

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

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## **List of Recommendations**

- **Recommendation 1:** That the government create a working group to study and make recommendations on how a transition to a plant-based food system in Canada could best be achieved, which will gather and assess evidence of the potential public health, ecological, and economic impacts of such a transition.
- **Recommendation 2:** That the government provide funding in the amount of \$7,000,000 per year for the next three years for a farmer transition pilot program, which will provide grants to a limited number of farmers who wish to transition from animal agriculture to producing safer, healthier, and more sustainable plant-based food for human consumption.
- **Recommendation 3:** That the government provide funding in the amount of \$134,000,000 to be dispersed over the next five years to research, define, and implement a National Food Program and a plant-based food procurement policy for government institutions and other public institutions such as hospitals, schools, and universities.
- **Recommendation 4:** That the government shift a minimum of \$390,000,000, or 10% of the total budget that was earmarked for supply managed animal industries in the 2019 Federal budget (\$3.9 billion), to directly fund the growth of climate friendly, sustainable, and healthier plant-based food for human consumption.

## **Body of Submission**

The present moment demonstrates the need for Canada to begin exploring how to transition to a plant-based food system and to take initial measures towards this transition.

Canada's 2019 food guide, which for the first time followed scientific research on diet and health rather than food industry lobbying, recommends a shift to plant-based foods and away from animal products. Among other things, this is because animal products are linked to serious health problems like cardiovascular disease and certain cancers, which are two of the leading causes of death and costly diet-related chronic disease in Canada.<sup>1</sup> The EAT-Lancet Commission on healthy diets also recommended a move to healthy plant-based diets that would contribute to human health and attainment of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>2</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic makes clear another set of public health reasons to stop supporting animal agriculture and facilitate a transition to a plant-based food system related to animal agriculture's role in incubating and spreading dangerous and disruptive infectious diseases. Producing animal products at scale inevitably involves crowding animals together in sheds, feedlots, and places of slaughter. It also brings workers into contact with these animals and involves crowding them together in slaughterhouses.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, animal agriculture requires enormous amounts of land, and is thus chiefly responsible for human encroachment on wild animal habitats.<sup>4</sup>

All of this makes animal agriculture a nearly perfect mechanism for the incubation and spread of new and emerging infectious diseases, not only from viruses but bacteria, fungi, and parasites from a variety of animal sources. Over 80% of antibiotics in Canada are given to farmed animals.<sup>5</sup> Meat bought in stores has been found to contain antibiotic resistant bacteria, and infections with such bacteria are common among workers in animal agriculture and people residing near concentrated animal feeding operations.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://food-guide.canada.ca/static/assets/pdf/CDG-EN-2018.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://eatforum.org/eat-lancet-commission/eat-lancet-commission-summary-report/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7316645/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3437e.pdf>;

<https://www.worldcat.org/title/food-choice-and-sustainability-why-buying-local-eating-less-meat-and-taking-baby-steps-wont-work/oclc/865505136>; <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/360/6392/987>;

<https://www.pnas.org/content/115/15/3804.short>; <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-018-0594-0>

<sup>5</sup> <https://saltyisland.com/antibiotic-use-in-canadian-livestock/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3234384/>;

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/supermarket-chicken-harbours-superbugs-cbc-1.1039548>;

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3194830/>;

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2093791112320015>;

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1277855/>

While the exact origins of COVID-19 are uncertain, it is very likely that the confinement of farmed animals and animal-agriculture-related encroachment on wild animal habitat played key roles in its passing from bats to an intermediate host to humans, as in SARS and MERS before it. Animal agriculture thus threatens to incubate and spread future infectious diseases that will be even more deadly and disruptive than COVID-19.<sup>7</sup>

