

CPMA 2024 Government Relations Priorities

With concerns about the cost of food top of mind for both government and Canadian families, the past year has posed significant challenges for the Canadian fresh produce industry. CPMA has continued to advocate on behalf of our members and the Canadian fresh produce sector 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.

In 2023, CPMA's Government Relations team:

- Coordinated efforts with partners to advance the passage of Bill C-280, the *Financial Protection for Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Farmers Act*, which received the support of all political parties in the House of Commons and has been referred to the Canadian Senate.
- Undertook extensive engagement with elected and departmental officials to shine a light on the significant potential impacts of federal proposals related to fresh produce packaging.
- Welcomed government initiatives reflecting CPMA recommendations, including: the introduction of a Recognized Employer Program under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, the extension of measures to increase access to temporary foreign workers post farm-gate, and the establishment of a National Supply Chain Office to address supply chain disruptions.
- Successfully delivered two joint advocacy events on Parliament Hill: Farm to Plate and Fall Harvest.
- Increased engagement through *Fresh News from CPMA*, a monthly newsletter for Parliamentarians and their staff, driving greater awareness of CPMA, our key issues, and the resources we offer to the public.
- Continued to make connections with elected and non-elected officials, and made submissions to more than two dozen government consultations on a wide range of policy areas, including: customs, food safety, labelling and other regulatory challenges, labour, organics, plastics, sustainability, trade, supply chain challenges and solutions, the development of a Canadian Grocery Code of Conduct, and more.
- Worked with partners across the agricultural sector through the Agriculture and Food Budget Coalition to amplify common messages and elevate the importance of Canadian agriculture and agri-food amongst Parliamentarians and in regulation and policy development.

As we move into 2024, CPMA will build on this momentum including through identifying ways to increase targeted, strategic connections with Parliamentarians and to engage our members in our advocacy activities. **With all advocacy efforts, we will continue to emphasize a common theme of making food a federal priority and promoting effective policies to address rising food costs, strengthening food security and ensuring the long-term viability of the fresh produce supply chain.**

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

Key Priority Areas

Financial protection and supporting Bill C-280 – Particularly with ongoing inflationary pressures facing Canadians, it is crucial that the government provides all possible safeguards for the food supply chain to secure a stable food system now, and support sector viability long-term. Following decades of advocacy, in October 2023 CPMA welcomed the passage in the House of Commons of Bill C-280, the *Financial Protection for Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Farmers Act*, which would establish a financial protection mechanism for fresh produce sellers in Canada and open the door to reciprocal protection to those selling to the U.S. market. In 2024, CPMA will work to build on this momentum in the Canadian Senate and to secure the swift passage of Bill C-280 into law.

Government Relations Actions for 2024

- Prioritize engagement efforts with Senators to advance the passage of Bill C-280, the *Financial Protection for Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Farmers Act*, through to Royal Assent.
- Work with our partners to reaffirm a commitment from the United States to reinstate reciprocal protection for Canadian produce sellers under the U.S. *Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act*.

Increasing produce consumption – We know that Canadians are struggling with the rising costs of essentials, and that fresh produce consumption is declining, with negative consequences for our health and well-being. Government support is needed to keep fresh produce accessible to Canadians and make it easier to fill *Half Your Plate* with healthy and nutritious fruits and vegetables. In 2024, CPMA will continue to advocate for government policies and initiatives to strengthen Canada’s food security and increase produce consumption across the country.

Government Relations Actions for 2024

- Advocate for measures that support the targets of the Food Policy for Canada to promote long-term social, environmental and economic sustainability of the Canadian food system and increase Canadians’ consumption of safe and nutritious food.
- Expand efforts to raise awareness among Parliamentarians and government officials of CPMA’s *Half Your Plate* and Freggie Children’s programming, and to further build relationships with officials working on related files, including through exploring new avenues for engagement on Parliament Hill.
- Work with our provincial and other partners to advocate for the timely development and implementation of a National School Food Policy and national school nutritious meal program as critical investments in the health of our children and our broader communities.
- Continue to build engagement in our *Fresh News* 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.
- Continue to identify and build relationships with organizational partners who can help to amplify our advocacy efforts regarding produce consumption and food security.

National Supply Chain Strategy – Over the past year, CPMA has continued to raise awareness of supply disruptions impacting the global fresh produce supply chain and to offer solutions to address these challenges and promote resiliency in the long-term. In 2024, CPMA will continue to work to mitigate the impact of disruptions on Canadians and Canadian businesses, including through engagement with officials from across relevant federal departments to inform the activities of the National Supply Chain Office and the anticipated National Supply Chain Strategy.

