



## Election 2015 – CPMA Questionnaire to Political Parties

The Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) represents Canadian and international members who are responsible for 90% of the fresh fruit and vegetable sales in Canada. Canada's produce industry had an estimated impact of \$11.4 billion in real GDP in 2013, according to the Conference Board of Canada. Our diverse membership is made up of every segment of the produce industry supply chain. From grower-shippers, to packers, distributors and foodservice operators, to the local retailers, CPMA members bring fresh fruit and vegetables from the farm gate to the dinner plate for Canadian families, right across the country.

Below you will find key questions on which the produce industry is looking for leadership from our political parties. We kindly ask for your response by end of day **Monday, October 5<sup>th</sup>** as we hope to distribute responses received to our members and post them on our website that week.

### Health and Nutrition

Access to affordable, nutritious food is a prerequisite for healthy families and communities. Fruits and vegetables can reduce the risk of chronic disease and obesity, thus placing less demand on publicly funded systems including healthcare. Yet Canadians do not consume adequate amounts of fruits and vegetables as recommended by Canada's Food Guide. According to Statistics Canada, only 39.5% of Canadians aged 12 and older reported eating 5 or more daily servings of fruits and vegetables in 2014. Three focus areas that are critical for success in encouraging produce consumption have been identified by health stakeholders: common messaging under a common approach, improving food skills and children's programs.

**If elected, will your party commit to implementing policy that supports increasing fresh fruit and vegetable consumption to improve the health of Canadians?**

### Payment Protection for Produce Sellers

a) The lack of payment protection for produce sellers during bankruptcies in Canada results in disproportionate financial risk for produce growers and sellers. The produce industry is united in its request for the creation of a limited statutory deemed trust which provides a no-cost solution and the most effective means to ensure fair protection for produce sellers. Other options that have been raised, such as check-off programs or insurance, would result in high cost to both sellers and government, while still providing ineffective protection.

The creation of such a trust would also address the serious impacts to the Canadian industry caused by Canada's loss of longstanding preferential access to the protections under their Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA) in the U.S. This loss was a direct result of Canada's failure to provide a reciprocal program in Canada. Preferred access to PACA allowed Canadian farmers and sellers access to dispute resolution including slow pay and no pay transactions at minimal cost; Canadians must now post very large security amounts to use that system to conclusion. Creation of a deemed trust will restore our preferred access to PACA programs.

**If elected, will your party commit to establishing a limited statutory deemed trust for produce sellers and to re-establishing Canada's preferential access to U.S. PACA protections?**

b) Currently, to trade in fresh produce inter-provincially in Canada, a produce buyer or seller must either be a member of the industry established Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Dispute Resolution Corporation (DRC) or hold a licence with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). This dual system has created two sets of trading rules, thus allowing for less credible industry players to work the system to their advantage at the cost of the sector's reputation. Establishment of a single system will streamline and simplify the Canadian system, enhance confidence in the Canadian market, and support a stable financial environment. The current federal government has committed to eliminating the CFIA licence as part of the regulatory modernization under the Safe Food for Canadians Act and to requiring produce sellers and buyers dealing inter-provincially to be members of the DRC.

**If elected, will your party commit to continuing the work to eliminate the dual licensing system and establish a single system through membership of the DRC?**

## **Food Safety Modernization**

Canadians enjoy an extensive variety of fresh produce year-round. Whether domestic or imported, conventionally grown or organic, the industry works diligently to provide safe, nutritious fresh fruits and vegetables to consumers. The Safe Food for Canadians Act was passed in November 2012 and represents a critical modernization of the food safety system in Canada. Since the passage of the SFCA, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has been working to develop the necessary regulations to implement the Act, which has included significant consultation with stakeholders, including food safety experts, consumer groups and industry. While the regulations are still in draft form, significant progress has been made over the past three years to develop regulations that will ensure a modern, efficient and effective food safety system in Canada.

**If elected, will your party recognize the significant effort undertaken by the CFIA, industry and other stakeholders and continue with and build on this effort to finalize the SFCA regulations?**

On June 30, 2015, the CFIA concluded consultations on the potential impact of the draft SFCA regulations on micro and small businesses, and potential changes and exclusions from regulatory requirements to accommodate these enterprises. No final decision is known. The produce industry believes that all food should be safe and that the food chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Financial assistance and staggered implementation can and should be available to assist businesses to meet the new regulatory requirements. However, all businesses along the food supply chain that are involved in the interprovincial food trade, in importing food and in exporting food should come under the SFCA food safety, traceability and licensing regulations, regardless of size.

**If elected, will your party ensure that the SFCA does not include exemptions from food safety, traceability and licensing requirements for any food business covered under the Act because of size?**

## **Labour and Temporary Foreign Workers**

Ensuring a consistent supply of fresh fruits and vegetables is essential to the produce industry's ability to meet the needs and demands of Canadian consumers. Canada's farmers are fostering a highly sophisticated and modern agriculture sector Canadians can be proud of and that will continue to provide an abundance of jobs and quality food for Canadians. Producers are running sophisticated operations and using modern business tools to run their businesses.

The industry understands the need for government to monitor foreign labour and to ensure that the incoming workers are not taking jobs that Canadians want. It has been clearly demonstrated over the years that there are certain jobs which Canadians will not accept. To continue to produce fruit and vegetable crops and ensure Canada's ongoing global competitiveness, access to a consistent supply of labour is essential. Access to labour is also a food waste issue, as a lack of labour has meant good, healthy fruits and vegetables have been left to spoil in fields and on trees. Government services should be provided in a business setting where government is part of the value chain assisting producers with access to labour.

**If elected, will your party recognize that agricultural labour needs are unique and that program-specific administration must be modified to better help the produce industry supply chain meet labour needs and take immediate action to do so?**

## **Research and Innovation**

The Government of Canada has a role in supporting research and innovation in the produce sector, and beyond, through sound policies and programs to fund and support research and innovation in an ongoing, collaborative fashion. Expanding Canada's capacity for research and innovation is an important element of ensuring business competitiveness and industry growth. Further, overly long or complex processes for approval of new technologies, such as those relating to pest management, can put Canadian industry at a competitive disadvantage.

Research facility reductions and closures combined with the loss of professional research and science capacity is a grave concern to the produce sector. The Conference Board of Canada has recognized the country's decline in global competitiveness ranking and called for enhancements to government investment in research and innovation.

**If elected, what is your party's commitment to research and to approval of new technologies for such things as pest management to allow the Canadian produce sector to remain competitive in the global market?**

## **North American Perimeter Approach**

Differences in regulatory requirements in Canada, the United States and Mexico can result in a loss of trade opportunities for the Canadian fresh fruit and vegetable industry. Trade in fresh fruits and vegetables in North America is highly integrated across the entire supply chain. Continued improvement to the level of integration between the three countries is essential to the competitiveness of the Canadian produce industry.

Unnecessary regulatory differences between these countries relating to such things as customs, plant health and delayed recognition of food safety systems can lead to delays, increased costs for both business and consumers and even lost product. Requirements that are not scientifically-based or essential to security act as effective non-tariff trade barriers between countries and must be eliminated. Increased cooperation and alignment in these areas can facilitate trade and provide benefits to both industry and consumers, while protecting Canada's security, people and environment.

**If elected, what will your party do to establish a North American perimeter approach and ensure a smooth and improved trading relationship between Canada, the US and Mexico?**