



## CPMA 2022 Government Relations Priorities

From the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and global supply chain disruptions to catastrophic weather events and a federal election, the past year has posed significant challenges for the Canadian fresh produce industry. As we marked the UN International Year of Fruits and Vegetables in 2021, CPMA has continued to ensure that our members' needs and priorities are brought to the attention of elected and non-elected government officials.

In 2021, CPMA's Government Relations team:

- Was recognized by the Lobby Monitor as the third most active in-house lobbyist over the course of the last government, validating our efforts to be the voice of fresh produce in Canada.
- Delivered successful virtual meetings with Parliamentarians, including during our virtual Farm to Plate Event, which saw 41 industry participants involved in meetings with more than 50 elected representatives and other government officials.
- Shone a light on supply chain disruptions impacting the fresh produce sector, including through a new report on *Workforce Needs in the Produce Supply Chain*, and the development of two joint statements with partner organizations across North America.
- Made more than 280 connections with Parliamentarians and other Designated Public Office Holders that were reported in the federal Lobbying Registry.
- Submitted comments to more than 30 federal government consultations, including 6 submissions to Parliamentary Committee studies.
- Conducted extensive outreach with all political parties and developed an advocacy toolkit for members ahead of the 2021 federal election.
- Participated in meetings with government on a wide range of policy areas, including customs, organics, food safety, trade, labelling and other regulatory challenges, the impact of recent flooding in B.C., labour disruptions at the Port of Montreal, the development of a Canadian Food Industry Code of Practice, and more.

As we move into 2022, we will continue to advocate on behalf of our members and the Canadian fresh produce industry as a whole, while building on CPMA's reputation as the Canadian organization with global connections representing the total fresh produce supply chain – from the farm gate to the dinner plate.

**Working with our volunteer leaders, we have identified the following priority policy areas for our government relations work for the coming year:**

## **Key Priority Areas**

**Labour** – Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the fresh produce sector faced a critical labour gap. In November 2021, CPMA released a new report, [\*Workforce Needs in the Produce Supply Chain: 2021 Findings\*](#), which found that all areas of our supply chain are now experiencing labour shortages, particularly in the warehouse workforce. Produce businesses are being impacted in terms of productivity, sales, profitability, access to products and new business development. In 2022, CPMA will advocate for government action to support workforce re-engagement and develop an Agricultural Labour Strategy to ensure our sector’s ongoing competitiveness.

### *Government Relations Actions for 2022*

- Advocate for an Agricultural Labour Strategy that reflects the workforce needs across our supply chain.
- Utilize our *Workforce Needs in the Produce Supply Chain* report to validate our members’ needs and challenges in our advocacy efforts with Parliamentarians and officials.
- Submit comments to the Finance Canada Pre-Budget Consultation that highlight the government’s important role in incentivizing workforce re-engagement.
- Ensure that CPMA’s comments to government consultations and Parliamentary studies apply a supply chain lens to the issue of labour shortages.
- Continue to work with our partners and government to ensure that foreign worker protocols are able to both effectively protect public health while also supporting our capacity for domestic production and ensuring Canada’s food security.

**Supply Chain Disruptions** – Almost two years since the start of the pandemic, substantial increases in costs and delays along the supply chain threaten our food security and the long-term economic viability of the North American fresh produce sector. From crippling port congestion and exploding costs in container shipping, to labour shortages, growing input shortages, and the cascading effects of inconsistent product delivery, the costs of these challenges cannot be fully borne by the industry and will be passed on to consumers. Through CPMA’s North American Trade Working Group, we have begun to raise awareness of the multi-faceted supply chain disruptions facing the fresh produce sector and to identify potential solutions. In 2022, we will continue and expand these efforts to advocate for urgent, multi-lateral government action to address these challenges and mitigate their impact on Canadians and Canadian businesses.

