

Because there's a buck to be made from it

Let's see who is behind the Conference Board of Canada and its anti-supply management stand



BY WENDY HOLM
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contentious public policies. The policy is designed to manage the market risk faced by farmers of supply-managed commodities. But it does so by generating higher prices for consumers and closes off growth opportunities in domestic and international markets.

Most contentious public policy? Really? In the casino halls of global investors lusting to get a crack at Canada's market, perhaps... And this shouldn't count but it does: the same investors that want to get rid of supply management are the ones funding the "think" tank that produced the study. And it gets worse. This little think tank has much

bigger aspirations.

But first, why are they doing this?

Is the Conference Board's rant against supply management about providing consumers with cheaper milk? Nope. After Martha (and her minions') very public pratfall, I can't see how anyone can continue to seriously raise this argument.

And it's not about quality cheese either. One-third of the fluid milk produced by Canadian cows is used in the manufacturer of Canadian cheese. Canada's flourishing artisanal cheese sector is receiving international recognition and awards for quality.

Harper opened market

access to EU cheese manufacturers in exchange for access for Canadian exports. Period.

This whole push to topple supply management is really about the dumbing-down of food - the substitution of whole foods like milk with imported "modified milk ingredients" cause there's a buck to be made from it.

In Canada we've already cut the ice cream market. Butteroil sugar blends - unknown when the trade deals were signed - today enter Canada free as the wind. As a result, except for those who buy from a small local dairy, we are raising a whole generation of kids who don't know what real ice cream

tastes like.

And what does The Conference Board of Canada want Canada's dairy farmers to do? Scrap supply management, get rich from a quota buy-out, ditch those darn "inefficient" family farms, buy more cows, and ship skim milk powder to "Chinese babies".

Yes they really say that. And more: returns to farmers in these post-SM dairy farms "with larger herds and lower prices" would be equivalent to "a typical Tim Horton's franchise." Seriously.

ALL THIS vitriol against Canada's supply management system, and yet three very recent reports on BC's supply management sector, by the respected firm Price Waterhouse Coopers, tell a completely different story.

In its April 2009 study (Socio-Economic Impact of British Columbia's dairy, chicken, turkey, hatching egg and table egg industries) Price Waterhouse concludes that supply management produces significant economic impacts for British Columbia, contributes additional long-term economic benefits to the province, and supports families and rural communities throughout B.C.

In its November 2010 report, which focused on the economic impacts, PWC concludes that BC's supply-managed sector a) contributes significantly to provincial

The bias that runs throughout the Conference Board's recent report Reforming Dairy Supply Management is expressed in its opening paragraph:

Supply management is among Canada's most

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GDP, employment, taxes and b) is characterized by industry stability and producer prices that have increased less than the rate of inflation.

PWC goes on to report that BC's supply management sector operates in a cohesive manner, is responsive to change, is represented by producers and processors throughout the province and has steadily growing output.

In their 2013 report on the sector, PWC came to the same conclusions: supply-managed commodities produce significant economic benefits for the British Columbia economy: "...while BC's agriculture sector shed 9,400 jobs between 2007 and 2011, the province's dairy, poultry and egg producers created nearly 3,000 net new jobs during the same period.

As a result, 45 per cent of all agriculture employees in B.C. are now working on supply-managed farms, up from 25 per cent in 2007."

HOW COULD two reports on the same sector present such a different perspective? When in doubt, follow the money: the Conference Board's simplistic rant against supply management was prepared by its new Centre for Food in Canada (CFIC) with funding provided by CFIC investors.

The mandate of the Centre for Food in Canada is: to create a shared vision for the future of food in Canada - articulated in a framework for a Canadian Food Strategy that will meet our country's need for a coordinated, long-term strategy for change.

Who is directing this new Canadian Food Strategy? Ah... that would be the private sector. CFIC's top-rung Champion Investors include Loblaw Companies Limited, Maple Leaf Foods, Heinz Canada, Nestlé Canada Inc., and Parmalat Canada.

Next-rung Partner Investors include Cavendish Farms (Irving Group), Cott Beverages Canada, McCain Foods (Canada), Olymel L.P., Saputo Inc., Weston Foods, Cargill Limited, IBM Canada,

Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Public Health Agency of Canada (Champion Investor Category) and Farm Credit Canada and the Government of Prince Edward Island (Partner Investor Category).

So let's see if I have this straight? Global food giants with a "vested interest" in dismantling Canada's supply management system are funding right wing dreck (apparently) slated - with taxpayer money - to become Canada's Food Policy?

It's time Canada's supply-managed commodities followed the lead of BC's

Dairy, Poultry and Egg Industry Group and funded a NATIONAL study defending supply management to Canadians.

PWC focused on supply management's social and economic benefits. Why not start, this time, with sustainability? The benefits that supply management brings to sustaining our soils, our communities and our environment and to building a resilient, food secure future for ourselves and our children.

"Supply management is the only sustainable choice" is the resonant message. Time to roll it out... Before it's too late.

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