



# **Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming Federal Budget**

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Primary contact: Kim Timmer  
[timmerk@cleanfarms.ca](mailto:timmerk@cleanfarms.ca)  
877-622-4460 ext. 2229

## **Recommendation**

- That the government provide funding in the amount of \$10,000,000 over three years to support a Canadian agricultural zero plastic waste strategy, including the development of tools to make it easier to recycle and track the management of agricultural plastics, and support the move of Canadian manufacturers in the agricultural sector to incorporate recycled content.

## **Cleanfarms – Investing in a Zero Plastic Waste in Agriculture Strategy**

Cleanfarms is leading Canada's agricultural industry in implementing innovative strategies and solutions to help eliminate plastic pollution on farms across the country.

### **Background and Overview**

In a post-COVID-19 world, it is crucial for Canada to find innovative ways to build back better and to lay the foundation towards a sustainable future.

As Canada rebuilds its economy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are significant opportunities to ensure we do so in a manner that achieves both economic and environmental objectives. Transitioning from a linear to a circular economy provides significant opportunity for jurisdictions to reduce waste and reduce the costs and environmental externalities of waste management (e.g., greenhouse gas, land and water emissions). At the same time, a circular economy also enables jurisdictions to generate local economic activity by growing sustainable local businesses, maximizing the value of local resources, encouraging local investment in green technologies and products, creating new green jobs, and benefiting from the economic and health benefits caused by improvements to the local environment.

Cleanfarms is a national not-for-profit organization that delivers industry-funded, end-of-life stewardship programming in the agricultural sector. We work collaboratively with our members, partner agencies, and the government to ensure that Canadian farmers can actively contribute to a healthy environment and a sustainable future.

Through industry leadership, we help to keep agricultural waste out of landfills and burn piles. Last year alone, more than 5.5 million empty pesticide and fertilizer containers were collected through Cleanfarms programs across the country. These materials are sorted, shredded and melted into useful materials like farm drainage tile.

However, there is more to be done. The next step is to significantly increase the amount of on-farm plastic waste captured and to reincorporate it as feedstocks into the packaging for the world class agricultural products manufactured across the country and rebuild a more sustainable and resilient economy.

Our proposal to establish a zero plastic waste in agriculture strategy would complement Canada's effort through the [Ocean Plastics Charter](#) and showcase how a circular economy can work – removing burdens from farmers and driving greater economic opportunity for our manufacturing sector.

### **Aligned priorities**

The federal government has made it clear that taking concrete steps towards the eventual elimination of plastic pollution in Canada remains a top priority:

“Implement our plan to ban harmful single-use plastic products and take steps toward eliminating plastic pollution in Canada. This includes working with provinces and territories to develop national targets, standards and regulations that will make companies that manufacture plastic products or sell items with plastic packaging responsible for collecting and recycling them.”

Minister of Environment and Climate Change Mandate Letter

**Recommendation:**

Cleanfarms is seeking \$10,000,000 over three years to support a comprehensive strategy that would include:

1. **The development of an online application to make it easier to recycle and track the management of agricultural plastics, and support the move of Canadian manufacturers in the agricultural sector to incorporate recycled content.** Cleanfarms would build onto its system to allow any agricultural operations to easily connect, schedule, and understand the impact of recycling their agricultural plastics. The information would allow Cleanfarms to better understand collection needs from the agricultural sector, increase awareness and better connect manufacturing needs with available feedstock.

Ensuring adequate feedstock is available is a key barrier that needs to be able to overcome. The application would also allow for Cleanfarms to better track the movement of materials to end disposition which is a key element of Canada's Phase 2 Action Plan on Zero Plastic Waste.

2. **Complete a comprehensive business case for incorporation of recycled content by suppliers to the agricultural sector:**
  - a. Assess the current infrastructure to allow for the incorporation of the plastic waste captured by Cleanfarms in various regions across Canada to be incorporated back into Canadian agricultural manufacturers packaging or products;
  - b. Estimate the needed investment for this new, upgraded or enhanced diversion infrastructure; and
  - c. Identify potential barriers, challenges, and opportunities (e.g., logistics, quality of materials, and availability of supply) and outline best practices based on a review of other facilities such as Campo Limpo Reciclagem e Transformação de Plásticos S.A in Brazil, which produces containers containing recycled plastic.
  - d. Complete a cost benefit analysis of what investments will mean for the Canadian economy.
3. **Provide support for manufacturers to complete small scale bench testing and pilot programs** to utilize the plastic waste collected, consolidated, transported by Cleanfarms to allow for its incorporation into their manufacturing process. This process will reduce process related concerns such as technology application, quality related issues and the percent of recycled content. The goal will be to achieve bottle to bottle or product to product recycling.
4. **Provide funding for strategic infrastructure investments by Cleanfarms to allow for Canadian manufacturers to incorporate recycled content.** The three initial steps would ensure Cleanfarms has all the information necessary to make informed investments to bridge the current infrastructure gap to allow plastic waste from agricultural operations to be recycled into agricultural packaging (e.g., containers, bags) and products (e.g., ag films).

With over 20 years of experience in this space Cleanfarms is ideally situated to take this on and encourage a more circular economy in agriculture. This investment would support Canadian agricultural companies that sell their products across the country and around the world. The opportunity is significant. This initiative will provide a model that could be replicated in other sectors to grow the economy while addressing the significant environmental concerns associated with waste plastics.

## Conclusion

The economic opportunity is substantial, as the World Economic Forum states that “linear consumption is reaching its limits. A circular economy has benefits that are operational as well as strategic, on both a micro- and macroeconomic level. This is a trillion-dollar opportunity, with huge potential for innovation, job creation and economic growth.”<sup>1</sup>

Prioritizing the agricultural sector will help to reduce burdens on farmers and address unique issues such as reducing plastic litter. It will develop a greater awareness of the importance of the proper management of agricultural plastics while moving towards a permanent solution to responsibly manage these materials.

Investing in a zero plastic waste in agriculture strategy is a significant opportunity for Canada to not only protect its oceans, wildlife, farmland, and communities but also to help restart Canada’s economy in a post-COVID-19 world. Canada is in a unique position to establish itself as a leader in agricultural plastics recycling that everyone can be proud of.

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<sup>1</sup> World Economic Forum prepared in collaboration with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and McKinsey & Company. “Towards the Circular Economy: Accelerating the scale-up across global supply chains.” Available at <http://reports.weforum.org/toward-the-circular-economy-accelerating-the-scale-up-across-global-supply-chains/1-the-benefits-of-a-circular-economy>.