The environmental damage of animal agriculture also makes it incompatible with Canada's climate and other environmental goals. Animal agriculture is an inherently inefficient way to obtain nutrients; growing crops to feed to animals and then eating the animals' bodies and secretions wastes an enormous amount of energy relative to eating plants directly. It uses vastly more land and water, thus destroying vastly more carbon sinks, and generates enormously more polluting waste, including GHGs, than the production of plants for human consumption. Consequently, animal agriculture is responsible for most agricultural GHG emissions, and even by conservative estimates animal agriculture produces more GHGs than all transportation exhaust combined.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, animal agriculture is at odds with Canadians' concerns about the well-being of animals. Recent surveys found that 95% of Canadians want to reduce needless animal suffering, including of farmed animals, to the point that 73% support stronger animal protection legislation.<sup>9</sup> Many Canadian consumers were also shocked by the euthanasia of farmed animals due to COVID-19 induced supply chain issues, to the point that a recent survey found that a majority of Canadians actually thought that such wasteful killing should be illegal.<sup>10</sup> Especially because animal agriculture is the opposite of necessary for health and the environment, and all farmed animal suffering and killing is thus in a clear sense needless and wasteful, the best solution is simply to begin moving Canada out of the animal agriculture business.

To this end, we make the following recommendations for the 2021 Federal Budget, to help operationalize the recent recommendations of the new Canada Food Guide to shift to a more plant-based diet, Canada's commitment to preventing the emergence and

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7316645/>;  
<https://www.grain.org/article/6437-new-research-suggests-industrial-livestock-not-wet-markets-might-be-origin-of-covid-19/print>;

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/18/tip-of-the-iceberg-is-our-destruction-of-nature-responsible-for-covid-19-aoe?fbclid=IwAR2K3D%E2%80%A6>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/>; <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3437e.pdf>;  
<https://www.worldcat.org/title/food-choice-and-sustainability-why-buying-local-eating-less-meat-and-taking-baby-steps-wont-work/oclc/865505136>; <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/360/6392/987>;  
<https://www.pnas.org/content/115/15/3804.short>; <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-018-0594-0>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.worldanimalprotection.ca/voteforanimals>;  
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/canada-we-must-do-better-for-our-animals-even-those-we-want-to-eat/article33219933/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.dal.ca/sites/agri-food/research/farmgate-waste.html>

spread of infectious diseases, Canada's climate and other environmental goals, and Canadians' concerns to reduce the needless suffering and killing of animals.

## **1. Establish a Plant-Based Transition Working Group**

Canadian plant farmers are vital to Canada's prosperity, supporting rural communities, creating good jobs, growing the middle class, and bringing high-quality products to the world's tables. Recent Canadian investments in the plant protein sector, including the Plant Protein supercluster, uniquely position Canada to dominate the plant protein market worldwide with the right government support.

The working group should develop strategies to help Canadian farmers and processors capitalize upon a greater shift away from animal agriculture and towards the production of plant-based food for human consumption. This working group will be comprised of plant protein producers and other industry representatives, as well as government officials, academic researchers, and financial experts, as necessary.

The federal government should consult with territorial and provincial governments on an ongoing basis during the working group's activities.

## **2. Fund an At-Risk Farmer Transition Pilot Program**

Many Canadian animal farmers have been struggling in light of recent trade deals, shifts in consumer demand, and especially the recent COVID-19 crisis. This transition pilot program will explore new models for helping such farmers by empowering them to grow the healthy, safe, and sustainable food that Canadians need, by supporting them in transitioning all or part of their operations to producing plant-based food for human consumption.

The program will provide a total of \$21 million in grants to farmers over the next three years, with a maximum of \$3 million in grants going to any one farmer or non-profit organization. The aim of the grants is to help provide access to capital, expert assistance, and debt consolidation or reduction services to farmers wishing to transition from animal to plant-based farming for human consumption. Priority should be given to socially disadvantaged farmers, indigenous farmers, veteran farmers, and farmers located in underserved communities.

### **3. Fund Grants and Guidance for Plant-Based Procurements in Public Institutions**

Along with the updated Canada Food Guide with a recommendation of a shift towards healthy plant-based foods and away from animal products, the Food Policy for Canada was launched in 2019 with the following Vision:

*“All people in Canada are able to access a sufficient amount of safe, nutritious, and culturally diverse food. Canada’s food system is resilient and innovative, sustains our environment and supports our economy.”*

But Federal and other public food procurement policies in Canada have not been updated to reflect this new policy and guide, and many aspects of the Food Policy have yet to be operationalized, including by failing to act on a commitment to establish a School Food Program.

