



Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

October 4, 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of Canada's fruit and vegetable industry supply chain, I am writing to congratulate you on your re-election and to share with you the Canadian Produce Marketing Association's recommendations for consideration in your mandate letters to incoming Cabinet Ministers.

Based in Ottawa, the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) is a not-for-profit organization representing companies active in the marketing of fresh fruit and vegetables in Canada, from the farm gate to the dinner plate, spanning the entire produce industry. The Association's members include major growers, shippers, packers, and marketers; importers and exporters; transportation and logistics firms; brokers, distributors, and wholesalers, retailers, and foodservice distributors; and fresh cut operators and processors. Founded in 1925, CPMA is proud to represent domestic and international members who are responsible for 90% of fresh fruit and vegetable sales in Canada, making significant contributions not only to our economy, but to the health and well-being of Canadians.

As we mark the UN International Year of Fruits and Vegetables in 2021, there is no better time for our federal leaders to take action to position our sector for success, now and in the months and years ahead. Prior to the start of the recent federal election campaign, CPMA shared with all federal parties 20 recommendations to support the Canadian fresh fruit and vegetable industry, (included here again for your reference). While all of these recommendations are important to supporting our sector long-term, we particularly want to highlight a few areas for priority action.

Financial Protection for Produce Sellers

The Canadian produce industry has been requesting the implementation of a financial protection tool for produce sellers for many years. During the election campaign, we were encouraged to see the Liberal Party indicate it "is open to work with the fruit and vegetable sector on their proposals, including the creation of a deemed trust". Such a mechanism would allow our sector to receive the intended benefit of the "super priority" provision for farmers that does not effectively cover sellers of fresh produce in the case of an insolvent buyer under the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act*.

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has put farmers and produce sellers in an even more vulnerable position. The implementation of a deemed trust mechanism provides the Government of Canada with an opportunity to address gaps in market stability, financial protection, trade and food security, with no cost to the government. In July, you received a [letter signed by 22 agri-food organizations across Canada](#) in support of a deemed trust for produce sellers. This group of organizations demonstrates the breadth and depth of support for this issue.

Furthermore, with all political parties indicating their support for such a mechanism, the creation of a deemed trust also provides an important opportunity for federal leaders to work together to protect one of our most essential sectors. **CPMA therefore strongly urges you to include the creation of a limited statutory deemed trust, similar to the U.S. *Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act*, among the priorities outlined in your mandate letters to the incoming Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food and the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry.**

Sustainability

The fresh fruit and vegetable sector supports the Food Policy for Canada's commitment to the promotion of long-term social, cultural, environmental and economic sustainability. A sustainable environment is essential to the future viability and growth of our industry and Canada as a whole, and the agricultural sector will be a key partner in tackling climate change and moving to a low-carbon economy.

As you know, growers and others along the produce supply chain have led the way in adopting environmentally sustainable practices for many years. We were pleased to see the Liberal Party's platform commitments to support sustainable agriculture in Canada, including developing a long-term strategy for sustainable water management in Canada through the Canada Water Agency, and the implementation of a Federal Greenhouse Gas Offset System and an Enhanced Soil Organic Carbon protocol. **In your mandate letters to the incoming Ministers for the Environment and Climate Change and Agriculture and Agri-food, we urge you to include direction that this Offset System should provide reasonable and fair recognition for past efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implement more environmentally sustainable practices.**

Across the agri-food sector, ambitious targets are being set to reduce the environmental footprint of producing and supplying food. Momentum is building to establish the National Index on Agri-food Performance to demonstrate Canada's rightful place as a leader of sustainable, safe and responsibly produced food. **As a partner in the development of the Index, we have been appreciative of the Government of Canada's support of this work to date and urge you to include ongoing support for this initiative in your Ministerial mandate letters.**

Plastics

The Canadian produce industry continues to be deeply engaged across all segments of the supply chain to reduce and mitigate the use of plastics. We have been pleased with the productive and collaborative discussions we have had with Environment and Climate Change Canada on this issue thus far and look forward to continuing to work in partnership with your government to achieve our common goals.

We would like to emphasize here that, through CPMA's work on reducing unnecessary and problematic plastics in the fresh produce sector, it has become clear that Canada must also address the challenge of the fragmented collection systems across the country, which do not effectively collect and recycle the materials currently in circulation that could be kept and utilized in the circular economy. We cannot stress enough that without this critical infrastructure in place, industry transitions to recyclable or compostable packaging materials will be rendered futile. **Therefore, we strongly urge you to include in your mandate letter to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change direction to work closely with industry to: take a systems approach to find solutions to reduce plastic waste that are evidence-based, and include a combination of education, innovation and investments in critical recycling infrastructure; and provide**

federal leadership and resources to the development of harmonized, efficient and cost-effective collection within communities across Canada.

Agricultural Labour Strategy

As you know, the fresh fruit and vegetable industry relies upon thousands of workers coming into Canada as part of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) and the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) in order to plant, cultivate, process, harvest and pack our products. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the labour gap in horticulture was becoming a crisis, expected to increase to 46,500 jobs by 2025 – the largest labour gap in the agricultural sector.

Now, as we continue to contend with the impacts of the pandemic, significant labour shortages continue to plague our sector and have extended to all areas of the supply chain, from the farm gate to the dinner plate. Bridging the labour gap is critical to the fresh produce industry's long-term success. **We were encouraged by the Liberal Party platform commitments to developing an Agricultural Labour Strategy, reducing red tape in the TFWP and recognizing Trusted Employers, and urge you to include them in your Ministerial mandate letters.**

We were also pleased to see the opposition parties voice their support for similar measures to address the agricultural labour gap. CPMA is hopeful that the incoming Parliament can come together to find effective solutions that meet the needs of our sector.

Infrastructure and Supply Chain Challenges

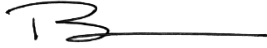
The COVID-19 global pandemic has created unprecedented public health, economic, and logistical challenges for communities and supply chains around the world. The Canadian fresh fruit and vegetable industry has been no exception. As we look ahead to post-COVID recovery, it is essential that Canada has 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. **Particularly as your government works to position Canada to succeed in a post-pandemic world, we urge you to prioritize sufficient, dedicated funding to support the rapid expansion of high-speed internet infrastructure and cell phone service coverage, and to include this direction in your Ministerial mandate letters, so that all Canadians and Canadian businesses have access to the digital infrastructure they need.**

Simultaneously, the supply chain linkages of transportation, border access and ports of entry and exit are key to ensuring the smooth flow of our highly perishable and essential goods across our border. Over the past two years, the fresh produce supply chain has faced significant challenges due to port congestion, a staggering rise in the cost of shipping containers, pallet shortages and other operational challenges. The smooth flow of our essential products through Canada's ports is critical not only to our sector's ongoing competitiveness and economic success, but also to supporting food security in communities across the country. **We strongly urge you to include in your Ministerial mandate letters a whole-of-government approach to enhance government oversight of Canada's ports, help businesses more seamlessly access international markets through our commercial border and keep the produce supply chain moving.**

We thank you in advance for your consideration of the recommendations outlined above. CPMA is happy to serve as a resource for you and your team and to answer any questions you may have about the needs and priorities of Canada's fresh fruit and vegetable industry as we look ahead to the 44th Parliament.

Sincere regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R Lemaire', followed by a horizontal line.

Ron Lemaire
President
Canadian Produce Marketing Association