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642 Woolwich Street,

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Aug 30, 2017.

The Honourable Lawrence MacAulay,
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Canada
1341 Baseline Road,
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0C5

RE: A Food Policy for Canada – Consulting with Canadians

Dear Honourable Minister,

The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO) is an Accredited Farm Organization representing the interests of over 4,000 farm families in Ontario.

Establishing a Food Policy for Canada will support the work of Canadians in being good stewards of the natural and cultural resources we need to ensure we have a secure, long-term, reliable and abundant food supply that is accessible to Canadians all over the country. Our agri-food sector is strong and has the capacity to drive economic growth in Canada. A strong Food Policy for Canada will be instrumental in directing and driving that growth.

Increasing Access to Affordable Food

Canadian farmers produce high quality safe and nutritious food in every province. However, our high quality arable land is limited, and only found in certain regions of the country. This has a significant impact on the easy availability of food for all Canadians.

The strength of our agricultural system in Canada is that it is entrepreneurial, from farmers through to food processing and marketing. Supporting innovation is important in order to make the most of our valuable farmland, as well as to seek out opportunities for producing food under more challenging growing conditions.

Our food transportation infrastructure is an important aspect of getting good food to more regions of Canada while still keeping it affordable. Good food transportation infrastructure is also important for agri-food exports.

The affordability of food depends on many factors. In order to address the affordability of food, issues such as poverty as well as regional differences in costs of food would have to be considered. Affordability of food should not come at the cost of undermining the value of the food we produce, or of unfair compensation to farmers for the high-quality food they produce.

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Improving Health and Food Safety

Canada already has high standards for food safety throughout the food chain. It is important that we protect the health of Canadians, and ensure a level playing field for our locally produced and processed foods by ensuring that all imported foods also meet the same high standards.

Many food choices can influence health outcomes. It is important that Canadians are well informed on healthy food choices. This includes education on healthy food choices both in schools and for adults. Consumers need to see accurate, verified and easy to understand information on food labels. Support for organizations working towards greater food literacy (knowing how to prepare and manage healthy food in a household, knowing about the food system as a whole) is also an important foundation to healthy eating and reducing household food waste.

Some food choices are values-based or production system based, rather than health or safety based. Government can still play a role in regulating certifications for values-based and voluntary labeling standards on food labels.

Conserving Our Soil, Water and Air

In order to ensure a secure, long-term, reliable and abundant food supply we need to protect and care for our productive farmland now and into the future. This arable land is the most important natural resource related to food production in Canada. Protecting farmland for farming and supporting farming methods that care for soil health are vital to ensuring Canadians benefit from this natural resource for generations to come.

Along with its food producing capacity, this land also offers many environmental benefits. Farmland can benefit pollinators and wild species and plays an important part of the larger water and carbon cycles among other nutrient cycles. Farmers should be appropriately compensated for their stewardship efforts in conserving the quality of our water, air and soil, and for conserving and promoting biodiversity.

Food waste is also a significant problem in Canada, costing Canadians in wasted money and resources and in environmental damage, especially from methane produced from organic wastes in landfills. The food strategy should work to reduce preventable food waste, and to divert organic wastes (especially non-preventable organic wastes) away from ending up in landfills. Recovering nutrient and energy from non-preventable organic wastes is more efficient, and better for both the economy and the environment.

Growing More High-Quality Food

Food security for Canadians is important, which is why local production and processing of food should be given particular priority. Through having control of our own food

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supply, we are able to express our values as a country, and set standards for food safety and sustainability, and food security for our citizens that serve as an example globally for what can be achieved.

A strong local primary production system also serves as an economic foundation for a strong agri-food system as a whole. The agri-food sector in Canada is an important economic driver and has many opportunities for further growth. The food strategy needs to include clear economic goals for the agri-food sector. Part of achieving further growth in this sector depends on establishing a regulatory regime appropriate for business success, and a focus on sustainable incomes for farmers from the market place. Our supply management system for some commodities ensures fair prices for farmers, sustainable levels of production and a stable supply for Canadians. In other commodities, Canadians have an advantage in production and are able to produce for a global market.

Both our natural and cultural farming resources need to be successfully passed on from one generation of farmers to the next to ensure the ongoing success of our agri-food sector and the security of our nation's food supply. The Food Policy needs to include consideration of measures to ensure new and young farmers are successfully entering the industry, and that our farmland is passing from farmer to farmer. At a federal level, the impact of taxation on farm succession planning options should be reviewed to make it easier for succession of farming assets both within and between farming families.

We appreciate this opportunity to comment and appreciate your consideration of our input as part of the consultation process.

Sincerely,

Clarence Nywening, President
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario