will have to be content with their continued work behind the scenes, building up family farm and rural resilience to counter the inevitable challenges in a time of global trade, climate change and an aging farming population.

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