



Honourable Heath MacDonald
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

May 15, 2025

Dear Minister MacDonald,

On behalf of the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA), we extend our heartfelt congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

CPMA is Canada's leading trade association representing companies active in the marketing and sale of fresh fruits and vegetables in Canada—from the farm gate to the dinner plate. Our membership spans the entire produce supply chain and includes major growers, shippers, packers, importers and exporters, transportation and logistics firms, brokers, distributors, wholesalers, retailers, foodservice distributors, and fresh-cut processors. Founded in 1925, CPMA is proud to represent over 930 domestic and international members who are responsible for well over 90% of fresh fruit and vegetable sales in Canada.

The fresh produce industry plays a vital role in Canada's economy, contributing nearly \$15 billion annually to GDP, supporting more than 185,400 jobs in both rural and urban communities across the country¹. Our industry is also a major trade engine for Canada, generating more than \$4.6 billion in exports and more than \$12 billion in imports in 2024 alone². Beyond its economic impact, the fresh fruit and vegetable sector also plays a crucial role in enhancing the health and well-being of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Despite these successes, growing political uncertainty with our largest trading partner, a series of port disruptions, escalating severe weather events and continuing consumer concerns about the cost of food have all contributed to significant challenges for the Canadian fresh produce sector. More federal support is needed to make food a federal priority and to create the conditions necessary to enable an environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable fresh produce industry in Canada, while ensuring our competitiveness in the global marketplace.

CPMA urges the government to support a strengthened food system and food security for all Canadians by adopting a whole-of-government approach to agriculture and food production, and by prioritizing food production and access to food in legislation, policy and crisis management. CPMA recommends the establishment of an Agri-food Supply Chain Advisory Council to serve as a standing forum to support Cabinet in advancing this cross-departmental effort.

¹ Conference Board of Canada, 2023

² Statistics Canada, 2025


Under this lens, as you begin your role as Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPMA offers the following recommendations for government action to support Canada's fresh fruit and vegetable supply chain, which were also shared in a [letter to Prime Minister Carney](#) following the federal election:

- The government should advance Canada's free and fair-trade agenda, remove regulatory barriers impeding Canada's competitiveness in the global marketplace, and enable further expansion of mutual recognition efforts with other key trading countries.
- The government should engage in regular and ongoing consultations with our industry and with the Trump Administration, to ensure a strong response to trade action taken against Canada while also safeguarding our food security, and to emphasize the important benefits for all three economies stemming from free and fair trade across North America.
 - In the interest of supporting a healthy population, a resilient food system, and a competitive domestic industry, so long as Canadian fresh produce is granted tariff-free entry into the United States, we request that fresh fruits and vegetables should be excluded from any retaliatory trade measures against the United States, and that steps should be taken to remove the existing tariffs on U.S. produce items to protect Canadian produce exporters from potential retaliation that would have devastating impacts on domestic fruit and vegetable growers, particularly in the greenhouse sector.
- The government should prioritize the implementation of Bill C-280, the *Financial Protection for Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Farmers Act*, to provide critical financial protection to produce sellers.
- The government should invest in the health of Canadians using a "Food as Medicine" approach to support measures to reduce diet-related diseases and hunger and mitigate health care costs associated with food insecurity and poor nutrition.
- The government should advance measures promoting the Canada Food Guide recommendation to fill *Half Your Plate* with fruits and vegetables, including in public procurement and government programming.
- The government should prioritize the development and implementation of the National School Food Program, ensuring that enhancing nutrition and promoting healthy eating practices, including through the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, are core objectives of the program.
- The government should deliver sufficient, ongoing capital investment under the National Supply Chain Strategy and the National Trade Corridor Fund to enable trade and transportation infrastructure improvements, including the enhancement of cold chain infrastructure.
- The government should establish priority lanes at ports of entry and implement a dedicated Trusted Trader pilot program to further streamline the movement of essential and perishable products across the Canadian border.
- The government should implement measures to prioritize the movement of food and essential goods through ports of entry in the event of emergency events or disruptions, and work to address the root causes of labour disruptions impacting critical supply chain infrastructure.
- The government should implement a National Workforce Strategy to meet immediate labor needs and generate future interest in careers across the food supply chain through education, training and skills development.
- The government should maintain a stable agricultural workforce by preserving the distinction between the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) and other streams within the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) program, such as AgStream and the Low-Wage stream, and by establishing a permanent Recognized Employer Program under the TFWP.

- The government should engage with industry and drive North American and global conversations to align efforts, standards and systems to effectively achieve our environmental sustainability goals, while ensuring that economic and social considerations are treated as equal pillars of long-term sustainability.
- Finally, the government should create an enabling regulatory environment for new products, technologies and business practices to support and de-risk the adoption of more sustainable solutions. This should include a focus on the harmonization of product registration across North America, and a commitment to ensure that the Pest Management Regulatory Agency is sufficiently resourced to fulfill core functions including pre-market applications, re-evaluations and minor use registrations.

We thank you in advance for your consideration of the recommendations outlined above. CPMA and our members are eager to serve as a resource for you and your team, and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the priorities and needs of the Canadian fresh produce sector.

Sincere regards and congratulations again on your appointment,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RL' followed by a horizontal line.

Ron Lemaire
President
Canadian Produce Marketing Association