

# FOOD SAFETY AND TRACEABILITY

*A shared benefit – A shared cost*

## OPPORTUNITY

Fresh fruit and vegetable growers and packers in Canada have made increasingly food safety an priority, but with that has come increased operational costs. Implementing and maintaining an on-farm food safety program can be expensive for producers. However, they must meet the requirements of a growing number of buyers who expect farms to be certified under a food safety program.

These food safety programs not only meet the demands of consumers, but are also required to compete in the global marketplace. Costs associated to these programs should be shared accordingly.

## BACKGROUND

In order to reassure buyers and maintain a high level of consumer confidence, the CHC and its industry members have spent years proactively developing and implementing the CanadaGAP™ (On-Farm Food Safety) Program for fresh fruit and vegetable growers and packers.

The CanadaGAP™ certification program offers a set of templates for producers to follow in order to document food safety procedures on the farm. CanadaGAP™ is a “made-in-Canada” program that has been reviewed by government for technical soundness. It is the first Canadian food safety program to achieve international recognition by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI).

In addition, the CHC has been proactive in the Produce Traceability Initiative (PTI), a U.S.-led project which maximizes the effectiveness of current produce traceback procedures, while developing a standardized industry approach to enhance the speed and efficiency of traceability systems for the future. This means that in the event of a food safety outbreak, the affected product can immediately be identified, right down to the very field it was harvested from.

## ACTION

Continued federal funding will be critical to implement and maintain on-farm food safety certification systems. Ongoing support for the CanadaGAP™ program will ensure Canada continues to be a world leader in food safety. Commitment from the federal government in terms of program recognition and financial support

will enable CHC to sustain the ongoing work of maintaining and delivering the program to industry.

Branding and ‘Buy Canadian’ programs in which food safety is a component will also be of benefit to producers in helping to drive customer demand and recognition of products produced under national on-farm food safety standards.

## RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

*Turning innovative ideas into economic realities*

### OPPORTUNITY

Innovation is critically important to producers in order to maintain the competitiveness of Canada’s horticulture sector. Research must enhance the sustainable production of high quality, safe and nutritious horticultural products for domestic and export markets, through science and innovation.

Canada’s horticulture sector is a leader in harnessing economic benefits from research and innovation investments; however, more effective results could be achieved by improving the coordination of research initiatives among various Canadian research organizations.

### BACKGROUND

In recent years there has been a disconnect between growers and researchers in the horticultural industry. The primary focus of the horticulture cluster is to improve production by addressing major agronomic issues facing the industry. Stakeholders must engage in collaborative efforts to enhance profitability and competitiveness through the use of scientific and technical resources to support innovation strategies.

### ACTION

The Government of Canada must ensure that policies and programs are in place to enable the horticulture industry to work towards and achieve the goal of enhanced profitability and competitiveness. This must be accomplished through the use of scientific and technical resources and innovation strategies. Furthermore, horticulture must be well positioned to emerge as a solutions provider (i.e.: health and other key attributes).



# Canadian Horticultural Council



## OPPORTUNITIES BRIEF



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## HEALTH

*Promoting fruits and vegetables for the health and wellness of Canadians*

### OPPORTUNITY

The health and wellness of Canadians is a vitally important public policy issue. Fruits and vegetables are proven to have many positive attributes that contribute to a healthy population and a healthy population places less demand on publicly funded systems including healthcare.

However, convincing people to consume the recommended daily amounts of fruits and vegetables is a major challenge. Canada's horticulture industry, in partnership with government, is committed to educating consumers on the importance of eating a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables and improving access to these products for all Canadians.

### BACKGROUND

There is opportunity for the federal government to more actively promote fruit and vegetable consumption amongst Canadians.

In January 2011 the USDA and Health and Human Services released the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans. A key message is "Make half your plate fruits and vegetables". A compelling message indeed!

In Canada, the CHC is part of the Horticulture Value Chain Roundtable, which includes representatives from industry and government. The Roundtable has established a Horticulture for Health (H4H) Working Group to develop messages on healthy eating and lifestyles via consuming fruits and vegetables. H4H calls for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to take on a champion role both with the sector and other federal departments.

### ACTION

The CHC urges the Minister of Agriculture and his officials to actively promote the H4H initiative through other federal departments.

The CHC also seeks genuine opportunities to work with Health Canada to further promote horticultural products by way of health claims and qualified statements about the benefits of consuming fruits and vegetables.

CHC also urges Health Canada to include the potato in its health claim #4 under the *Food and Drug Act*. This inclusion will allow consumers to recognize potatoes as being part of a healthy diet, and will also positively impact the Canadian potato industry.

## SUSTAINABILITY

*Adapting to a changing environment*

### OPPORTUNITY

Global warming is projected to have significant impacts on conditions affecting agriculture and at the same time future demographics point to the need to double global food production by 2050, if not sooner.

Within this context, the horticulture sector plays a paramount role in ensuring a sustainable agriculture sector and a secure food supply in Canada.

Our producers have and will continue to adapt. In turn, government policy and programs will need to evolve to reflect the changing realities for the agriculture industry.

### BACKGROUND

Climate change adaptation strategies such as water conservation measures and adjustment of planting and harvesting dates could play a critical role for the future of the agriculture sector. Other adaptation options include the introduction of new species and hybrids that are more resistant to drought and heat, and the development of policies and practices to increase the flexibility of agricultural systems.<sup>1</sup>

Sustainability in Canada's horticulture sector will rely on the commitment and contribution of our governments as well as our own ingenuity, leadership and succession planning.

### ACTION

The CHC urges the government to provide adequate funding for agricultural adaptation to climate change. This adaptation must include technological developments, government programs and insurance, farm production practices and farm financial management.

<sup>1</sup>Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation: A Canadian Perspective (Natural Resources Canada)

## BUSINESS RISK MANAGEMENT / SAFETY NETS

*Helping Canadian farmers manage the risks*

### OPPORTUNITY

Canadian farmers face many risks that can affect the viability and profitability of their business, including adverse weather, disease, insects or changes in commodity prices, input costs, currency exchange and production yields.

The production structure for the horticulture sector has key challenges including low profit margins and high capital input per production unit, labour intensive production and a fluctuating profit margin due to weather and market conditions, export exchange rates, foreign competition, commodity quality and overproduction.

Business Risk Management (BRM) programs are designed to help Canadian farmers better manage these risks so that our country has a sustainable Canadian food supply.

### BACKGROUND

The CHC seeks to work more effectively and efficiently with the government and industry stakeholders in ensuring appropriate and equitable risk mitigation and management programs are available to Canadian producers.

On behalf of the horticulture sector, the working group develops policy advice and recommendations as well as identifies data requirements.

The working group has consistently identified the lack of general available production insurance programs to all producers of all horticulture crops as an ongoing risk management barrier to the success of horticulture producers across the country.

### ACTION

The horticulture sector calls upon the government to abolish coverage caps in various safety net programs, including the Agri-Invest program, and ensure that funding be made available as required.

In addition, the sector requests the government to establish a Farm Financial Protection Program to address this serious gap in insurance.