



Right Honourable Mark Carney
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

April 29, 2025

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of Canada's fresh fruit and vegetable industry, I am writing to congratulate you on your election. We look forward to working with your government to help Canadian businesses thrive and ensure that the fresh produce industry can continue to provide our safe, nutritious products for tables here at home and around the world.

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 more than 930 domestic and international members who are responsible for 90% of fresh fruit and vegetable sales in Canada, making significant contributions not only to our economy, but to the health and well-being of Canadians.

Growing 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. More federal support is needed to make food a federal priority and to create the conditions necessary to enable an environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable fresh produce industry in Canada, while ensuring our competitiveness in the global marketplace.

CPMA urges your government to support a strengthened food system and food security for all Canadians by adopting a whole-of-government approach to agriculture and food production, and by prioritizing food production and access to food in legislation, policy and crisis management. CPMA recommends that your government establish an Agri-food Supply Chain Advisory Council to serve as a standing forum to support your Cabinet in advancing this cross-departmental effort.

Under this lens, CPMA also offers for your consideration the following recommendations for priority action in your mandate letters to incoming Cabinet Ministers.

Advancing Canadian interests in international trade

To ensure the ongoing viability of Canada's food system, we need a strong domestic and global strategy. Free and fair international trade in fresh produce offers huge economic growth opportunity for Canadian businesses and provides Canadians with access to safe and healthy fresh food options year-round.

Increasing market access and sustainability of the Canadian fresh fruit and vegetable industry requires mutual recognition of food safety systems, and international harmonization of crop protection regulation, products, and residue limits, to remove costly duplication. Every effort should be made to remove unnecessary regulatory barriers to trade and support the competitiveness of Canadian products.

- **CPMA therefore recommends that your mandate letters to the Minister of International Trade and other relevant Ministers include the direction for federal government resources to advance Canada's free and fair trade agenda, remove regulatory barriers impeding Canada's competitiveness in the global marketplace, and enable further expansion of mutual recognition efforts with other key trading countries.**

Of particular significance, the North American fresh produce industry is highly integrated, with economic, health and food security benefits for all three countries. In 2024 alone, Canada imported close to \$5.5 billion in fresh produce from the United States, representing a little less than half of all fresh produce imports. Just as important, Canadian companies exported just over \$4.5 billion in fresh produce to the United States, comprising more than 97% of all fresh produce exports¹.

In the interest of supporting a healthy population, a resilient food system, and a competitive domestic industry, so long as Canadian fresh produce is granted tariff-free entry into the United States, we request that fresh fruits and vegetables should be excluded from any retaliatory trade measures against the United States, and that steps should be taken to remove the existing tariffs on U.S. produce items to protect Canadian produce exporters from potential retaliation that would have devastating impacts on domestic fruit and vegetable growers, particularly in the greenhouse sector.

- **CPMA also recommends your mandate letters to the Minister of International Trade, the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food include direction to engage in regular and ongoing consultation with our industry and with the Trump Administration, to ensure a strong response to trade action taken against Canada while also safeguarding our food security, and to emphasize the important benefits for all three economies stemming from free and fair trade across North America.**

Following decades of advocacy, CPMA welcomed the passage of Bill C-280, the *Financial Protection for Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Farmers Act*, which received Royal Assent in December 2024. This important legislation 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.

- **CPMA recommends that your mandate letter to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry include direction to prioritize the implementation of Bill C-280, the *Financial Protection for Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Farmers Act*, to provide critical financial protection to produce sellers.**

¹ Statistics Canada, 2025

Increasing produce consumption for healthier communities

Even prior to recent inflationary pressures on the cost of food, year over year, Canadians are eating fewer vegetables and fruits, and Canadians' current consumption pattern is far from meeting Health Canada's 2019 *Canada's Food Guide* recommendation to fill half your plate with vegetables and fruit.

Given the protective effect of fruits and vegetables on reducing the risk for many chronic diseases, it is clear that supporting access to these nutritious foods in all regions of the country can contribute substantially to the health and well-being of our communities, while also significantly decreasing government health care spending.

- **CPMA therefore recommends that your mandate letters to the Minister of Health, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, and other relevant Ministers include a direction to invest in the health of Canadians using a "Food as Medicine" approach and to support measures to reduce diet-related diseases and hunger and mitigate health care costs associated with food insecurity and poor nutrition.**
- **CPMA also recommends that your mandate letters to the Minister of Health, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food and the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Services and Procurement include direction to advance measures promoting the Canada Food Guide recommendation to fill *Half Your Plate* with fruits and vegetables, including in public procurement and government programming.**

CPMA has been a longstanding supporter and advocate of a national school food program and a proud member of the Coalition of Healthy School Food and were pleased to see the commitments made in Budget 2024 and the significant efforts undertaken with provincial, territorial and Indigenous partners to advance the National School Food Program. We and our members are keen to work with the government to secure a consistent supply of healthy food for children across Canada and create real opportunities for beneficial partnerships in our food system.

- **CPMA recommends that your mandate letters to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, the Minister of Jobs and Families, and other relevant Ministers include the direction to prioritize 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.**

Fueling a competitive and resilient produce supply chain

The fresh produce supply chain is one of the most highly globally integrated supply chains in the world, and international trade is critical to the success of the Canadian fresh produce industry. 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.

It is also important to recognize that 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. Therefore, the smooth flow of essential products through Canada's marine ports and other ports of entry is critical to supporting both our economic competitiveness and food security across the country.