In addition, the Policy does not address the need for a program ensuring the majority of the food procured and offered in government and public institutions is plant based (thereby aligning to the Canada Food Guide), as well as eliminating the procurement of any foods for which there is scientific evidence of their direct negative impact on Canadians’ health, such as processed meat and red meat.

(<https://www.cancer.org/latest-news/world-health-organization-says-processed-meat-causes-cancer.html>)

Therefore, in order for the government to effectively operationalize the Canada Food Policy and Guide, it is incumbent on it to allocate in the 2021 budget significant funding. We recommend that an amount equal to what was allocated in the 2019 budget for the Canada Food Policy (\$134M over 5 years) be included in the 2021 budget specifically to research, define, and implement a National Food Program and a plant based food procurement policy that would include all government institutions such as cafeterias in federal buildings and prisons, as well as all public institutions including but not limited to schools, hospitals, and universities.

### **4. Switch 10% of the Payments to Animal Farmers in 2019 to Funding Plant-Based Agriculture**

In the 2019 Budget, the Government allocated \$3.9 billion to Canadian Supply Managed farmers as a concession for trade agreements. This amount dwarfs the \$153 million over

five years of funding announced in 2018 under the Innovative Supercluster Initiative (ISI) to the Protein Industries Supercluster to support a consumer shift in demand for healthy plant based food and protein.

But an analysis issued by the NRC in 2019 highlights the increased demand for plant-based protein, and the requirement for more funding to support innovation.

(<https://nrc.canada.ca/en/research-development/research-collaboration/programs/plant-based-protein-market-global-canadian-market-analysis>)

*“Most plant-based protein sources are at an early stage of development and require continued innovation to succeed. Key areas of plant-based research that provide considerable opportunities for meaningful industry innovation across the value chain include sourcing, isolation and functionalization, formulation, processing, and distribution.”*

*“Growing interest demand for plant-based protein alternatives has been largely driven by (1) an increasing awareness about the benefits of protein-rich diet and plant-based alternatives, (2) rising world demand for protein due to rapid population growth, (3) growing consumer interest in foods that promote health and well-being, and (4) adoption of environmental stewardship and protection of animal welfare.”*

The Prairies based Protein Industries Canada (PIC) has received minimal funding to enable innovative growth which would result in healthier proteins for Canadians, despite a forecasted growth in GDP through plant based agriculture, and more jobs in the prairies.

*“Supported by the largest funding boost in recent Canadian agriculture history, this industry-led consortium is expected to help generate an estimated \$853 million in new commercial activity, add \$15 billion to Canada 's GDP and create up to 50,000 new jobs.”*

Funding similar to what has been allocated to animal agriculture farming is required to enable plant based protein producers/manufacturers to achieve market growth both in Canada and internationally.

*“Producers and manufacturers in the sector have identified at least four venues to take advantage of the growing market of plant-based food: (1) starting new plant-based companies, (2) launching a plant-based product line or altering ingredients, (3) pursuing acquisitions to enhance their brand and product offering; and, (4) expanding, diversifying or adjusting product offerings to ensure alignment with the current market through R&D. Some of the major global players in the sector are undertaking major expansions of their existing facilities and operations in Canada.”*

As such, it is reasonable for the Federal Government to establish a budget for the 2021/2022 fiscal year focused on developing the plant based protein industries and farmers. This growth would generate more jobs for Canadians as we recover from the effects of COVID-19, as well as align to Canada's Food Guide, commitment to preventing the emergence and spread of infectious diseases, Canada's Food and Sustainability Policies, and concern to minimize needless animal suffering and killing. Switching only 10% of the funds earmarked for payments to supply managed animal industries would actually be a very modest step in this extremely important direction.