Government Relations Actions for 2024

- Engage with Parliamentarians and decision-makers to ensure that the needs and priorities of the fresh produce sector are reflected in the development of the National Supply Chain Strategy and in the initial efforts of the new Supply Chain Office.
- Continue to advocate for the establishment of priority lanes at ports of entry, and work with government to expand Trusted Trader programs, to further streamline the movement of essential and perishable products across the Canadian border.
- Continue to advocate for proactive, cross-government action to put in place a formalized process to allow the movement of food and essential goods through Canada’s ports of entry in the event of emergency events or disruptions.
- Continue to identify and work with other agricultural and non-agricultural partner organizations, both in Canada and around the world, to further amplify our calls for government action, including through leadership in the Global Coalition of Fresh Produce.
- Advocate for measures to improve service standards and enhance government oversight of Canada’s ports and to help businesses more seamlessly access international markets through our commercial border.
- Undertake increased efforts through the CPMA Customs Working Group to support members through the implementation of the CBSA Assessment and Revenue Management (CARM) Client Portal.

Other Government Relations Priorities

- **Sustainability and packaging** – CPMA is proud to represent an industry whose members have long been leaders in implementing sustainable practices in areas such as biodiversity, greenhouse gas emissions and carbon sequestration, food loss and waste, renewable energy, soil health, water conservation, and sustainable packaging solutions. In 2024, CPMA will expand our team with a full-time Sustainability Specialist to support our members and continue to share the produce sustainability story, including through an International Sustainability Summit following the CPMA Convention and Trade Show in Vancouver. We will also work to ensure that government policy and programming supports workable solutions and provides reasonable and fair recognition for past efforts to implement more environmentally sustainable practices, and will advocate in support of initiatives such as the Sustainable Agriculture Strategy, National Index on Agri-Food Performance and a long-term strategy for sustainable water management.
- **Labour** – Bridging the labour gap is critical to ensuring the success of the Canadian fresh produce industry in both the short and long-term. While we have been pleased to see government action on CPMA recommendations such as the introduction of a Recognized Employer Pilot and the extension of measures to increase access to temporary foreign workers in off-farm facilities, continued

government support is needed to address long-term labour shortages that have impacts to productivity, profitability and new product development. In 2024, CPMA will continue to advocate for an effective National Agricultural Labour Strategy that applies a total supply chain lens to ensure that all aspects of the agriculture and agri-food sector – from the farm to the dinner plate – are considered and supported.

- **Infrastructure** – It is essential that all Canadian communities have the necessary critical infrastructure in place to support their economic development, strengthen their climate resiliency, and better enable them to attract and retain workers, 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. In 2024, 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 increased government investments to ensure that all Canadians and Canadian businesses have access to the critical infrastructure they need.
- **Innovation** – We know that greater investments are needed to support the ability of the Canadian produce industry to leverage innovation to meet the challenges facing our sector. In 2024, CPMA will continue to advocate for government innovation funding specific to the fresh produce supply chain to foster our industry’s ongoing competitiveness, and work with our partners to increase awareness within government of regulatory barriers to innovation in the fresh produce sector, and to find collaborative solutions to address them.
- **International Trade** – The Canadian fresh produce industry relies upon a strong network of trading relationships, but more government support is needed to ensure that we can remain competitive and continue to feed Canadians and consumers around the world. In 2024, CPMA 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.
- **Regulatory modernization and improving government consultation** – CPMA supports the Government of Canada’s ongoing efforts towards regulatory modernization, which is necessary to maintain and strengthen the fresh produce industry’s global competitiveness. Alleviating cumulative regulatory burden and ensuring the alignment of department objectives are critical to the success of these efforts. In 2024, CPMA will work with our partner organizations to continue to advocate for a collaborative approach to find workable solutions for industry and government, as well as for the cross-department deployment of resources, such as the Treasury Board’s Competitiveness Assessment Tool, to foster better government understanding of the impacts of proposed regulations and promote a more effective regulatory modernization process. 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.
- **Organics** – The Canadian Organic Standards provide the regulatory foundation for a strong and growing organic sector and are a critical tool in negotiating beneficial equivalency arrangements with our trading partners. Greater federal support is required to ensure that these Standards

continue to fulfill these important roles. In 2024, CPMA will advocate for greater government efforts to support the organic sector, including expanded involvement and oversight from key federal departments and ongoing, dedicated resources to enable the cyclical review of the Canadian Organic Standards. We will also contribute to the 2025 review of the Canadian Organic Standards as a voting member of the Organic Review Technical Committee.

- **Election preparation** – The realities of a minority government mean that a federal election may be around the corner. In 2024, CPMA will develop and raise awareness among all political parties of our recommendations for key priorities for government action to support a strong and sustainable Canadian fresh produce supply chain and will provide our members with tools and resources to engage with federal political candidates in their communities.

Collaboration with other agri-food and supply chain organizations continues to grow in importance for CPMA as a strategic tool in advancing and amplifying our messages to government on some of the key issues facing our sector. In 2024, we will continue to build on these collaborative efforts on major issues of concern for our members – including through our joint advocacy events on Parliament Hill, the CFIA-Fresh Produce Alliance Technical Working Group and the coordination of efforts by the Agriculture and Food Budget Coalition focused on advancing joint priorities in the federal budget.

For more information about CPMA’s Government Relations efforts, contact Shannon Sommerauer, Director of Government Relations, at ssommerauer@cpma.ca.