



150 Research Lane  
Guelph, ON N1G 4T2  
Phone (519) 822-3929  
Fax (519) 837-8721  
[www.georgemorris.org](http://www.georgemorris.org)

## NEWS RELEASE

### Grow differentiated agriculture, suggests new George Morris Centre study

Guelph, ON [February 25, 2005] – Prolonged low prices for farm commodities and declining farm incomes underline that changes are required in the Canadian agricultural marketing system, according to a George Morris Centre report released today.

The report, *Uprooting Ourselves From Commodities and Moving Into Differentiated Farm Products*, addresses the link between farm incomes and sector growth with the nature of the agricultural marketing system. It goes on to suggest the beginnings of a process to address the move to a more sustainable system for Canadian agriculture.

Based on an internally-motivated research project by the George Morris Centre, the new report highlights four forces pushing the agri-food sector toward more differentiated farm and food products, and four forces acting to maintain a commodity culture in the sector.

“Our agricultural marketing system is focused on marketing commodity farm products,” says Al Mussell, study author and senior research associate at the Centre. “The trouble is, Canadians can’t eat more commodity-based foods and the commodity export market, which we have excelled in, is an increasingly challenging arena. That leaves differentiated products as key sources of revenue and income growth. We should engage in serious debate over removing barriers to differentiation in farm products.”

The report recommends that there is a need to overcome the reliance on commodities for the agricultural sector to grow, provide more sustainable levels of farm incomes and to better serve consumer preferences. However, the culture of commodity production and the characteristics of the farm-food supply chain of today reinforce it. “This needs to change because the forces pushing for increasing differentiation are driven by the realities of the marketplace,” says Mussell.

The George Morris Centre is a national, not-for-profit think-tank specializing in the Canadian agri-food sector. The Centre provides perspective, critical information, strategic analysis and

planning, and education on issues affecting the sector to promote its environmental and economic sustainability.

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Full report available on the George Morris Centre website at: [www.georgemorris.org](http://www.georgemorris.org)

For more information contact:

Renée Mactaggart  
Director, Communications  
George Morris Centre  
Tel: (519) 822-3929  
E-mail: [renee@georgemorris.org](mailto:renee@georgemorris.org)