
News Release

Federal-Provincial-Territorial

Canada's Ministers of Agriculture meet to drive a strong and innovative agriculture and agri-food sector

July 19, 2019 – Quebec City, Quebec



The Federal, Provincial, and Territorial (FPT) Ministers of Agriculture concluded their two-day annual meeting in Quebec City today, co-chaired by Marie-Claude Bibeau, federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, and André Lamontagne, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for Quebec. The Ministers reiterated their commitment to help Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector seize new opportunities, and tackle important challenges to ensure businesses prosper and create economic growth.

Given the critical importance of exports to Canadian farmers and processors, the Ministers were unanimous in their support of international trade that is based on trade rules and science. Ministers agreed to continue to work together to take advantage of new trade agreements with key markets. Ministers discussed the current trade challenges facing industry, particularly the canola, pork and beef sectors, as well as durum wheat, pulses and soy, and recognized the need for urgent resolution and to work with the sector to support industry's sustainability, profitability and growth.

In support of Canada's supply management system, Ministers reiterated the importance of providing compensation to the supply-managed sectors in a full and fair way in response to the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). The federal government is taking the appropriate steps to announce details as soon as possible, to ensure that these industries are well positioned to thrive.

The Ministers acknowledged that the growing shortage of labour makes it difficult for agricultural businesses to operate and expand, despite their recruitment activities. The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) is a tool used by industry to access much needed labour resources. The Ministers reviewed sector concerns with the program and discussed the progress made. The Ministers emphasized the importance of finding solutions to immediate challenges agriculture and agri-food employers are encountering when recruiting workers through the TFWP, including challenges associated with administrative burden and processing delays. They look forward to continued engagement with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) on short-term administrative changes to be implemented in a timely fashion. Provinces and territories affirmed the urgency of obtaining short-term administrative changes, acknowledging that labour is a multi-dimensional issue requiring action at all levels of government.

The Ministers underlined that business risk management programs are essential in helping farmers address risks, such as natural disasters, weather events, severe loss or market volatility, acknowledging program challenges raised by industry. The Ministers discussed adjustments that could improve existing programs to address the needs of producers and complement private sector tools. The Ministers directed officials to return with a set of proposed improvements to AgriStability for the Ministers' consideration before year end. The Ministers committed to working with the industry to promote a

modern and competitive sector. The collaboration depends heavily on the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, which is now in its second year and represents a five-year \$3 billion investment by the governments to strengthen and grow Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector. In 2018-2019, governments invested close to \$346 million in FPT cost-shared programming and \$79 million in federal programs to benefit the sector. The Ministers noted the significant progress made to date under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership and will begin work on the next policy framework.

The Ministers highlighted their commitment to building a diverse agriculture sector by encouraging the full participation of youth, women and Indigenous Peoples. The Ministers welcomed a panel of young farmers, who shared their views on a range of topics from technology, to business management, to mental health.

The Ministers agreed to continue collaborating with industry representatives on a pan-Canadian action plan and implementing the plan to help proactively mitigate the potential impacts of African swine fever (ASF). Continued efforts in preparedness planning, biosecurity for small-scale farms and the strategic management of wild pigs were part of the discussion. The Ministers heard an update on the Animal Health Canada initiative and agreed to continue this work.

The Ministers also recognized the need to reduce regulatory red tape, and to put in place effective and responsive regulations that support innovation, growth and competitiveness, and protect health and environment. They endorsed a set of regulatory guiding principles, and committed to continuing their focus on traceability and surveillance activities.

The Ministers agreed to build on the progress made at the meeting over the upcoming year. The next annual meeting of FPT Ministers is in Guelph, Ontario, in July 2020.

Quotes

"The future is full of promise for Canada's agriculture and agri-food industry. We have the competitive advantages to sustainably supply the Canadian market and the world's growing population with our high-quality products. A strong federal-provincial-territorial partnership will help ensure Canadian farmers and food processors are well positioned to meet the important challenges and pursue opportunities for continued success at home and abroad."

– *The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food*

"The agri-food sector is booming, and we are responsible for ensuring that our farmers and food processors benefit from all of the opportunities it offers. This meeting gave me the opportunity to see that a number of other provinces are facing the same issues we are, to varying degrees. It was agreed that it is important to urgently restore access to all our pork and beef export markets and to work together to ensure the growth and prosperity of the sector. I also reiterated the importance of fully compensating supply-managed producers who made sacrifices leading to the signing of various trade agreements. Finally, the provinces and territories agreed that the federal government must urgently make the administrative changes requested in order to respond to the labour issues being faced by our businesses."

– *André Lamontagne, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for Quebec.*

Quick facts

- Canada's agriculture and agri-food industry is a key driver of economic growth. The agriculture and agri-food system contributes over \$142 billion to Canada's GDP annually and employed 2.3 million people in Canada in 2018. Consumers worldwide recognize Canada as a trusted and reliable supplier of safe, high-quality foods and products.
- In February 2017, the Advisory Council on Economic Growth identified Canada's agri-food sector as having great potential for the economic growth of our country.
- Under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership's AgriScience Program, 17 clusters were announced, including, for example, the Canadian Agricultural Automation Cluster, the Bioproducts Agri-Science Sector, and the Beef and Forage Science Cluster. Provinces and Territories have complementary science and innovation efforts across Canada.
- Farm operators under 35 years of age accounted for an increasing share of total operators and their absolute numbers also rose—from 24,120 in 2011 to 24,850 in 2016. This was the first absolute increase in this category of operators since 1991. (2016 Census of Agriculture, Statistics Canada)

