

CPMA 2021 Government Relations Priorities

The past year has been unlike any other for businesses and organizations around the globe, and CPMA has been no exception. While the COVID-19 pandemic has certainly altered our working reality, CPMA has been able to adapt and ensure that our members' needs and priorities continue to be brought to the attention of elected and non-elected government officials.

In 2020, CPMA's Government Relations team:

- Was recognized as being among the top 15 in the *Hill Times'* list of Top 50 Agriculture Influencers on Parliament Hill.
- Adapted to the COVID environment by holding our first-ever virtual Fall Harvest advocacy event, our first virtual CGIM Working Group meeting with government officials, and virtual meetings with Parliamentarians.
- Prepared our *Canadian Fresh Produce Industry Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic report*, outlining 24 short- and long-term recommendations for government action to support our industry.
- Made more than 130 connections with Parliamentarians and other Designated Public Office Holders that were reported in the federal Lobbying Registry.
- Submitted comments to 16 federal government consultations, made 6 submissions to Parliamentary Committees and appeared at five Committee hearings.
- Represented industry concerns, developed guidance and supported member inquiries related to the *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations*.

As we mark 2021 as the UN International Year of Fruits and Vegetables, we will continue to advocate on behalf of our members and the Canadian fresh produce industry as a whole, while building on CPMA's reputation as the Canadian organization with global connections representing the total fresh produce supply chain – from the farm gate to the dinner plate.

Working with our volunteer leaders, we have identified the following priority policy areas for our government relations work for 2021:

Key Priority Areas

- **COVID Recovery** – The COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly remains top of mind for the fresh produce sector. CPMA will continue its efforts to support our members in navigating the challenges of the pandemic and in transitioning into economic recovery.

Government Relations Actions for 2021

- Submit comments to the Finance Canada Pre-Budget Consultation focused on promoting Canada's economic recovery from COVID-19.
- Ensure that CPMA's comments to government consultations and Parliamentary studies include the lens of COVID-19 challenges and recommendations to support our sector's recovery.
- Continue to work with our partners and government to ensure that foreign worker protocols are able to both effectively protect public health while also supporting our capacity for domestic production and ensuring Canada's food security.

- Continue to advocate for essential food sector workers, including across the fresh produce supply chain, to be prioritized in COVID-19 vaccination planning across the country.
 - Continue to raise awareness among Parliamentarians and government officials of the challenges being faced by our sector as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and of our recommendations for government action to support our sector through economic recovery, including through any necessary financial supports.
- **Labelling Modernization and SFCR Implementation/Traceability** – The implementation of new requirements under the *Safe Foods for Canadians Regulations (SFCR)* has posed a major challenge to our members. In particular, the lot code traceability requirements have resulted in unintended negative consequences for many. In 2021, CPMA will continue to advocate for regulatory reform that supports future innovations, while avoiding uniquely Canadian regulatory requirements, to bolster the fresh produce industry and contribute to our competitiveness.

Government Relations Actions for 2021

- Continue to support CPMA members in their implementation of *SFCR* requirements, particularly related to lot code traceability requirements.
 - Continue to work with our partners to advocate for a regulatory amendment to extend the bulk produce exemptions under Section 213 of the *SFCR* to fresh fruits or vegetables that are an individual unit of produce wrapped in transparent film, and to fresh fruits and vegetables in a transparent, unsealed protective plastic bag.
 - Leverage CFIA's planned Food Product Innovation regulatory initiative (previously known as the Food Labelling Modernization initiative) to advocate for regulatory changes to address unintended consequences of the existing *SFCR* and to better facilitate traceability, innovation and economic competitiveness in the fresh produce sector.
 - Continue to work with industry and government to reach workable solutions on labelling requirement challenges facing the industry.
- **Financial Protection** – In the COVID business environment that has and will drive businesses into bankruptcy, it is crucial that the government provides all possible safeguards for the food supply chain, including by finally answering the fresh produce industry's call to implement a deemed trust mechanism for produce sellers in Canada.

Government Relations Actions for 2021

- Host a webinar regarding market turbulence and bankruptcy trends in the produce industry to raise awareness among CPMA members, federal Parliamentarians and provincial representatives of the importance of a financial protection tool in Canada.
- Continue our advocacy to garner support among federal Parliamentarians for the inclusion of a deemed trust mechanism in Federal Budget 2021.
- Leverage support from the major opposition parties (Conservative, NDP, and Bloc) to increase pressure on the minority Liberal government to take action to implement a deemed trust.
- Work with partner organizations to closely monitor bankruptcy and PACA trends in the United States in order to better understand and be able to communicate to government what we can expect in Canada and how a financial protection tool can support our sector.

- Continue to feature financial protection as a key policy focus in our joint advocacy events with the Canadian Horticultural Council, Farm to Plate (late spring) and Fall Harvest (November).
 - Work to ensure that the implementation of a financial protection mechanism for produce sellers is included in federal party platforms in the event of an election.
- **Plastics** – While the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic saw reduced consumer interest in reducing the use of plastics, we anticipate that support for plastic reduction initiatives will return to pre-pandemic levels as we move forward. At the same time, the federal government has made clear its intentions to move forward with legislative and regulatory measures to support the move toward zero plastic waste. With this work underway, 2021 provides an important opportunity for CPMA to engage with government and other stakeholders to find effective solutions to this challenge.

