



PRESS RELEASE

CPMA 2026 State of the Industry: Built to Adapt — Turning Pressure into Progress

April 29, 2026 (Toronto, Ontario) — The Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) President, Ron Lemaire, delivered a clear and confident message this morning at the Association’s 2026 Annual Convention: Canada’s fresh produce sector operating under real pressure — but it is not breaking.

Addressing industry leaders from across the supply chain, CPMA President, Ron Lemaire, framed the state of the sector around a central theme of **adaptive capacity** — the ability of the produce industry to flex, adjust, and perform under sustained strain while continuing to deliver food security, affordability, and resilience for Canadians.

“2026 is not a story of retreat,” said Lemaire. “It is a story of adaptive capacity — strength without breaking. Pressure is real, but so is our choice. We can turn that pressure into progress.”

An industry operating near its limits — and holding ground

CPMA member data shows an industry that held its ground in 2025 despite unprecedented challenges. While more than three-quarters of surveyed members reported stable or improved performance, growth largely came through **compression rather than expansion** — reflecting tighter margins and reduced operating buffers. Structural cost pressures, labour constraints, climate volatility, regulatory burden, and rapidly shifting consumer behaviour continue to define the operating environment. At the same time, fresh fruits and vegetables are increasingly recognized as **strategic infrastructure**, sitting at the intersection of health, affordability, and national resilience.

“Food security is now central to national policy discussions,” said Lemaire. “Trade infrastructure is recognized as nation-building. And sustainability expectations are evolving toward greater pragmatism and economic realism.”

Advocacy that delivers real results... CPMA highlighted tangible progress made over the past year in relieving pressure across the supply chain, including:

- Removal of key produce tariffs affecting Canada–U.S. trade
- Expanded trade diversification efforts with priority markets
- Advancement of the Grocery Sector Code of Conduct
- Delivery of supplier protection measures under Bill C-280

These outcomes reflect CPMA’s focus on credible, solutions-oriented advocacy aligned with national priorities such as trade, infrastructure, and food security.

Food safety, sustainability, and trade readiness... Ron Lemaire reaffirmed the organization’s leadership role in critical foundational areas such as:

- Continued investment in food safety research and regulatory engagement in Canada.
- Announcement of a **free CPMA Food Safety Symposium** for members, to be held in Vancouver in September 2026



- A practical, cost-aware approach to sustainability focused on food loss and waste reduction, packaging innovation, Extended Producer Responsibility challenges, and emissions reduction
- Ongoing work toward harmonized global standards to reduce complexity and cost across the value chain

On trade, the CPMA President emphasized that **predictable, rules-based, tariff-free access** is no longer optional — it is a core business requirement. With geopolitical uncertainty and an upcoming CUSMA review, CPMA is intensifying efforts to protect and strengthen Canada’s role in an integrated North American and global produce marketplace.

Tested — Not Tired... Looking ahead, CPMA outlined a clear direction for 2026: acknowledge capacity strain, prioritize “must-win” work, modernize regulatory frameworks, and build recovery through efficiency, diversification, and focused strategy. Member outlook for the remainder of 2026 reflects both realism and resolve — with optimism and caution split nearly evenly underscoring both opportunity and responsibility.

“We are challenged — but not divided,” said Lemaire. “And we are changing — by choice, not by force. The future of fresh produce in Canada is not something that happens to us. It is something we are building — together.”

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For more information, please contact:

Micken Kokonya
Manager, Communications and Market Research
Canadian Produce Marketing Association
Phone: 613-769-8742
Email: mkokonya@cpma.ca

About the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA):

Based in Ottawa, Ontario, CPMA is a not-for-profit organization that has been supporting a diverse membership made up of every segment of the fresh produce supply chain for over 100 years. CPMA represents more than 900 member companies responsible for 90% of the fresh fruits and vegetable sales in Canada and an industry that contributes over \$18 billion to Canada’s GDP annually, supports over 187,400 jobs, and improves the health and productivity of Canadians.