



LONG-TERM THINKING FOR TODAY'S ISSUES

February 15, 2023

Attention: Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
1341 Baseline Road, Tower 7
Floor 5, Room 300
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0C5
Via email: aaafc.npf-pcs.aac@agr.gc.ca

Re: Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership – Next Agricultural Policy Framework

Dear Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada,

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 new Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership should build on the successes and good work farmers and so many others in the agri-food system are already doing to provide high quality agricultural products, produced in a sustainable way, to meet the needs of Canadians and others around the globe.

The CFFO sees opportunity for continued sector improvement through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership. In particular the CFFO recommends that:

- Sustainability needs to focus on improving production *and* environmental benefits together, including protection of productive farmland, improved soil health, and diverse crop rotation.
- Government and industry work together to find ways to measure beneficial management practice (BMPs) uptake.
- Capacity and market opportunities for local processing be expanded, both for meat and other types of processing.
- Efforts to support farmers' mental health continue.
- Delivery for programs like AgriStability be updated to reduce administrative burden and ensure more timely and predictable support.

Agricultural Sustainability and Environmental Goals

Agricultural sustainability needs to focus on areas that maintain or improve production and bring environmental benefits. These include protection of productive farmland, improved soil health, and diverse crop rotation. At the same time, it is important that environmental goals do not compromise production or come at the cost of farmer incomes or our overall food security, in Ontario or globally.

Healthy soil is the foundation of long-term farm success, food production, and environmental benefits. Practices that benefit soil health and water quality also bring other environmental benefits, including storing carbon and increasing overall farm resiliency.

The CFFO recommends support for research focused on soil health, water quality, wise use of resources, and farm sustainability continue under SCAP. Progress made towards these goals should be carried forward.

The CFFO has been active in the ongoing work to implement “Ontario’s Agricultural Soil Health and Conservation Strategy.” Environmental initiatives under SCAP focused on soil health should support the implementation of the goals outlined in Ontario’s Soil Strategy.

Data, Measurement and Results Reporting

Government and industry need to work together to establish a baseline of current uptake of beneficial management practices (BMPs) and the outcomes these practices are providing. From this baseline, it will be possible to understand and measure changes in uptake going forward.

Because the results of BMPs vary based on factors such as soil type and seasonal weather conditions, **focus should be on measuring uptake of BMPs.** Farmers should receive fair credit for their efforts in implementing BMPs, even if the direct outcome of these practices varies by region and growing season.

Supply Chain Resilience

Currently Ontario farmers are facing challenges both in obtaining necessary inputs, especially at reasonable costs, and in accessing further processing.

The CFFO encourages continued support through SCAP to expand domestic processing capacity. **We encourage the government to enable expansion of local processing capacity and market opportunities, both for meat and other types of processing.** Reducing red tape, especially for small and medium-sized meat processors, is also important.

At the same time, it is important to reduce or eliminate barriers that prevent access or increase costs for necessary inputs. Fertilizer is an excellent example where improvements need to be made to ensure fair and reasonably priced access for all Canadian farmers to this vital resource, either from domestic or imported sources.

It is important to ensure the domestic regulatory and taxation environment does not significantly impact agricultural competitiveness. Currently, the federal carbon tax is negatively impacting the competitiveness of Ontario farmers. The CFFO urges the federal government to

remove this tax. In particular, this tax is negatively impacting the cost of food and food production. The CFFO continues to ask that fuels used for drying grains, both on-farm and at commercial grain dryers, be exempt from federal carbon pricing.

Support for Farmers and Workers

Farming is a stressful profession, constantly facing new challenges and uncertainty. Now more than ever, farmers and farm workers need specific mental health supports that are appropriately accessible and adapted to the realities of farm life. We strongly encourage the government to **continue efforts to support farmers' mental health.**

Updates to Programs

The CFFO supports changes in program delivery for AgriStability that will reduce administrative burdens for farmers and make the support offered more timely and predictable.

Conclusion

Environmental goals cannot supersede the importance of production or farm financial viability. The CFFO recommends that sustainability needs to focus on improving production *and* environmental benefits together, including through protection of productive farmland, improved soil health, and diverse crop rotation. Government and industry need to work together to find ways to measure beneficial management practice (BMPs) uptake.

To increase our supply chain resilience, capacity and market opportunities for local processing should be expanded, both for meat and other types of processing. Mental health supports designed specifically for farmers should continue. Delivery for programs like AgriStability should be updated to reduce administrative burdens and ensure more timely and predictable support.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide input and thank you for your consideration of our concerns and comments.

Sincerely,



Ed Scharringa, President
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario