



May 21, 2020

The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
1341 Baseline Road
Ottawa Ontario K1A 0C5
Delivered via email to: Marie-Claude.Bibeau@parl.gc.ca

Re: Federal Supports for Agriculture

Dear Minister Bibeau,

The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO) is an Accredited Farm Organization representing the interests of over 4,000 farm families in Ontario who are called to the vocation of farming. CFFO policy promotes economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable farming, advocating that farmers receive fair return for their production and stewardship efforts.

The COVID-19 crisis has spotlighted the critical need for a strong agricultural sector in Canada. Public concern for food security and support for essential workers – from farmers to processing workers to grocery store attendants – illustrates broad public support for a strong agri-food sector nation-wide.

Our Request:

The CFFO thanks federal government for its recent emergency aid package for farmers and food processors, unveiled May 6. This funding envelope recognizes many of the present needs of the agri-food sector, particularly the \$77 million toward helping food processors retrofit their facilities and increase capacity in order to process backlogged livestock.

During his May 6 announcement, however, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau described this package as an "initial amount." **We therefore urge your ministry to press Prime Minister Trudeau to release further funding support toward the agriculture and agri-food sector as soon as possible.**

The current patchwork of supports, from devoting \$252 million in emergency aid to tweaking CERB eligibility so that more farmers can apply, go some way toward mitigating the effects of the current crisis. Unfortunately, these supports fall far short of the \$2.6 billion emergency fund requested by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, for example. Government has drawn criticism from stakeholder groups and industry experts alike, for failing to meet the needs of the industry.

The vast majority of government support for agriculture is currently tied to improved loan access through FCC, rather than direct support programs. As you know, farming is a highly capital-intensive industry. Deeper debt is not what the sector needs to survive this crisis.

Our Recommendations:

Boost AgriRecovery

The government has added \$125 million to the AgriRecovery fund, primarily for livestock farmers; we contend that much more is needed. We urge you to work with your provincial and territorial counterparts to increase the AgriRecovery purse, to include a broader spectrum of commodities, and to increase the number of eligible business disruptions due to COVID-19, including revenue lost due to lack of access to labour.

Boost Risk Management Programs

Risk management programs, such as AgriStability, need to be available to all or a much broader spectrum of commodities, at levels that encourage strong participation to ensure coverage for difficult times such as these. We urge you to work at the federal level, and with those provinces that deliver AgriStability, to make sure these programs are fair across sectors and for different sizes of farms.

Practicing wise risk management should be rewarded. We are concerned for fair treatment for different commodities, different sizes of farms, and also for those who have stuck with BRM programs over the years. We recommend a return to 85% coverage in AgriStability starting in 2020.

Conclusion:

Stakeholders across the country recognize government's efforts to help the agriculture and agrifood industry. At the same time, we join in their deep concern for the ability of Canadian agriculture to weather this storm. We believe you will agree with us that a diverse agricultural sector (in farm size, commodity and geography) is necessary for continued food security. We therefore urge you to increase supports to bolster one of Canada's most essential services.

Yours sincerely,



Ed Scharringa, President
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario

CC: Hon. Ernie Hardeman, MPP, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs