



Growing Forward

What We Heard:

Report from the

May 27-28, 2008 Consultation



Alberta



Manitoba



Québec

Newfoundland
Labrador

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Growing Forward – What We Heard: Report from the May 27-28, 2008 Consultation

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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Growing Forward	5
What We Heard – A Competitive and Innovative Sector	6
<i>Accelerating the pace of innovation and facilitating the adoption of new technology</i>	6
<i>Enabling competitive enterprises and sectors</i>	6
<i>Transforming Canada's strengths into domestic and global success</i>	8
What We Heard – A Sector That Contributes to Society's Priorities	10
<i>Enhancing the safety and security of the food system</i>	10
<i>Promoting environmentally responsible agriculture</i>	11
What We Heard – A Sector that is Proactive in Managing Risks	13
<i>Minimizing the occurrence and extent of risk incidents</i>	13
What We Heard – Other Comments	15
Concluding Remarks	16
Annex A – List of Participant Organizations	17

Introduction

Federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) governments remain committed to working with the agriculture and agri-food sector and the Canadian public to develop Growing Forward, a coordinated and national approach to agriculture and agri-food policy, through broad, national consultations.

The FPT consultations process, beginning in late 2006 and ongoing, was designed to stimulate dialogue among Canadians about how governments and others can work together to ensure a competitive and profitable Canadian agriculture and agri-food sector that provides safe, high-quality products and services with benefits for all Canadians. These consultations have ranged from broad public sessions held across the country, to more focused sessions involving participants chosen through a consensus FPT government process to ensure that the entire agri-food value chain has, and will continue to be, represented on a national basis.

Based on these earlier discussions and ongoing analysis by FPT governments, national stakeholders were brought together in February 2008 to discuss the broad outlines of potential initiatives and activities. These were designed to complement the new Business Risk Management (BRM) programs and help achieve the three overarching policy outcomes of Growing Forward: A Competitive and Innovative Sector; A Sector that Contributes to Society's Priorities; and a Sector that is Proactive in Managing Risks.

Building upon the February consultation session, stakeholders were invited to reconvene in Winnipeg on May 27-28, 2008, for more detailed discussions on proposed Growing Forward initiatives. Prior to this meeting, a consultation document was provided to participants. This document outlined proposed Growing Forward initiatives and aligned them with the three overarching Growing Forward policy outcomes as well as sub-categories under each of these outcomes. In a continued spirit of partnership, participants were asked to provide FPT governments with specific, constructive feedback on the consultation document and they did so during both break-out and plenary sessions.

This report summarizes what FPT governments heard over the course of the two-day meeting. While it tries to capture the essence of all ideas put forth by participants during discussions, it is a summary and therefore cannot include every specific comment put forward.

This report and the consultation document, as well as materials from all earlier consultations, are available on the Growing Forward website at www.agr.gc.ca/growingforward.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the meeting, your efforts will help inform the ongoing development of Growing Forward.

Growing Forward

Vision

The Growing Forward vision is a profitable and innovative agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products industry that seizes opportunities in responding to market demands and contributes to the health and well-being of Canadians.

Outcomes

Focusing on building a competitive and innovative sector

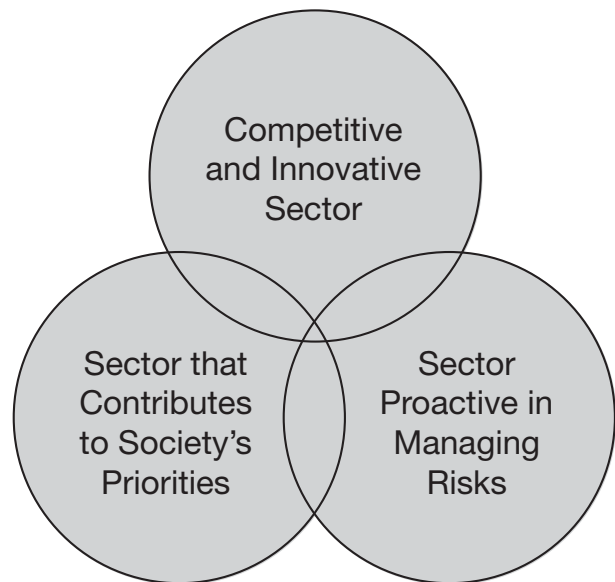
An agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products industry equipped to compete successfully in domestic and international markets, innovate, adapt to change, and seize new opportunities, thereby achieving sustained growth and profitability.

Ensuring the sector contributes to society's priorities

An agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products industry that generates benefits for the sector and all Canadians by contributing to broader FPT government priorities, ranging from food safety to environmental sustainability to health and wellness.

Being proactive in managing risks

An agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products industry that is well-equipped to manage and mitigate risks that impinge on the profitability of enterprises and sectoral prosperity.



What We Heard – A Competitive and Innovative Sector

Accelerating the Pace of Innovation and Facilitating the Adoption of New Technology

Proposed initiatives outlined in the consultation document:

- Canadian Agri-innovation Council (CAIC)
- Innovation Fora
- Promoting Agri-Based Innovation Investment Opportunities
- Bioeconomy strategy
- Science Clusters
- Innovation Commercialization Centres
- Science to Support Commercialization of New Agri-Based Products
- Supporting the Innovative Capacity of Farmers

Participants noted the need for **market-oriented approaches** and a **supportive business environment** to optimize innovation and commercialization in the industry. Some participants asked how governments could provide better incentives to accelerate current work.

Some participants suggested that the **regulatory system** is a major impediment to innovation and strongly encouraged a **collaborative governmental approach** to address regulatory barriers to innovation. This approach would include strengthening intellectual property (IP) protection and making farmers more aware of tools currently available to them. Some participants generally sought reduced impediments to product commercialization and greater incentives to innovate. It was also recommended that there be more **support for non-food crop varieties**.

Concern was expressed over the **large number of new initiatives**. It was proposed that there be a general **simplification** of the potential initiatives and that governments be cautious not to start new innovation fora where existing resources (e.g., value chain roundtables) could be used, and to avoid overlapping work already done by other organizations or institutions.

It was also suggested that care be taken to ensure that **smaller regions and commodity groups** not be overlooked in national innovation initiatives, as regional solutions to certain innovation issues are critical.

It was noted that **greater producer involvement** in implementing innovative practices and products would lead to new, greater market opportunities for the sector, encouraging governments to focus on ensuring greater producer uptake of initiatives focused on agricultural innovation.

Several participants also noted the need for governments to develop **definable targets and benchmarking** for the proposed initiatives.

Enabling Competitive Enterprises and Sectors

Proposed initiatives outlined in the consultation document:

- Farm Program Entry and Navigation Platform
- Business Development
- Support for National Organizations
- Health Claims and Novel Food Ingredients
- Science Networks for Food-Based Health Research
- Minor Use Pesticides
- Veterinary Drugs

Participants noted that government's role should, indeed, be one of **enabler** and indicated that governments could enable industry to compete by:

- Supporting industry and commodity organizations and cooperatives to be potential **delivery agents** for many of these initiatives;
- Raising more **awareness of the international context** facing producers;
- Better **integrating international constraints and opportunities** into these programs; and
- Collaborating beyond domestic benchmarking (e.g., on-farm performance) to international benchmarking, in terms of Canada's performance vis-à-vis its competitors in areas like IP management and regulatory oversight.

Concern was expressed that the **regulatory process** generally impedes innovation and competitiveness in Canada. There was support for a "single-window approach" to dealing with regulations. Some participants identified initiatives in this area as "patchwork" and recommended that the multilateral agreement contain a **commitment that governments address overlaps and conflict** between AAFC and other federal government departments and agencies (and between their provincial counterparts) in the regulatory framework. Health Canada (HC), the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) were widely recognized as important partners in this endeavor.

A number of other points were raised in connection with the regulatory process:

- Canada should explore **adopting approvals from other jurisdictions** in situations where imported products are produced through the use of inputs that are not approved in Canada;

- Canada should **focus more on international regulatory issues**, particularly given the potential benefits of greater North American regulatory alignment;
- Exports and competitiveness are impeded by **differences in provincial regulations and standards** (e.g., meat inspection);
- **Industry associations** can help companies navigate the regulatory system;
- Canada must take greater care to **ensure compatibility** between Canadian and international standards (e.g., compatibility of international organic standards);
- Canada needs to better communicate the efficacy of its regulatory system, both domestically and internationally;
- The financial costs of seeking approvals for small markets (like Canada, in many cases) or smaller commodities must be considered;
- The growing regulatory burden is encouraging bigger agricultural operations; and
- There may be a need to amend the *Food and Drugs Act* to provide a different framework in which to review products.

Several participants expressed support for the **Farm Program Entry and Navigation Platform** initiative, a program designed to provide better client service delivery through a centralized platform to navigate available programs. However, some participants felt that the initiative needed a new name. They also reminded officials that many farmers have dial-up internet access and that the program must be effectively communicated to users. Some noted that collaborating with industry associations operating initiatives that could be linked to this process could help communicate it to producers. Participants also noted that they still need communication with a real person/advisor for diagnostic work.

There was discussion around the **Business Development** initiative, a program aimed at encouraging the use of sound business management practices in the agri-food sector. Some participants consider this to be one of the most important Growing Forward initiatives. While access to capital was identified as a key constraint, participants had a range of comments on the initiative, identifying areas that it might address:

- Dissemination of financial and scientific knowledge;
- Provision of key financial tools, possibly as part of a federal investment plan;
- Succession planning for people passing on their farms (e.g., advice on tax implications);
- Programs for beginning farmers;
- A role for cooperatives (e.g., helping to start and expand them);
- Barriers to getting products to market (e.g., transport);
- Delivery by national or cooperative organizations;
- Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) seeking access to capital to modernize and compete; and
- Food processor business development needs, notably the regulatory and tax systems, and labour challenges.

In discussions on the **Support for National Organizations** initiative, participants suggested that governments should look to provide stable funding to emerging or multi-commodity organizations, up to a threshold, rather than providing it on a project-by-project basis. Many participants agreed that they see national organizations as effective delivery mechanisms.

On the **Health Claims and Novel Food Ingredients** program, it was suggested that funding should be targeted at helping HC streamline administrative procedures relating to claim submissions. Participants also felt that improvements could be made to the **Minor Use Pesticides** initiative by providing additional funding to help innovators of crops with novel traits, better linking the initiative with the Integrated Pest Management program, and promoting the national registration of minor use pesticides. While there was support for the **Veterinary Drugs** initiative, it was noted that anti-microbial agents are as much of an agricultural issue as veterinary drugs.

Transforming Canada's Strengths into Domestic and Global Successes

Proposed initiatives outlined in the consultation document:

- International Trade Development and Expansion
- Brand Canada International
- Enhancing Value Chain Roundtables
- Canadian Agriculture and Food International Program
- Market Information and Export Capacity Building
- Enabling Research for a Competitive Agriculture

Participants expressed continued support for **international marketing activities**. Given increasing competition here at home, however, participants expressed concern that the Canadian market was not targeted and noted that there were no provisions in the proposed programming for **domestic marketing**.

Several participants pointed to the importance of ensuring that there is a **highly coordinated approach** to these proposed initiatives. Some felt that domestic support must be balanced with strong export performance to maintain a healthy Canadian industry. The need for **goal-oriented measures** of success was stressed by some.

A number of participants felt that, to improve the coordination of these initiatives, governments should **encourage cross-sectoral consultation mechanisms** and better identify where trade negotiations fit in the broader strategy for the sector. Participants also highlighted the need for cooperatives, transportation and human resource issues to be addressed in some of these initiatives. Harmonizing the regulatory system, leveling the playing field with importers and focusing on the entire value chain were also raised as issues that need to be addressed.

In discussing the **International Trade Development and Expansion** initiative, some participants conveyed concerns that government activities in international market development are not serving industry as well as they did in the past. Participants sought clearer definitions of the respective roles of government and industry and recommended **better collaboration** within this program. Given the role of other government departments in maintaining international markets, they also sought greater integration specifically with HC, CFIA and DFAIT programs.

While participants noted the value of the **Brand Canada International** initiative, there was also support for an **increased focus on, and support for, domestic marketing and programming**, which could include activities like creating local food initiatives, more clearly communicating the Canadian brand to Canadians, and promoting industry fora to discuss and support such initiatives. Some participants felt Brand Canada is missing a quality assurance standard, while others noted the importance of individual branding and the need to ensure that brand standards for individual firms meet those set through Brand Canada.

There were **various views expressed** on the **Enhancing Value Chain Roundtables (VCRTs)** initiative. Some participants stated that while some VCRTs (e.g., organic) had been quite successful in supporting industry development, there remains room for improvement. Some noted the need for **clearer definitions of VCRT mandates**, for the programs to be **goal-oriented**, and for assurances that governments would support industry recommendations. Others felt that, depending on the issue, VCRTs could include members from different commodity groups and other government departments such as DFAIT. It was also recommended that VCRTs convene only when necessary and ensure that industry and academics interact.

Some participants noted the value of the **Canadian Agriculture and Food International (CAFI) Program**, but commented that they would like to see improvements on turnaround time for CAFI proposals, and an interest was expressed in discussing the next stage of CAFI at an appropriate time.

During discussions on the **Market Information and Export Capacity Building** initiative, some participants indicated that there is a need for a more strategic and integrated means of information sharing, between government and industry, to facilitate market access.

What We Heard – A Sector That Contributes to Society's Priorities

Enhancing the Safety and Security of the Food System

Proposed initiatives outlined in the consultation document:

- Food Safety Systems Development
- Food Safety Systems Recognition
- Food Safety Systems Implementation

Participants generally supported the idea of developing food safety systems **proactively**, but noted that **industry should decide** whether to implement them in a particular area, **in response to market demands**.

Several participants stressed that **communication and awareness** of food safety issues needs to be improved both with the public, to better convey current practices and standards, and with producers, to better articulate future needs of the sector. Some participants felt that consumers need a better understanding of on-farm food safety standards.

Integration was also considered a key component of this set of initiatives and some participants requested better integrated approaches between commodities, particularly for multi-commodity farms. It was suggested that national commodity groups could again take a leadership role in implementing some of these initiatives. It was also suggested that streamlining food safety programs through a “single verifier” approach could greatly help producers in this area.

Participants also felt that FPT governments must recognize and develop **industry standards** from which the sector can extract value. Several issues were raised surrounding Canadian standards:

- Standards for imports and domestic products should be similar;
- Brand Canada should have food safety standards that are widely communicated to consumers;
- Differences in provincial standards (e.g., abattoir standards) are a source of interprovincial trade barriers; and
- There must be a stronger commitment from governments on understanding the national standards of the on-farm food safety process.

Participants also raised the issue of **funding** for the three proposed food safety initiatives. There was support for the position that funding for public goods should come from the public and governments. Some felt that the cost of on-farm food safety systems to producers could be lowered through a hastening of the application and approval process and an expansion of the list of eligible expenses (e.g., on-farm audit, labour, and work to keep the systems up-to-date).

Concerning the **Food Safety Systems Implementation** initiative, some participants stressed that on-farm programs developed by industry should be implemented by industry. Some suggested that before-and-after implementation snapshots could improve the measurement of food safety systems and help to better identify their benefits. Some participants agreed that governments could improve implementation in this area by:

- Focusing on flexibility;
- Reducing the administrative burden of programs and approval times for industry-developed food safety systems;
- Allowing producer organizations to deliver the programming; and
- Improving communication between governments, buyers and consumers.

Promoting Environmentally Responsible Agriculture

Proposed initiatives outlined in the consultation document:

- Agri-Environmental Science
- Agri-Environmental Knowledge and Information Tools
- Supporting On-Farm Sustainable Agricultural Practices
- Environmental Performance and Measurement Reporting

Participants raised a number of comments relating to the proposed initiatives, noting the need for:

- **A national EG&S initiative**, which could include a link to organic production and a carbon trading system;
- **A national water management and drought strategy**;
- Action regarding **animal care** and the development and application of World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) standards;
- An integrated discussion around **energy and sustainability** that recognizes work already underway and involves stakeholders in the post-farm sector that are significant energy users;

- **Strong government collaboration** by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) with Environment Canada (EC) and Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) on environmental initiatives; and
- **Improved awareness** of good agricultural practices (e.g., soil, land and water management) among the general public.

Regarding the **Agri-Environmental Science** initiative, some participants felt that the outlined priorities are very specific and that program descriptions should always articulate their overarching goals. Participants noted the need for coordination between this initiative and some of the innovation initiatives such as CAIC and the Science Clusters. Other comments on this initiative pointed to the need to:

- Disseminate research beyond the agricultural sector;
- Highlight the role of national organizations in undertaking agri-environmental science research;
- Focus more on soil and land management;
- Address barriers to best management practices (BMPs) uptake;
- Use existing organizations for delivery where possible; and
- Integrate external and internal funding components.

