

CPMA 2025 Government Relations Priorities

With the political uncertainty of a minority government here at home and an election south of the border, concerns about the cost of food remaining top of mind for consumers, and a series of port disruptions, 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 2024, CPMA's Government Relations team:

- Coordinated efforts with partners and undertook extensive engagement with Parliamentarians to advance the passage of Bill C-280, the *Financial Protection for Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Farmers Act*, which passed at Third Reading in the Canadian Senate on December 10th.
- Joined Canadian Parliamentarians in meetings with US Congressional representatives and officials on the importance of integrated supply chains, food security and financial protection for fresh produce sellers.
- Welcomed government initiatives reflecting CPMA recommendations, including: the launch of the National Supply Chain Office to address supply chain disruptions, the introduction of a National School Food Program, and federal funding and support for a Grocery Sector Code of Conduct.
- Successfully delivered two joint advocacy events on Parliament Hill: Farm to Plate and Fall Harvest and hosted six Parliamentarians at the CPMA Convention and Trade Show.
- Highlighted 25 recommendations for Federal Budget 2024 and made submissions to more than two dozen national and international government consultations on a wide range of policy areas, including: food safety, labelling and other regulatory challenges, plant health, labour, organics, sustainability, plastics and packaging, trade, school food, supply chain challenges and solutions, and more.
- Engaged with elected officials from all parties throughout the year, and 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.
- 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 2025, 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, 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 – Following decades of advocacy, CPMA welcomed the passage of Bill C-280, the *Financial Protection for Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Farmers Act* in the Canadian Senate. Following Royal Assent, this important legislation will 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 2025, CPMA will build on this success by working with our partners to secure the reinstatement of preferential access for Canadian produce sellers to protection under the U.S. *Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act*.

Government Relations Actions for 2025

- Prioritize engagement efforts with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to achieve the reinstatement of reciprocal protection for Canadian produce sellers under the U.S. *Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act*.

Increasing produce consumption – Even prior to recent inflationary pressures on the cost of food, year over year, Canadians are eating fewer vegetables and fruits, incurring significant negative impacts on our health and billions in annual economic burden. CPMA’s *Half Your Plate* campaign works to increase fresh produce consumption in Canada, but more support is needed. The National School Food Program and a “Food as Medicine” approach are important tools in improving the health of our children and our communities. In 2025, CPMA will expand our efforts to advocate for government policies and initiatives to strengthen Canada’s food security and increase produce consumption across the country.

Government Relations Actions for 2025

- Advocate for investments in the health of Canadians using a “Food as Medicine” approach and measures to reduce diet-related diseases and hunger and mitigate health care costs associated with food insecurity and poor nutrition, including in public procurement and government programming.
- Work with our provincial and other partners to advocate for the timely delivery of funding and federal-provincial-territorial cooperation to advance the development and implementation of the National School Food Program, ensuring that enhancing nutrition and promoting healthy eating practices, including through the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, are core objectives of the program.
- 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.
- 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 – This year has seen significant disruptions impacting the fresh produce supply chain, including at North American ports. CPMA has continued to raise awareness of the impact of these disruptions and to offer solutions to promote resiliency in the long-term. In 2025, 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 2025

- 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 ongoing efforts of the National Supply Chain Office and other relevant government departments.
- Continue to advocate for the establishment of priority lanes at ports of entry and work with government to further streamline the movement of essential and perishable products across the Canadian border, including through efforts to develop a Trusted Trader pilot for fresh produce.
- 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.
- Continue efforts through the CPMA Customs Working Group to support members through the implementation of the CBSA Assessment and Revenue Management (CARM) Client Portal.

International trade – The North American fresh produce industry is highly integrated, with economic, health and food security benefits on both sides of the border, and the Canadian fresh produce industry relies upon a strong network of trading relationships. Particularly with the review of CUSMA on the horizon, some of the comments made by President-Elect Trump regarding possible trade actions, including tariffs, raise serious concerns. In 2025, CPMA will engage 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.

