

CPMA 2026 Government Relations Priorities

Ongoing political uncertainty with our largest trading partner, a series of port disruptions, escalating severe weather events and continuing consumer concerns about the cost of food have all contributed to significant challenges for the Canadian fresh produce sector this year. 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 2025, CPMA's Government Relations team:

- Achieved regulatory gains for members through the planned removal of long-standing labelling irritants by CFIA.
- Successfully advocated for the removal of Canadian retaliatory tariffs on certain U.S. fresh produce items, which imposed costs on importers and consumers and threatened action against Canadian exporters.
- Successfully advocated for the National School Food Program to be made permanent, as announced in Federal Budget 2025.
- Undertook direct outreach to all political parties regarding election campaign platform recommendations, continuing with outreach to the incoming Cabinet to advance member priorities following the federal election.
- Built relationships with new and returning Parliamentarians at three post-elections Meet and Greets in Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto.
- Hosted our first Export Marketplace event, engaging with Parliamentarians and officials about the challenges and opportunities for our sector in diversifying and enhancing Canadian produce exports.
- Delivered our annual Fall Harvest event on Parliament Hill and hosted Parliamentarians at the CPMA Convention and Trade Show.
- Highlighted more than 20 recommendations for Federal Budget 2025 and made submissions to more than a dozen government consultations on a wide range of policy areas of impact to our members.
- 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 North American produce industry and the broader agricultural sector to amplify common messages and elevate the importance of Canadian agriculture and agri-food in government decision-making.

As we move into 2026, 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 that agriculture and food production must be a national priority in the government's broader Build Canada economic strategy.**

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

CUSMA review and 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. In light of ongoing trade volatility with the United States, this past year CPMA undertook significant engagement with government officials, and provided resources to help members navigate evolving tariff policies. In 2026, CPMA will continue these efforts to ensure that the interests of our industry are reflected in Canada’s negotiations with our trading partners and will work with our international partners to advocate for the facilitation of trade across our global supply chain.

Government Relations Actions for 2026

- Undertake substantial engagement with the Government of Canada, international trading partners and allied associations to advance fresh produce trade.
- Ensure that the voice of the Canadian fresh produce sector is heard and considered by Canadian trade negotiators in the review of CUSMA.
- Work collaboratively 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 explore opportunities to build connections and support Canadian produce businesses in establishing and expanding export markets, including in Mexico and beyond.
- Continue to emphasize that any potential tariffs would do nothing but disrupt our integrated supply chain and add cost to industry and consumers.
- Dedicate resources to research and advisory services to enhance and inform our work and advance our priorities with government.

National Supply Chain Strategy – The supply chain linkages of transportation, border access and ports of entry and exit are key to ensuring the smooth flow of essential goods across our border, supporting both our economic competitiveness and food security across the country. The high volume and perishability of fruits and vegetables means that longer dwell times at ports can not only delay delivery and increase costs for industry, but can also result in lost sales, product spoilage, and ultimately food waste. CPMA was pleased to see Federal Budget 2025 include significant investments in critical trade infrastructure, reflective of our recommendations to government. In 2026, CPMA will build on this work and engage with the National Supply Chain Office, CBSA, Transport Canada, and other government departments to advocate for the inclusion of cold chain infrastructure and other investments to address our members’ needs and priorities.

Government Relations Actions for 2026

- Engage with federal officials about ways in which our members can access the new supports introduced in Federal Budget 2025, and urge the government to make agriculture and food security a national priority in the development and implementation of the government’s broader Build Canada economic strategy and trade infrastructure investments.
- 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.
- Build on efforts begun in 2025 to advocate for government funding to support infrastructure improvements and drive future growth at the Ontario Food Terminal as a core strategic asset in Canada's food system.
- 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 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.