Some participants felt that activities under the proposed **Agri-Environmental Knowledge and Tools** program should be better integrated with other Growing Forward initiatives. There was support for the Watershed Evaluation of BMPs (WEBS) program, but some participants indicated the need for it to be expanded and better communicated under Growing Forward. Others expressed some frustration with the National Land and Water Information Service program, as they felt that information is often not readily available. There was a fair amount of discussion over

BMPs in this area, with some participants suggesting that BMPs be identified in the program description. It was also suggested that on-line tools enhancement needs to be complemented with the expansion of broadband internet access.

Discussing the **Supporting On-farm Sustainable Agricultural Practices** initiative, some participants commented on the need to recognize that environmental issues extend beyond the farm gate and that a flexible approach is often needed to undertake collective action. Many participants felt that current **environmental farm plans** (EFPs) that began under the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF), should be recognized as acceptable for Growing Forward programs. EFPs continue to have wide support and many expressed their preference for “farm plan” versus “risk assessment” in terms of language. Other feedback on this initiative included:

- Producers must be assured of confidentiality with respect to the sharing of information from delivery providers to governments;
- Producers would benefit from further funding for their BMP proposals;
- Financial assistance should be based on a per unit, not per farm, basis;
- Industry leadership in delivering actions like technical assistance should be utilized;
- The technical assistance component of the proposed initiatives could feature stronger linkages with EC and NRCan; and
- The role of processors regarding environmental quality and control is not addressed in the proposed initiatives.

In talking about the **Environmental Performance Measurement and Reporting**, participants expressed the view that the role of broader stewardship initiatives should be incorporated and benchmarked in these activities. Other comments included:

- Stories and linkages between agriculture and the environment need to be better explained domestically and abroad, to communicate the benefits that the sector is producing;
- Benchmarking, based on international practice and experience, is required to avoid “re-inventing the wheel” and to ensure that information is presented relative to Canada’s trading partners;
- While performance measurement is important, not every farm should have significant reporting requirements – individual impact studies were expensive under the APF;
- National Agri-Environmental Health Analysis and Reporting Program (NAHARP) should become a sustainability index; and
- Long-term monitoring is still needed in some areas.

What We Heard – A Sector that is Proactive in Managing Risk

Minimizing the Occurrence and Extent of Risk Incidents

Proposed initiatives outlined in the consultation document:

- Developing National Biosecurity Systems
- Developing National Traceability Systems
- National Animal and Plant Biosecurity Strategy

Several participants expressed the view that the focus of risk management initiatives should be on developing groundwork based on market demand and the need to mitigate risk in areas of traceability and biosecurity. The **cost implications** of these initiatives are crucial, as participants underscored the importance of recovering cost and gaining profitability at the farm-gate.

Participants commented that there should be a formalization of risk assessment prior to the implementation of any activities under **Developing National Biosecurity Systems**. A number of participants explained the need for a **coordinated emergency response team** that could provide clear communication to the public, develop an efficient and common sense-based risk mitigation strategy, and apply to a number of potentially affected commodities.

It was also noted that producers need reassurances of receiving **timely compensation** for losses once they have made formal declarations.

Enforcement was frequently raised as a means of helping to focus on prevention, not reaction, in agriculture. Participants argued that providing CFIA with additional resources for surveillance and monitoring would ultimately save governments some BRM spending

Biosecurity activities should be common sense, many participants explained, and biosecurity protocols should be clearly communicated. These protocols could ultimately include an emergency response team that is dispatched to deal with risk incidents.

Concerning the **Developing National Traceability Systems** initiative, participants expressed a preference for a **recognized, national traceability system** that is affordable, built with a clear purpose and applicable to a number of commodities. This system would provide credibility to consumers, promote a single Canadian system, reduce international confusion, and simplify product handling and management among retailers.

Participants also discussed **roles and responsibilities** on traceability activities. It was noted that there are many questions around the issue of access to and use of traceability data and who owns IP in certain traceability work. It was stated that there is a need to communicate who handles the **information and privacy** of stakeholders. Some participants were unclear on who will have access to and control the information (e.g., database information) related to some of these initiatives.

Participants emphasized the **role of science in traceability** systems, in improving the efficiencies of traceability systems, as well as **flexibility**, in responding to market changes. Some observed that current systems that work right now are not recognized in the document, or the potential for traceability systems to build on existing programs with strong databases, such as Quebec's live-stock identification program.

