

Testimony of Kevin Waslaski
Northern Canola Growers Association
USDA Farm Bill Hearing
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My name is Kevin Waslaski and I farm in Langdon, which is in the northeast part of the state. I am the president of the Northern Canola Growers Association and I would like to offer the following comments on the next Farm Bill.

Canola has enjoyed a solid reputation as a healthy vegetable oil as it has the lowest saturated fat of any vegetable oil on the market. The recently published U.S. Dietary Guidelines even acknowledged that Americans should consume more of the good fats, like those found in canola oil. North Dakota produces 90% of the nation's canola and the industry has been attempting to grow the acres here and in other states to meet consumer demand. However, we still depend heavily on imports to meet the demands of the American consumer.

The minor oilseed loan rate has served as a critical safety net for minor oilseed producers. Any farmer can tell you that when they go in to visit with their banker, the loan rate is of utmost concern, because that banker wants to see that their risk is minimized. In the current Farm Bill, the minor oilseed rate dropped to \$9.30. This drop in our loan rate lowered our protection while at the same time we are facing skyrocketing input costs. Having the ability to include minor oilseeds in my rotation with small grains has helped me better manage my crop diseases. Growers in this region must include more oilseeds in their rotations to manage quality losses with their small grains.

Processors have also informed us that minor oilseed acreage in the U.S. this year will not be sufficient to allow domestic crushers to operate their plants at full capacity without relying on imports. Canola imports this year are projected to reach record levels.

My testimony addresses one of the key questions asked by the USDA concerning the ability of the U.S. to compete in global markets, and that is the success of U.S. agriculture will depend on our ability to produce products that meet world demand. Farm policy can help to maximize our competitiveness by providing the necessary tools to produce these crops demanded worldwide. The USDA can do its part to ensure canola and other minor oilseed growers maintain profitability by strengthening the minor oilseed loan rate.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input.