



Global Affairs Canada
111 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario
Submitted Via email Philippines-Consultations@international.gc.ca

March 5, 2025

RE: [Consulting Canadians on a possible bilateral free trade agreement with the Philippines](#)

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of our members across the fresh fruit and vegetable supply chain, the Canadian Produce Marketing Association is pleased to offer comments to Global Affairs Canada regarding a possible bilateral free trade agreement with the Philippines. As a highly globally integrated industry, we are supportive of the Canadian government's progressive trade agenda and its commitment to strengthening our trading partnerships across the globe. Given Canada's growing trade relationships in the Indo-Pacific region, an agreement with the Philippines within the broader Canada-ASEAN agreement could present opportunities for market expansion, economic growth and supply chain resilience.

About CPMA

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 over 900 domestic and international members who are responsible for 90% of fresh fruit and vegetable sales in Canada.

General Comments

As noted above, the fresh produce supply chain is highly integrated around the globe and relies on the smooth flow of goods across borders. In Canada, our climatic limitations and shorter growing season means that we rely upon imported product to ensure that Canadians can put a variety of fruits and vegetables on their tables year-round.

As a key stakeholder in trade agreements with members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), we recognize the benefits an agreement with the Philippines can have for Canadian exporters and importers. This agreement would also support producers and consumers, while also enhancing Canada's resilience against global trade disruptions, ensuring the availability of high-quality produce and maintaining competitive market



Expanding engagement with ASEAN markets aligns with Canada's broader strategy of diversifying our trading relationships and reducing reliance on traditional partners, while positioning Canada to benefit from the region's rapid economic growth.

Discussion Question: What specific bilateral interests do you have with the Philippines that could be addressed in a bilateral FTA?

Canada and the Philippines have a growing trade relationship, with an upward trend in trade that highlights the importance of enabling strong economic partnerships. A recent example showed an increased import of yellow onions in 2024 to the Philippines, demonstrating their increasing demand for imported produce. This positions the Philippines as a potential market for Canadian agricultural exports, presenting an opportunity to strengthen our trade ties and expand market access for our growers.

Furthermore, Canada is committed to advancing sustainable agricultural practices and recognizes the Philippines for its strong commitment to sustainability and sustainable agricultural practices. As both nations work toward shared sustainability goals, we see a valuable opportunity to deepen our partnership. By collaborating on innovative solutions, trade opportunities, and capacity-building initiatives, we can strengthen economic ties while advancing responsible and sustainable development.

Discussion questions: What elements would you like to see included in a Canada-Philippines FTA? How would these elements benefit you?

First, considering recent tariff measures imposed by the United States on Canadian goods under the Trump administration, Canada must prioritize securing trade agreements that promote tariff-free access to key markets. A trade agreement with the Philippines should explicitly aim to prevent the introduction of restrictive tariffs or reduce any significant tariffs significantly to ensure a stable and predictable trading environment for the fresh produce industry.

Secondly, Canada's free trade agreements should support regulatory harmonization that can lead to the adoption of higher standards and regulations across trading partners, ensuring that food safety and phytosanitary measures are harmonized to facilitate smooth trade, promote quality control and reduce regulatory burdens while ensuring a safe food supply. In terms of promoting a level playing field, regulatory alignment with our trading partners is vital to supporting economic competitiveness and increasing market access for Canadian agricultural operations within the globally integrated fresh fruit and vegetable sector. CPMA urges the Government of Canada to explore opportunities within the ASEAN agreements to facilitate the approval of innovative crop protection products so that they can enter the Canadian market at the same time as they become available for our trading partners, maintaining the Canadian industry's competitiveness.



In closing, CPMA emphasizes that a Canada-Philippines bilateral trade agreement within the Canada-ASEAN FTA framework offers the potential for expanding the availability of high-quality produce in for Canadian consumers and strengthening the Canadian agri-food sector by expanding export opportunities. We look forward to working collaboratively with the government to ensure that the agreement supports the growth and stability of the produce sector while addressing the critical issues noted above. We thank you for taking the time to review our comments and would be pleased to answer any questions you 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