- **CPMA therefore recommends that your mandate letters to the Minister of Transport, the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, and other relevant Ministers include a direction to deliver sufficient, ongoing capital investment under the National Supply Chain Strategy and the National Trade Corridor Fund to enable trade and transportation infrastructure improvements, including the enhancement of cold chain infrastructure.**
- **CPMA also recommends that your mandate letters to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and the Minister of Transport include the direction to establish priority lanes at ports of entry and implement a dedicated Trusted Trader pilot program to further streamline the movement of essential and perishable products across the Canadian border.**
- **CPMA further recommends that the Minister of Transport, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and other relevant Ministers include a commitment to implement measures to prioritize the movement of food and essential goods through ports of entry in the event of emergency events or disruptions, and work to address the root causes of labour disruptions impacting critical supply chain infrastructure.**

Building the fresh produce workforce

As you know, Canada's agricultural sector faces a critical workforce gap, with labour shortages persisting in both rural and urban regions and across all supply chain stages – from the farm to the dinner plate. Bridging this labour gap is critical to ensuring the success of the Canadian fresh produce sector in the short and long-term.

The future fresh fruit and vegetable industry will require a domestic and international workforce with a wide range of skills, including an increasing focus on expertise in areas such as robotics and artificial intelligence, software engineering and programming, green energy systems and data analysis. The federal government has an important role to play in supporting educational efforts and raising awareness, especially among young and urban Canadians, about the significant and diverse opportunities available in our sector.

- **CPMA therefore recommends that your mandate letters to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, the Minister of Jobs and Families, and other relevant Ministers include a direction to implement a National Workforce Strategy to meet immediate labour needs and generate future interest in careers across the food supply chain through education, training and skills development.**

In addition to our domestic workforce, the fresh fruit and vegetable industry relies upon thousands of workers coming into Canada as part of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) and the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) to plant, cultivate, process, harvest and pack our products. These federal programs are essential but currently fall short of fully addressing the unique needs of the fresh produce industry, which require a specialized, timely workforce to manage perishable products and avoid delays or shortages that may directly impact food quality and availability.

- **CPMA recommends that your mandate letters to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, the Minister of Jobs and Families, and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship include**

the direction to maintain a stable agricultural workforce by preserving the distinction between SAWP and other streams within the TFW program, such as AgStream and the Low-Wage stream, and by establishing a permanent Recognized Employer Program under the TFWP.

Supporting a sustainable fresh produce sector

Across the agri-food sector, ambitious targets are being set to reduce the environmental footprint of producing and supplying food. 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, coupled with the proliferation of different sustainability certifications and varying reporting requirements from customers and/or governments, add cost and complexity to the food supply chain without effectively advancing sustainability outcomes.

From reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across supply chains, to adopting sustainable packaging, to mitigating food loss and waste, government and industry require more robust data to identify and achieve our collective sustainability goals. Recognizing the globally integrated nature of the fresh produce supply chain, the Government of Canada should undertake direct engagement with the fresh produce sector to develop appropriate, data-driven sustainability tools and objectives that reflect our specific needs, challenges and opportunities.

Importantly, a balanced approach is necessary to ensure that environmental goals are pursued in tandem with economic viability and social well-being. This pragmatic lens is essential to maintaining food affordability while also aligning with international and North American frameworks to support our sector's competitiveness and overall resilience.

- **CPMA therefore recommends that your mandate letter to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change include the direction to engage with industry and drive North American and global conversations to align efforts, standards and systems to effectively achieve our environmental sustainability goals, while ensuring that economic and social considerations are treated as equal pillars of long-term sustainability.**

Primary packaging is integral to the sustainability of the global produce supply chain. 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. The Canadian produce industry continues to be deeply engaged in efforts to reduce and mitigate the use of plastics and other packaging. The Government should undertake direct engagement with the sector and must also address the challenge of fragmented collection systems across the country that do not effectively collect and recycle the materials that could be utilized in the circular economy.

- **CPMA recommends that your mandate letters to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities include the direction to provide federal leadership to support harmonized waste collection, recycling and composting infrastructure across Canada.**

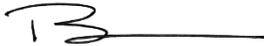
Innovative tools and alternative technologies are also needed to help the produce sector fight climate change while remaining globally competitive. It is imperative that fresh fruit and vegetable producers have

access to, and can utilize, products and processes that ensure the sustainability of the industry and support food security. Greater funding is also required for research into newer alternatives that are safer for humans and the environment than the deregistered crop protection products that urgently need to be replaced. In addition, a regulatory environment that facilitates the North American harmonization of product registration is essential to ensure timely and cost-effective access to safe, effective solutions, and to avoid placing Canadian producers at a competitive disadvantage.

- **CPMA recommends that your mandate letters to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, the Minister of Health, and other relevant Ministers include the direction to create an enabling regulatory environment for new products, technologies and business practices to support and de-risk the adoption of more sustainable solutions. This should include a focus on the harmonization of product registration across North America, and a commitment to ensure that the Pest Management Regulatory Agency is sufficiently resourced to fulfill core functions including pre-market applications, re-evaluations and minor use registrations.**

We thank you in advance for your consideration of the recommendations outlined above. CPMA and our members are happy to serve as a resource for you and your team and to answer any questions you may have about the needs and priorities of Canada's fresh fruit and vegetable industry as we look ahead to the 45th Parliament.

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