Government Relations Actions for 2025

- Work with our partners around the globe, including through our North American Trade Working Group and the Global Coalition of Fresh Produce, to amplify the importance of free and fair trade for the fresh produce supply chain.
- Continue to emphasize that unilateral trade restrictions from the U.S., including any potential tariffs, would do nothing but disrupt our integrated supply chain and add cost to industry and consumers, and that the Government of Canada should engage in early and ongoing consultation with the fresh produce industry on issues impacting trade with the U.S., including the upcoming review of CUSMA.
- Continue to voice our industry's opposition to Bill C-282, which would prioritize certain agricultural commodities and certain Canadian producers over others in trade negotiations and might inadvertently place the fresh fruit and vegetable sector in the crosshairs of retaliatory trade action.

Other Government Relations Priorities

- **Federal election preparation** – While the exact timing remains to be determined, Canada will go to the polls in 2025. The federal election will shape CPMA’s Government Relations activities throughout the year, including a focus on engagement with all political parties to advocate for the inclusion of key fresh produce priorities in campaign platforms, and the creation of tools and resources to support our members in connecting with federal political candidates in their communities. CPMA will also continue current efforts to collaborate with partner organizations across the Canadian agricultural sector to amplify our joint priorities for government action.
- **Sustainability** – 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 reduction and carbon sequestration, food loss and waste minimization, renewable energy, soil health, water conservation, and sustainable packaging solutions. In 2025, CPMA’s Government Relations activities will help advance CPMA’s Sustainability Strategy and its key priorities to ensure that elected and other government officials understand the importance of advancing international harmonization in sustainability efforts, and that government policy and programming supports workable solutions to achieve our collective sustainability goals, notably in regards to sustainable fresh produce packaging, food loss and waste, and supply chain decarbonization. We will also continue to advocate for strategic investments and for early and ongoing collaboration with industry to ensure that regulations, policies and programs effectively enable and enhance the long-term sustainability of the Canadian agri-food sector at large.
- **Regulatory modernization and mitigating regulatory burden** – 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 2025, 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 and Journey Mapping, to foster better government understanding of the impacts of proposed regulations and promote a more effective regulatory modernization process. Our Government Relations activities will also support members in the implementation of new regulations and aim to mitigate regulatory burden, including in relation to environmental requirements, (such as Extended Producer Responsibility and the Federal Plastics Registry), and labelling requirements (such as upcoming trademark requirements in Quebec and new greenwashing rules). In addition, we will engage with government departments to support the work of the renewed Canada-U.S. Regulatory Cooperation Council and the promotion of regulatory harmonization with our largest trading partner.
- **Workforce** – 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, continued government support is needed to address long-term labour shortages that have impacts to productivity, profitability and new product development. In 2025, CPMA will continue to advocate for an effective National Agricultural Labour Strategy that applies a total supply chain lens to ensure

that we are able to attract and retain the workforce we need to continue to put our seasonal, perishable products on Canadian tables. This includes ongoing engagement with the government as it moves forward with the development of a New Foreign Labour Program for Agriculture and Fish Processing.

- **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 over the past few years 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 2025, 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 in rural infrastructure, including roads, energy, affordable housing, public transportation and service infrastructure.
- **Innovation** – Greater investments are needed to support the Canadian produce industry in leveraging innovation to meet the challenges facing our sector and strengthen our global competitiveness. In 2025, CPMA will continue to advocate for an enabling regulatory environment that de-risks the adoption of innovative technologies, government support for the adoption of cybersecurity measures to protect the food supply chain, and the development of a Pan-Canadian Data Strategy that promotes research, programming, digital skills and outcome-based measurement and reporting.
- **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 2025, 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 continue our engagement in the completion of the 2025 review of the Canadian Organic Standards as a voting member of the Organic Review Technical Committee.

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 2025, we will continue to build on these collaborative efforts on major issues of concern for our members, including in efforts to ensure the priorities of the fresh produce industry and the broader agricultural sector are reflected in the upcoming federal election campaign.

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