Government Relations Actions for 2021

- Continue to build on CPMA's leadership profile in efforts to reduce and mitigate the use of unnecessary, problematic plastics across the fresh produce supply chain, including through the CPMA Plastics Packaging Working Group and the Canada Plastics Pact.
- Work to raise awareness among Parliamentarians and government officials of the particular food safety and food waste challenges our sector faces, and of the systems approach that is needed to effectively achieve a reduction in the use of problematic plastics across Canada.
- Work to identify and build relationships with agricultural and non-agricultural partners who can help to amplify our advocacy for evidence-based solutions that combine education, innovation, and effective recycling collection within communities across Canada.
- Ensure that, in the event of a federal election, all political parties have the information they need to have an informed position on plastics that considers our industry's concerns.

Other Government Relations Priorities

- **Regulatory Modernization and improved government consultation** – A collaborative approach to find workable solutions for industry and government is the backbone to success for regulatory and policy compliance. We will work with other agricultural organizations to advocate for a comprehensive review of the regulatory modernization and consultation process that would allow the government to better facilitate thorough stakeholder participation, better understand the administrative or other costs of proposed changes and develop effective regulations that meet the needs of both industry and the Canadian public, without stifling economic competitiveness.
- **Food safety and leafy greens** – The implementation of recent changes to food safety requirements, such as those related to *SFCR* implementation and CFIA testing requirements for U.S. romaine, have been a significant undertaking for our members. In 2021, CPMA will continue its comprehensive food safety efforts to support member needs. From a government relations perspective, we will continue to advocate for government engagement with industry on appropriate and effective food safety measures that allow for reasonable implementation time.

- **International trade** – From the ongoing U.S. International Trade Commission investigations to *CUSMA* implementation to the European Union’s Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies, the Canadian industry continues to face challenges to trade. We will continue to work with our international partners to advocate for the facilitation of trade across our global supply chain and ensure that the interests of our industry are reflected in Canada’s negotiations with our trading partners. We will also closely monitor developments in the Canada-U.S. trading relationship under the new Biden administration.
- **Sustainability and Canadian National Index efforts** – Governments around the world, including here at home, are increasingly looking to agriculture as an important contributor in the fight against climate change. Across the agri-food sector, ambitious targets are being set to reduce the environmental footprint of producing and supplying food. CPMA is a proud partner in the effort to create a Canadian National Index on Agri-food Performance with clear sustainability metrics and benchmarks that are strongly linked to those being used around the globe. In 2021, we will continue to build on this work and will engage with our partners and government officials to recognize and support sustainability efforts across the fresh produce supply chain.
- **Increasing fresh produce consumption and supporting food security** – The COVID-19 pandemic has made healthy living even more important to Canadians. We know that CPMA does amazing work to promote increased produce consumption. In 2021, our government relations team will support these efforts by raising awareness among Parliamentarians and other government officials about CPMA’s *Half Your Plate* program and initiatives such as the 2021 virtual Freggie Fresh Ride. At the same time, we will continue to advocate for government action to strengthen Canada’s food security, including through a whole-of-government approach under the Food Policy for Canada.
- **Port Modernization** –In 2021, CPMA will continue its engagement with government to address the challenges our members face at the Canadian border and to improve oversight and enforcement of service standards at Canada’s ports. We will also continue to partner with other organizations to call for a comprehensive interagency review of all regulations that affect supply chains and the Canadian commercial border to help businesses more seamlessly access international markets and strengthen Canada’s global competitiveness.
- **Innovation** – Planning for COVID-19 recovery must include looking at how the business environment may change permanently. A strong and growing Canadian produce industry will depend on our ability to leverage innovation. From a government relations perspective, CPMA will continue to advocate for government innovation funding specific to the fresh produce supply chain and enhanced support for businesses shifting to digital, to bolster the industry and foster our ongoing competitiveness.
- **Federal election preparation** – The current minority government situation means that a federal election could always be right around the corner, and we know that the political parties are formulating their policy platforms in case a campaign is called. In 2021, CPMA will prepare a policy brief outlining our election priorities and will engage with the various federal parties to ensure that the needs of the fresh produce industry are reflected in any federal campaign.

Over the past number of years, collaboration with other agricultural and supply chain organizations has become increasingly important for CPMA. These partnerships have made an important contribution to our success in advocating to government on behalf of our members by amplifying our messages on some of the key issues facing our sector. In 2021, we will continue to build on these collaborative efforts on major issues of concern for our members – including facilitating foreign worker programs, making improvements to business risk management programs, ensuring the smooth flow of trade at the Canadian border, and more.

For more information about CPMA’s Government Relations efforts, contact Shannon Sommerauer, Director of Government Relations, at ssommerauer@cpma.ca.