### *Government Relations Actions for 2022*

- Raise awareness among Parliamentarians and government officials of the complex and interconnected supply chain challenges facing our sector, and of the need for whole-of-government action to address them, including through CPMA and CHC’s Meet and Greet series with key members of the new Parliament.
- Advocate for the naming of a Canadian Supply Chain Commissioner to lead a joint industry-government Task Force to address ongoing supply chain disruptions, and for multi-lateral efforts to provide greater oversight and accountability.
- Continue to identify and work with other agricultural and non-agricultural partner organizations, both in Canada and throughout North America, to further amplify our call for government action.
- Work with industry and our partners to assess and quantify the impact of supply chain disruptions on the fresh produce industry and determine recommended solutions.

**Sustainability & Plastics** – Governments around the world, including here at home, are increasingly looking to agriculture as an important contributor in the fight against climate change. Across the agri-food sector, ambitious targets are being set to reduce the environmental footprint of producing and supplying food. CPMA is a proud partner in the effort to create a Canadian National Index on Agri-food Performance with clear sustainability metrics and benchmarks that are strongly linked to those being used around the globe. In 2022, we will continue to build on this work and will engage with our partners and government officials to recognize and support additional sustainability efforts across the fresh produce supply chain.

Following the federal election, the Liberal government has made clear its intentions to move forward with legislative and regulatory measures to support the move toward zero plastic waste. With this work underway, 2022 provides an important opportunity for CPMA to engage with government and other stakeholders to find effective solutions to this challenge. At the same time, CPMA will expand these advocacy efforts to address increasing global attention to the sustainability of PLU stickers.

#### *Government Relations Actions for 2022*

- Continue to advocate for government policy that supports the goals of environmental, social and economic sustainability.
- Work to raise awareness of the work of the Canadian National Index on Agri-food Performance and to advocate for ongoing government support of this initiative.
- Work with CPMA members to compile a series of Sustainability Case Studies that can effectively demonstrate the work being done in our sector to adopt more sustainable practices.
- Continue to build on CPMA's leadership profile in efforts to reduce and mitigate the use of unnecessary, problematic plastics across the fresh produce supply chain, including through the CPMA Plastics Packaging Working Group and PLU Sticker Sub-Working Group, as well as the Canada Plastics Pact.
- Work with government to develop a workable path forward on recycled content requirements.
- Work to identify and build relationships with agricultural and non-agricultural partners who can help to further our advocacy for evidence-based solutions that combine education, innovation, and effective recycling collection within communities across Canada.

**Food Security & Increasing Produce Consumption** – The COVID-19 pandemic has made healthy living and food security even more important to Canadians. We know that CPMA and our members do great work to promote increased produce consumption. In 2022, our government relations team will expand our efforts to share this “good news” story by raising awareness among Parliamentarians and other government officials about CPMA's *Half Your Plate* program and initiatives such as the Freggie Fresh Ride. At the same time, we will continue to advocate for government action to strengthen Canada's food security, including through a whole-of-government approach under the Food Policy for Canada, and work with our partners regarding a national school nutrition program.

#### *Government Relations Actions for 2022*

- Implement a regular newsletter for Parliamentarians to share information about CPMA and member efforts to promote produce consumption and build CPMA's reputation as the voice of the fresh produce supply chain in Canada.
- Work to raise awareness among Parliamentarians and government officials of CPMA's *Half Your Plate* and Freggie Children's programming, and to build relationships with officials working on

related files, including through the execution of CPMA's first *Half Your Plate*-themed event on Parliament Hill.

- Work with our provincial and other partners to expand our efforts regarding a national school nutrition program.
- Work to identify and build relationships with organizational partners who can help to amplify our advocacy efforts regarding produce consumption and food security.

