



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

March 18, 2026

Dear Minister MacDonald,

On behalf of Canada's fresh fruit and vegetable industry, I am writing to share recommendations to inform your government's efforts to advance a National Food Security Strategy. We look forward to working with you to help Canadian businesses thrive and ensure that the fresh produce industry can continue to provide our safe, nutritious products for tables here at home and around the world.

Based in Ottawa, the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) is a not-for-profit organization representing companies active in the marketing of fresh fruit and vegetables in Canada, from the farm gate to the dinner plate, spanning the entire produce industry. The Association's members include major growers, shippers, packers, and marketers; importers and exporters; transportation and logistics firms; brokers, distributors, and wholesalers, retailers, and foodservice distributors; and fresh cut operators and processors. Founded in 1925, CPMA is proud to represent close to 900 domestic and international members who are responsible for 90% of fresh fruit and vegetable sales in Canada.

The fresh fruit and vegetable supply chain is a significant contributor to Canada's economy and food security, generating \$18 billion in GDP and supporting more than 188,000 jobs in rural and urban communities from coast to coast to coast¹. In addition to our sector's economic contributions, we also provide Canadian families with safe and nutritious food that is crucial to supporting their health and well-being.

CPMA is strongly supportive of the development of a National Food Security Strategy, particularly at this time when 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. We agree that a whole-of-government approach and shared ownership is needed to ensure our domestic food security, and that agriculture and food production must be a national priority in the government's broader Build Canada economic strategy.

To begin, CPMA reiterates our support for the measures and considerations outlined in the March 16th submission, *Agriculture Industry Input into Canada's National Food Security Strategy*, which we have included here in *Appendix 1*. In addition, CPMA offers the following recommendations for measures of particular relevance to the fresh produce supply chain.

¹ Signal49 Research (formerly Conference Board of Canada), 2025

Prioritize investment in critical food security infrastructure

Ensuring overall access to a variety of nutritious food for all communities across Canada year-round means supporting the entire agri-food value chain through investments to bolster critical pieces of food infrastructure.

- **Funding for infrastructure improvements at the Ontario Food Terminal:** The Ontario Food Terminal in Toronto is an established, resilient hub that delivers fresh, affordable produce to urban, rural, and remote communities across Canada. In fact, CPMA data show that fresh produce sourced through the Terminal is distributed to communities in nine provinces, making this public market a core strategic asset in our food system. The Terminal also supports hundreds of Ontario growers, many of whom rely on it as their primary or most stable market, particularly midsized farms that face barriers accessing consolidated grocery supply chains (*see Appendix 2 for further background*). However, many of these growers are currently selling their perishable products in the outdoor farmers' market, creating weather, food safety and shelf-life challenges. Infrastructure improvements including a temperature-controlled building for the farmers' market, are required to ensure the Terminal can maintain and expand its vital role in fostering market competition, supporting growers and small businesses and ensuring food security for all Canadians. CPMA therefore recommends that the Government of Canada should partner with the Government of Ontario to provide \$125 million to support infrastructure improvements and drive future growth at the Ontario Food Terminal.
- **Leverage the National School Food Program as core food security infrastructure:** Canadians' current fruit and vegetable consumption pattern is far from meeting Health Canada's 2019 *Canada's Food Guide* recommendation to fill half your plate with vegetables and fruit. This is deeply concerning, as vegetables and fruits provide a protective effect in reducing the risk for cardiovascular disease, including heart disease and stroke, and certain types of cancer². There are also economic consequences to low fruit and vegetable consumption: as fruit and vegetable consumption has decreased, the annual economic burden attributable to low produce consumption in Canada has increased from almost \$5 billion in 2015 to close to \$8 billion in 2021, a 60% increase in economic burden related to low produce consumption³. CPMA has been a longstanding supporter and advocate of a national school food program and a proud member of the Coalition of Healthy School Food and were pleased to see your government's commitment to make this important program permanent and encouraged by the efforts undertaken to-date with provincial partners. Ongoing and expanded funding is needed to align with cost-of-living growth, evaluation findings, and emerging needs to enable the establishment of a Program that is consistent with the National School Food Policy's vision and objectives, including support for healthy eating. CPMA and our members are keen to work with the government to secure a consistent supply of healthy food for children across Canada and create real opportunities for beneficial partnerships in our food system. CPMA therefore recommends that the National Food Security Strategy recognizes and prioritizes the National School Food Program as a critical piece of food infrastructure supporting the health and wellbeing of families across the country.

² [Fruit and vegetable intake and the risk of cardiovascular disease, total cancer and all-cause mortality—a systematic review and dose-response meta-analysis of prospective studies](#), *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 46(3), 1029–1056, Aune, D., Giovannucci, E., Boffetta, P., Fadnes, L. T., Keum, N. N., Norat, T., Greenwood, D. C., Riboli, E., Vatten, L. J., & Tonstad, S., 2017

³ H. Krueger & Associates, 2023

Facilitate the movement of perishable food

The fresh produce supply chain is one of the most highly globally integrated supply chains in the world. While the growing and selling of a range of domestic fresh fruit and vegetable products is a vital part of the fabric of our rural and urban landscape, we also rely heavily on our global partners to supply Canadians with safe and healthy produce year-round. In fact, due to our colder climate and shorter growing season, coupled with Canada's cultural mosaic and demand for a wide variety of products, 4 out of 5 dollars spent on fresh fruit and vegetables in Canada is spent on imported product. Therefore, the supply chain linkages of transportation, border access and ports of entry and exit are key to ensuring the smooth flow of essential goods across our border, which is critical to supporting both our economic competitiveness and food security across the country.

- **Establish a dedicated Trusted Trader pilot program for perishable food:** The high volume and perishability of fruits and vegetables means that longer dwell times in transport can not only delay delivery and increase costs for industry and consumers, but can also result in lost sales for producers, product spoilage, and ultimately food waste. The fresh produce sector is currently unable to access the expedited clearance benefits of CBSA's Trusted Trader program because our products are subject to CFIA import requirements. At the same time, CFIA and CBSA inspection resources are consistently strained. The Safe Food for Canadians licensing system, now in place for more than five years, along with Trusted Trader protocols, provide a solid foundation to determine importers' compliance history. CPMA therefore recommends that the Government of Canada leverages the SFC licensing system to establish a dedicated Trusted Trader pilot program for perishable food to streamline the movement of low-risk perishable goods and reduce costs for industry, consumers and government.

What to avoid in the National Food Security Strategy

CPMA reiterates that, as the government advances its work to develop the National Food Security Strategy, it is equally important to be clear about what the strategy must *not* do. Policies to artificially constrain retail prices—such as price-fixing arrangements, mandated price caps, or negotiated price controls—risk creating a mere illusion of consumer benefit while pushing pressure up the supply chain. Instead, we echo the position from the joint agriculture industry submission that the National Food Security Strategy must focus on removing barriers to investment, growth, and innovation and commit to systemic solutions that expand Canada's productive capacity, enhance supply-chain resilience, and address affordability through growth, trade, competitiveness, and innovation.

We thank you in advance for your consideration of the recommendations outlined above. CPMA and our members are happy to serve as a resource for your government and to answer any questions you may have about these measures or the needs and priorities of Canada's fresh fruit and vegetable industry in the development and implementation of the National Food Security Strategy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R Lemaire', followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Ron Lemaire
President
Canadian Produce Marketing Association