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. Strategic investments are also needed in other food system infrastructure to fuel sector growth, improve supply chain fluidity and maintain Canada's reputation as a reliable trading partner. This fall, Federal Budget 2025 introduced substantial new investments in trade and community infrastructure. In 2026, CPMA will continue to engage with decision-makers to advocate for infrastructure priorities that will facilitate a growing produce sector, while also ensuring that government efforts to reduce spending do not impede critical accompanying government functions that facilitate trade and commerce, such as inspection capacity.

Government Relations Actions for 2026

- Engage with federal government officials to ensure the needs and priorities of the fresh produce supply chain are considered in the roll-out of new programs and investments, including the Build Communities Strong Fund and the Trade Diversification Corridors Fund.
- Continue to advocate for sufficient, dedicated funding to support the rapid expansion of high-speed internet infrastructure and cell phone service coverage in rural areas to ensure all Canadian produce businesses can realize the benefits of e-commerce, government digitization and innovative new technologies.
- Continue to advocate for government investments in rural infrastructure, including roads, energy, affordable housing, public transportation and service infrastructure to support worker retention and foster economic development in communities across Canada.

Implementing financial protection – Following decades of advocacy, CPMA welcomed the passage of Bill C-280, the *Financial Protection for Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Farmers Act* in December 2024. Bill C-280 establishes a financial protection mechanism for fresh produce sellers in Canada and opens the door to reciprocal protection to those selling to the U.S. market. In 2026, CPMA will work to advance the publication of the regulations needed to implement this important legislation and 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 2026

- Prioritize work with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada to advance the regulations necessary to implement financial protection for fresh produce sellers in Canada.
- Undertake 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*.

Other Government Relations Priorities

- **Increasing produce consumption** – Even prior to recent consumer concerns about 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 2026, 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, including as a core component of the National School Food Program. This includes expanded 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.
- **Regulatory modernization and red tape reduction** – To ensure the ongoing viability of Canada’s food system, it is critical to maintain a strong federal regulatory framework in support of both internal and international fresh produce trade. Increasing market access and sustainability of the Canadian fresh fruit and vegetable industry requires mutual recognition and international alignment of plant health and crop protection regulation, products, and residue limits, to remove costly duplication. Innovative tools and alternative technologies are needed to help the produce sector fight climate change, combat emerging pests and address other key challenges, while remaining globally competitive. In 2026, CPMA will work with our partner organizations to continue to advocate for a collaborative approach to find workable solutions for industry and government, reduce red tape and regulatory burden, remove unnecessary trade barriers and support the ongoing competitiveness of Canadian businesses.
- **Sustainability** – CPMA is proud to represent an industry whose members have long been leaders in implementing sustainable practices. Proof of sustainability is increasingly required to compete at home and abroad in an industry that is expected to show progress toward environmental and other societal outcomes. However, the lack of standardized methodologies to measure and report sustainability performance, add cost and complexity to the food supply chain without effectively advancing sustainability outcomes. In 2026, 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, including in regards to sustainable fresh produce packaging and EPR programs, food loss and waste, and supply chain decarbonization.

- **Innovation and investment** – 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 2026, CPMA will continue to advocate for strategic government support and an enabling regulatory environment that de-risks the adoption of innovative technologies, and resources for the adoption of cybersecurity measures to protect the food supply chain.
- **Workforce** – Chronic labour shortages in urban and rural communities pose a significant barrier to the produce industry’s long term economic success, and recent political discourse on the Temporary Foreign Worker Program threatens to make this situation worse. The future fresh fruit and vegetable supply chain requires a domestic and international workforce with a wide range of skills, including in emerging areas like robotics and Artificial Intelligence, to realize our full economic potential. In 2026, CPMA will continue to advocate for an effective an effective workforce strategy for the entire fresh produce chain 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.

Collaboration with other agri-food and supply chain organizations remains a critically important strategic tool for CPMA in advancing and amplifying our messages to government on some of the key issues facing our sector. In 2026, 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 federal government’s Build Canada agenda.

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