## **Other Government Relations Priorities**

- **Financial Protection** – In the COVID business environment that has and will drive businesses into bankruptcy, it is crucial that the government provides all possible safeguards for the food supply chain, including by finally answering the fresh produce industry's call to implement a deemed trust mechanism for produce sellers in Canada. During the federal election campaign, all major opposition parties expressed support for a deemed trust. The renewed minority government poses an opportunity to harness this support to move this file forward.
- **Regulatory Modernization and Improved Government Consultation** – A collaborative approach to find workable solutions for industry and government is the backbone to success for regulatory and policy compliance. CPMA will work with our partner organizations to advocate for a comprehensive review of the regulatory modernization and consultation process that would allow the government to better facilitate thorough stakeholder participation, better understand the administrative or other costs of proposed changes and develop effective regulations that meet the needs of both industry and the Canadian public, without stifling economic competitiveness. In addition, to expedite regulatory reform efforts, we will continue to advocate for government recognition and use of data and reviews from countries recognized as trusted regulatory authorities.
- **Customs and Port Modernization** – In 2022, CPMA will continue its engagement with government to address the challenges our members face at the Canadian border, to help businesses more seamlessly access international markets, and to improve oversight and enforcement of service standards at Canada's ports. We will also continue our efforts through the CPMA Customs Working Group to support members through the implementation of the CBSA Assessment and Revenue Management (CARM) Client Portal.
- **Innovation** – From advancements in biotechnology to supply chain solutions, a strong and growing Canadian produce industry will depend on our ability to leverage innovation. From a government relations perspective, CPMA will continue to advocate for government innovation funding specific to the fresh produce supply chain and enhanced support for businesses shifting to digital, to foster our industry's ongoing competitiveness.
- **Infrastructure** – As we look ahead to post-COVID recovery, it is essential that Canadian communities have the necessary critical infrastructure in place to support our economic development now and into the future. The growth of e-commerce and increased government digitization efforts make access to broadband internet and cell phone coverage even more important for business to succeed, including in rural areas, where a significant amount of production occurs but internet access remains a challenge. At the same time, recent extreme weather events have demonstrated the importance

of having resilient critical infrastructure in place in communities across the country. In 2022, CPMA will continue to advocate for sufficient, dedicated funding to support the rapid expansion of high-speed internet infrastructure and cell phone service coverage, and for government funding to ensure that all Canadians and Canadian businesses have access to the critical infrastructure they need.

- **International Trade** – From the ongoing U.S. International Trade Commission investigations to *CUSMA* implementation to the European Union’s Green Deal, Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies, the Canadian industry continues to face challenges to trade. We will continue to work with our international partners to advocate for the facilitation of trade across our global supply chain and ensure that the interests of our industry are reflected in Canada’s negotiations with our trading partners.
- **Labelling Issues and Regulatory Changes** – While the COVID-19 pandemic and the federal election have created some delays, we anticipate the publication of CFIA’s Food Product Innovation regulations and Health Canada’s Front-of-Package Labelling regulations early in 2022. CPMA will continue to advocate for regulatory reform that supports future innovations, while avoiding uniquely Canadian regulatory requirements, and will work with industry and government to reach workable solutions on labelling requirement challenges facing the industry.
- **Next Round of the Canadian Agricultural Partnership** – With the next Agricultural Policy Framework set to begin in 2023, CPMA will expand its engagement with federal and provincial governments to ensure that our members’ needs and priorities are reflected in this process. While we were pleased to see the country’s Agriculture Ministers make commitments on issues of importance to our sector in the recent *Guelph Statement*, CPMA will continue to emphasize that the goals outlined in the *Statement* will not be achievable if the current, ongoing supply chain disruptions are not addressed.

Over the past number of years, collaboration with other agri-food and supply chain organizations has become increasingly important for CPMA. These partnerships have made an important contribution to our success in advocating to government on behalf of our members by amplifying our messages on some of the key issues facing our sector. In 2022, we will continue to build on these collaborative efforts on major issues of concern for our members – including addressing supply chain disruptions, bridging the labour gap, ensuring the smooth flow of trade at the Canadian border, and more.

**For more information about CPMA’s Government Relations efforts, contact Shannon Sommerauer, Director of Government Relations, at [ssommerauer@cpma.ca](mailto:ssommerauer@cpma.ca).**