



**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of  
the 2021 Budget**

Theme: Restart the Canadian economy, as it recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic



## Recommendations:

**Recommendation 1:** Prioritize government investments in agri-food research and innovation that provide the greatest return on investment and encouraging collaboration between industry, academia and other stakeholders.

**Recommendation 2:** Invest in technologies and solutions that:

- Create more resilient local supply chains and reduce Canada's reliance on imported produce; and
- Increase nutritional safety and security.

**Recommendation 3:** Invest in agri-food technologies that can help alleviate COVID-19 related issues, including:

- Safe handling of food products;
- Cross-contamination;
- Labour shortage issues;
- and more.

**Recommendation 4:** Create favourable climate for private investment in agri-food research and innovation and incentivizing early adoption by producers (for example, by offering tax breaks for use of certain technologies).

**Recommendation 5:** Take steps to support the promotion of science-based information, and crack down on misconceptions that are widely spread, including:

- Expanding the mandate of, and providing resources to, the Chief Science Advisor to help breakdown misconceptions and promote made-in-Canada agri-food innovations;
- Showing federal leadership by promoting cohesive dialogue and information sharing within and between sectors; and
- Incentivize initiatives that help Canadians connect with and further their understanding of our agri-food sector, such as urban farming, buy-local movements, etc.



## About the Agri-food Innovation Council

Founded in 1920, the Agri-food Innovation Council (AIC) is a unifying voice for cross-sectorial research and innovation in the Canadian agri-food sector.

Our mandate is to advocate on behalf of agri-food research and innovation.

For over a century, AIC has responded to the needs of its members in service to the agri-food community, playing a central role as a source of credible information and comment for the Canadian agriculture and agri-food sector.

AIC is one of Canada's foremost advocates for agri-food research and innovation as well as an important tool to facilitate its dissemination to industry stakeholders.

The Agri-food Innovation Council was previously known as the Agricultural Institute of Canada. In 2019, our organization rebranded to better reflect the nature of our work.

We are funded through memberships and activities. All of our funding is Canadian.



## Agri-food Sector and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is having devastating impacts on all sector of our food supply chain – from consumer demand to production structures. Various containment measures implemented across the global abruptly changed the agri-food supply chain with and between borders.

This disruption will mean long-lasting changes for Canada's agri-food system as a whole and force us to transition to a more resilient and integrated agri-food system.

Consumer decisions and trends will likely change in the coming months and years as consumers adjust to buying food products in a post-COVID-19 world.

Investing in agri-food technologies to alleviate COVID-19 related issues will help Canada's agriculture sector as a whether this economic storm. These issues could include:

- Safe handling of food products;
- Cross-contamination;
- Labour shortage issues;
- and more.

In the past, Canada has been an international leader and pioneer in agri-food technologies, and now is the right time to prioritize government investments that offer high returns on investments, create favourable climates for investments and incentivize adoption of new technologies.

## Canada's Food Supply Chain Resilience

The COVID-19 pandemic brought some harsh realities to Canadians; we are not accustomed to seeing grocery store shelves empty and our favourite produce not available. This pandemic is forcing the agri-food sector to rebalance priorities and focus on resilience of our food system in order to lessen dependency on imported agri-food products.

In order to accelerate this transition to a more self-reliant food system, it is crucial that investments be made and prioritized based on the greatest return on investment.

Agricultural innovations and new technologies have the potential to revolutionize the way we produce and cultivate agriculture and agri-food products, as well as the products themselves. We are already seeing products that:

- Utilize fewer resources;
- Emit less carbon;
- Require less human labour;
- Have higher crop yields;
- Have more nutritional value and more.

With targeted and strategic support, the impact of these innovations would be felt on a greater scale.



## **Favourable Investment Climate**

While we do not yet know the economic implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, we do know that seeking private funding to conduct agri-food research could become more difficult.

AIC believes that the federal government has a role to play in creating a favourable climate for private investment in agri-food innovation. Intelligent tax measures, support for venture capital funding and more will help create attractive conditions for future investment.