Related products

[Backgrounder: Summary of items of the 2019 Annual Meeting of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers of Agriculture](#)

Associated links

[Video: State of the Sector 2019 – Bright and Bold](#) (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada)
[Canadian Agricultural Partnership](#) (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada)
[Report of Canada's Economic Strategy Tables: Agri-food](#) (Industry Canada)
[Food Policy for Canada](#) (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada)
[Notice to interested parties — Introducing occupation-specific work permits under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program](#) (Canada Gazette)

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Backgrounder

Summary of items from the 2019 Annual Meeting of Federal, Provincial and Territorial (FPT) Ministers of Agriculture

Agricultural Trade and Market Access

Canadian farmers and food processors depend on trade, exporting half of the value of their production. Agri-food exports hit a new record in 2018 reaching \$66.2 billion, putting Canada within reach of its \$75 billion target in agriculture, agri-food and seafood exports annually by 2025. The growth of the sector depends on maintaining and increasing access to key international markets, including the U.S., European Union and the Asia-Pacific regions. The Ministers discussed market diversification and the ongoing implementation and success of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), which are already creating good middle class jobs and providing farmers with new opportunities in key markets. The Ministers also discussed the Canada-United States-Mexico agreement, which was signed in November of 2018. Once ratified, the agreement will strengthen ties between the three countries and contribute to North America's global competitiveness. The Ministers also discussed the need for collaboration between provinces and the federal government in identifying both market access and bilateral and trade negotiating priorities.

Labour

Labour and skills development remain a top priority for the long-term growth of Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector. The Provincial and Territorial Ministers recognized the efforts made to improve service delivery of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, as well as measures to support the transition of foreign workers to permanent residency, including through targeted opportunities for two-year Labour Market Impact Assessments. The Government of Canada has also taken further action to support transitions of foreign workers to permanent residency in all provinces, with the exception of Quebec, including two new federal immigration pilots launched in 2019, the extension of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot and 2,000 new Provincial Nominee Program positions. As per the Canada-Quebec Accord, Quebec maintains responsibility for the selection, reception and integration of immigrants to the province. The Provincial and Territorial Ministers also look forward to engaging on the final recommendations of the Primary Agriculture Review and are looking forward to changes being made as soon as possible.

The provinces and territories affirmed the urgency of obtaining short-term administrative changes regarding:

- Continued progress in addressing issues with the cap on the temporary foreign workers on the low wage stream of the program;
- easier access to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and faster processing, particularly for recognized employers;
- a modernization of the National Commodities List.

The Ministers agreed to take action to facilitate technology adoption that reduces labour shortages and improves productivity, and to identify and fill data and information gaps related to labour and skills development ¹.

Business Risk Management (BRM) Review

The Ministers noted progress made in addressing the recommendations made last year by the Expert Panel on the BRM Review. The Ministers discussed options on potential changes to the AgriStability program to ensure equitable treatment and to simplify the program. They agreed to analyze how AgriStability treats private insurance payments, and directed officials to find solutions that will also encourage the development and use of complementary risk management tools. The Ministers agreed to meet again by the end of 2019 with an aim to implement changes in these areas for 2020.

Regular industry engagement through the National Program Advisory Committee and other Canada-wide and regional industry groups has informed the work of officials. The Ministers remain committed to continued engagement with industry, external experts and other stakeholders.

African Swine Fever

The FPT Ministers reviewed actions being taken to prevent entry of African swine fever (ASF) into Canada. The Ministers are committed to ongoing engagement with industry to evaluate Canada's animal health emergency management systems, to prevent and prepare for ASF, and to ensure business continuity should ASF enter Canada. Work also continues to negotiate zoning agreements with important trading partners, such as the ones already put in place with the United States and the European Union, so that trade can continue quickly from parts of the country that remain free from the disease.

Regulatory Review

Canada's regulatory system provides globally renowned quality and safety to Canadians and our trading partners. The Ministers discussed the regulatory review of the agri-food sector that was recently completed, highlighting the importance of collaborative action to streamline regulations that hinder innovation, competitiveness and economic growth in the sector. The Ministers adopted a common set of principles and will focus on the following priorities: competitiveness in global markets, implementation of regulations to spur innovation, traceability and surveillance, collaboration with Health Canada on food safety and with Pest Management Regulatory Agency on the pesticide re-assessment process, reducing internal trade barriers, implementing Canadian Plant Health Council work plans, implementing measures to support the sector in dealing with animal health emergency issues.

¹ Quebec footnote - Although Quebec shares several of the general objectives sought by other governments, Quebec intends to retain its prerogative with respect to labour training. Therefore, it does not intend to participate to the discussions regarding labour and skill development, given its view that this area is under its exclusive jurisdiction and that actions proposed would duplicate measures and partnering structures already in place in Quebec. Quebec will otherwise collaborate to the action plan in light of its priorities, in a spirit of sharing information and best practices.

The Food Policy for Canada

Minister Bibeau presented an overview of the recently announced federal Food Policy for Canada. The Food Policy for Canada is a roadmap for a healthier and more sustainable food system in Canada – one that builds on the federal government's agenda to support the growth of Canada's farmers and food businesses. There will be ongoing collaboration with provinces and territories on Food Policy-related issues. Provinces and Territories also discussed their food-policy related initiatives.