



MP Valerie Bradford, Chair  
Standing Committee on Science and Research  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

June 20, 2024

Dear Madame Chair and Committee members,

On behalf of the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) and Canada's fresh fruit and vegetable industry, I am writing to express our interest in appearing before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Science and Research regarding its study on innovation, science and research in recycling plastic.

CPMA is in a unique position as an organization representing companies from the farm gate to the dinner plate, spanning the entire fresh 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. In fact, CPMA's more than 875 domestic and international members are responsible for 90% of fresh fruit and vegetable sales in Canada.

Canadians rely on a highly integrated domestic and global produce supply to meet Health Canada recommendations for a healthy diet. The fresh produce supply chain in Canada has the complex task of moving a wide variety of perishable products, often over long distances, in a way that ensures Canadians have access to safe, high quality and affordable fruits and vegetables. Packaging, including plastic packaging, is essential to maintain the quality and safety of fresh produce – in fact, 95% of what packaging accomplishes is done before it even reaches the consumer.

The fresh produce industry is a leading adopter of sustainable packaging strategies, ranging from lightweighting and innovative elimination, to reuse in secondary packaging, design for recyclability and actual recycling, as well as the incorporation of recycled content. Substitution to alternative materials such as recyclable fiber packaging, or industrially compostable materials is also increasing when packaging performance and function is not compromised.

Since 2019, the produce industry has organized efforts to systematically reduce plastic use and support the circular economy through the work of the [CPMA Packaging Working Group](#), partnership in the [Canada Plastics Pact](#), guidance for industry to support the voluntary transition to the use of industrial compostable PLUs, and [the development of a sustainable packaging guide for the industry](#) (supported by Agriculture and Agri-food Canada).

The diversity of fresh fruit and vegetable commodities means that the most appropriate packaging for one commodity will be different from another commodity. For many commodities, there are no viable alternatives to plastic which would not lead to increased food waste, cost and food insecurity.

Through the adoption of increasingly recyclable and sustainable plastic packaging forms and composition, fresh produce packaging can provide the key functionality required when transporting and delivering highly perishable products to Canadians. This functionality includes ensuring food safety, minimizing food waste, ensuring cost effectiveness during transportation, meeting consumer convenience requirements, while also meeting mandatory labelling requirements (for traceability purposes, for example). In short, fresh produce packaging is integral in enabling the sustainability of fresh produce supply chains Canadians rely on year-round to access fresh fruits and vegetables from around the world.

The complexity of produce packaging decision making arises from the need to meet packaging function and environmental performance combined with the wide array of potential solutions – including recycling, reuse, composting and even biodegradable materials. These packaging options are not readily interchangeable, and their environmental impacts are highly dependent on the waste management infrastructure, which varies regionally across Canada. Consequently, there are many risks associated with the selection of sustainable fresh produce packaging forms and compositions.

Given Canadians' growing expectations to reduce the environmental impacts of packaging, packaging innovations in both form, composition and application are emerging to meet those expectations while not adversely impacting the critical functions as outlined above. One of the leading challenges facing the fresh produce industry is how to expand the portfolio of sustainable packaging forms to serve the diversity of fruit and vegetable categories. Such a portfolio seeks to meet the performance requirements such as food safety and minimizing food loss, while also addressing the environmental expectations of reducing the amount of produce packaging going to landfill.

On behalf of Canada's fresh produce industry, the CPMA would welcome the opportunity to appear before the SRSR committee to share the key findings of recent research, highlight the best practices being adopted by the fresh produce sector both in Canada and abroad, and contribute to the committee's study on innovation, science and research towards reducing packaging waste through recycling or other end-of-life strategies.

On behalf of the fresh fruit and vegetable supply chain, CPMA is grateful to the Committee for the opportunity to share our comments on this important issue and would be pleased to answer any questions Committee members may have.

Sincerely,

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

Ron Lemaire  
President  
Canadian Produce Marketing Association