



PRESS RELEASE

Food Safety and Health Professionals Emphasize Importance of Fruit and Vegetable Consumption During COVID-19 Pandemic

April 8, 2020 (Ottawa, ON) – The Canadian fresh fruit and vegetable supply chain continues to provide millions of Canadians with safe and healthy produce. The Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA), who represents the produce sector in Canada, is working closely with many Government branches to ensure the continuity of the supply chain and availability of produce for Canadians.

CPMA would like to reiterate that consumers can remain confident regarding the safety and quality of the fruits and vegetables they purchase. The [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) (PHAC) has stated that “There is currently no evidence to suggest that food is a likely source or route of transmission of the virus and there are currently no reported cases of COVID-19 transmission through food. People are unlikely to be infected with the virus through food.”

Jeff Hall, CPMA Food Safety Specialist, adds that “although fresh fruits and vegetables are often consumed raw, the risk of contracting COVID-19 from them is extremely low. Canada has some of the highest food safety standards in the world and the produce industry, in collaboration with the government, remains extremely vigilant in ensuring that all fresh produce meets Canada’s regulatory requirements. This includes imported fruits and vegetables, as they must meet Canada’s stringent food safety protocols before entering the country.”

The physical and mental health benefits of produce consumption are widely known, with last year’s (2019) revision of [Canada’s Food Guide](#) reinforcing that Canadians should fill [half of their plate](#) with fruits and vegetables at every meal to maintain a healthy diet. It is recommended that consumers follow CPMA’s [guide on safe handling of fruits and vegetables](#) to keep themselves and their families protected. PHAC echoes this advice, offering [common cleaning and disinfection methods](#) for you, your tools, kitchen surfaces and food.

CPMA Dietitian, Jennifer Ong Tone, MHS, RD, says “proper nutrition, along with other lifestyle factors, plays an important role in maintaining a healthy immune system and that includes filling [Half Your Plate](#) with fruits and vegetables at every meal and snack. We’re happy to offer a number of valuable consumer resources, ranging from [proper handling](#) to [making the most of your fruits and vegetables](#), on [halfyourplate.ca](#) to keep you safe and healthy during, and following, this pandemic.”

In addition to PHAC, CPMA is actively engaged with government organizations including the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), the Canada Border Services

Agency (CBSA), Transport Canada and Health Canada, to proactively eliminate any possibility of disruptions to Canada’s essential produce supply, as well as addressing existing issues the produce sector is facing.

“CPMA members and the entire fresh fruit and vegetable industry, from our growers and temporary foreign workers right through to retailers and food services, are working tirelessly to ensure that produce continues to reach consumers,” said Ron Lemaire, CPMA President. “On our end, as an association, we are in constant contact with our government and industry partners to collaborate on protocols, best practices and solutions to ensure quality, healthy food is available to all Canadians.”

For more information on CPMA’s efforts to support the produce industry’s operations with regards to the COVID-19 outbreak, as well as resources for businesses and consumers, please visit [CPMA’s COVID-19 Updates page](#) or the more consumer-friendly Half Your Plate webpage. These pages continue to be frequently updated as the situation with COVID-19 evolves.

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About the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA):

Based in Ottawa, Ontario, CPMA is a not-for-profit organization that represents a diverse membership made up of every segment of the produce industry supply chain who are responsible for 90% of the fresh fruit and vegetable sales in Canada. CPMA is fortunate to represent a sector that is both a significant economic driver for communities and that also improves the health and productivity of Canadians.