Several participants stressed the issue of **animal health and care** as a major issue in managing risk that should be included in the proposed activities. Participants suggested there be a reference to a **national animal health strategy** (and the associated infrastructure) with the opportunity for Canada to become a leader in this area, and noted a strong need for the integration of traceability, on-farm food safety, and biosecurity within the Animal Health Strategy being led by CFIA.

What We Heard – Other Comments

Some participants felt that Growing Forward should more explicitly cover certain issues facing the agri-food sector. **Animal welfare and care was identified in this context**, and it was noted that some livestock producers identified it as their largest concern. **Transportation issues** were also flagged in this way, given their relevance to many who are trying to market Canadian goods.

Some concern was raised over the lack of a clearly-identified **human resources component** in the broader strategy for the agri-food sector. Some questions were raised over how to get, and keep, young farmers in industry and how to encourage the availability of a streamlined and qualified pool of labour. The need to recognize that agriculture is science-based was raised and participants sought more ideas on how to encourage science based-skills and attitudes among young people and new entrants in the sector.

Participants stressed that those **beyond the farm gate** (processors, input suppliers, etc.) have an important role to play and noted the importance of ensuring the inclusion of these participants within the Growing Forward approach.

Some participants expressed their specific interest in seeing a **better alignment of IP** in Canada, particularly with respect to the regulatory environment and enforcement, to better enable the seed industry to innovate.

Growing Forward **audit and evaluation processes** and plans by governments on measuring their achievements and those of national organizations were also noted as being important.

It was suggested that governments should take care in **allowing the sale of agri-firms**, such as processors, after these firms have received substantial government support.

Concluding Remarks

The May 27-28, 2008 national consultation meeting offered participants the opportunity to provide governments with their considerable input and ideas on proposed Growing Forward programs and initiatives designed to position the sector to respond to new challenges and to seize new market opportunities.

Input from this two-day session was used to brief FPT Ministers at their May 29-30 meeting in Toronto and is informing FPT governments as they continue to finalize Growing Forward program details and initiatives. As governments further refine program detail, delivery options, and implementation strategies, it is anticipated that more federal-provincial-territorial participant engagement sessions will be held with a more regional focus. More information on these sessions will be available in the coming months.

For more information on Growing Forward please:

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We would like to extend our thanks to everyone who has participated in the consultation process to date. Your commitment to providing governments with constructive feedback has resulted in numerous ideas being put forward and your continued engagement will help inform discussion in the final stages of Growing Forward program development.

Annex A – List of Participants

Agricultural Alliance of New Brunswick	Canadian Seed Trade Association
Agricultural Institute of Canada	Canadian Sheep Federation
Agricultural Producers of Saskatchewan	Canadian Turkey Marketing Agency
BioteCanada	Canadian Veterinary Medicine Association
British Columbia Agriculture Council	Canadian Young Farmers Forum
Canada Beef Export Federation	Canola Council of Canada
Canada Grains Council	Chicken Farmers of Canada
Canada Pork International	CropLife Canada
Canadian 4-H Council	Dairy Farmers of Canada
Canadian Agricultural Safety Association	Ducks Unlimited
Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute	Flax Council of Canada
Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions	Flowers Canada
Canadian Bankers Association	Food and Consumer Products of Canada
Canadian Bison Association	Food Processors Alliance of Canada
Canadian Canola Growers Association	George Morris Centre
Canadian Cattlemen's Association	Grain Growers of Canada
Canadian Cervid Alliance	Keystone Agricultural Producers
Canadian Co-operatives Association	La Coop Fédérée
Canadian Egg Marketing Agency	National Farm Animal Care Council
Canadian Faculties of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine	Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture
Canadian Federation of Agriculture	Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture
Canadian Federation of Independent Business	Ontario Federation of Agriculture
Canadian Hatching Egg Producers	Prince Edward Island Federation of Agriculture
Canadian Horticultural Council	Pulse Canada
Canadian Livestock Genetics Association	Soil Conservation Council of Canada
Canadian Meat Council	Union des producteurs agricoles
Canadian National Goat Federation	West Central Road and Rail
Canadian Organic Growers	Western Barley Growers Association
Canadian Ornamental Horticulture Alliance	Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association
Canadian Pork Council	Wild Rose Agricultural Producers (Alberta)
Canadian Seed Growers Association	

