

CPMA 2023 Government Relations Priorities

From the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and supply chain disruptions to geopolitical conflict and catastrophic weather events, 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 industry 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 2022, CPMA's Government Relations team:

- Shone a light on supply chain disruptions impacting the fresh produce sector at the Canadian, North American and global levels, and contributed to the work of Canada's National Supply Chain Task Force, whose report reflected several recommendations made by CPMA.
- Worked with our partners to support the introduction of Bill C-280, the *Financial Protection for Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Farmers Act*, and secured the backing of three of the four major political parties for this important legislation.
- Collaborated with partners to push for an Emergency Temporary Foreign Worker program to improve access to workers in the food manufacturing sector.
- Successfully delivered virtual and in-person joint advocacy events, including a post-election Meet and Greet series, Farm to Plate and Fall Harvest.
- Hosted our first *Half Your Plate* advocacy event on Parliament Hill, with a focus on increasing fresh produce consumption across Canada.
- Launched *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.
- Continued to make virtual and in-person connections with elected and non-elected officials, and make submissions to government consultations, on a wide range of policy areas, including: customs, food safety, labelling and other regulatory challenges, labour, organics, plastics, sustainability, trade, supply chain challenges and solutions, the development of a Canadian Food Industry Code of Practice, and more.
- Worked with partners across the agricultural sector to establish a collaborative mechanism 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 2023, 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 emphasize a common theme of making food a priority in legislation and policy to address barriers to food security and ensure 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

Making food a federal priority and increasing produce consumption –We know that Canadians are increasingly concerned with the rising costs of essentials, including fresh produce. Government support is needed to keep produce accessible to Canadians and make it easier to fill *Half Your Plate* with healthy and nutritious fruits and vegetables. Fortunately, the challenges of the past few years have also demonstrated that effective solutions can be achieved when government departments, international partners and other stakeholders work together with urgency and dedicated focus. In 2023, CPMA will continue to advocate for government action to strengthen Canada’s food security and increase produce consumption, including through a whole-of-government approach to make access to food and food production a federal priority in the development and implementation of policy, legislation and crisis management.

Government Relations Actions for 2023

- Advocate for measures that support the targets of the Food Policy for Canada to promote long-term social, environmental and economic sustainability of the Canadian food system and increase Canadians’ consumption of safe and nutritious food.
- Expand efforts to raise awareness among Parliamentarians and government officials of CPMA’s *Half Your Plate* and Freggie Children’s programming, and to build relationships with officials working on related files.
- Work with our provincial and other partners to advocate for a National School Food Policy and national school nutritious meal program as critical investments in the health of our children and our broader communities.
- 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.
- Work 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 – Over the past year, CPMA has undertaken significant efforts to raise awareness of supply disruptions impacting the fresh produce supply chain and to offer solutions to address these challenges in the short-term and promote resiliency in the long-term. We were actively engaged in the National Supply Chain Summit and the National Supply Chain Task Force and were pleased to see the federal government’s commitment to developing a National Supply Chain Strategy, with more details to come in the next federal budget. In 2023, CPMA will continue and expand our efforts in this area to inform the development of the National Supply Chain Strategy, and to advocate for urgent, multi-lateral government action to implement the recommendations of the National Supply Chain Task Force to mitigate the impact of disruptions on Canadians and Canadian businesses.

Government Relations Actions for 2023

- 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.
- Advocate for the establishment of priority lanes at ports of entry, and work with government to expand Trusted Trader programs, to further streamline the movement of essential and perishable products across the Canadian border.

- 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.
- Support measures to improve service standards and enhance government oversight of Canada's ports and to help businesses more seamlessly access international markets through our commercial border.
- Continue to work with industry and our partners to assess and quantify the impact of supply chain disruptions on the fresh produce industry and determine recommended solutions.
- Continue our efforts through the CPMA Customs Working Group to support members through the implementation of the CBSA Assessment and Revenue Management (CARM) Client Portal.
- Continue to identify and work with other agricultural and non-agricultural partner organizations, both in Canada and throughout North America, to further amplify our calls for government action.

Access to labour – Bridging the labour gap is critical to ensuring the success of the Canadian fresh produce industry in both the short and long-term. Last fall, CPMA's report, *Workforce Needs in the Produce Supply Chain* found labour shortages reported by 92% of growers, 75% of wholesalers, and 100% of retailers, with impacts to productivity, profitability and new product development. In 2023, CPMA will advocate for an effective National Agricultural Labour Strategy that applies a total supply chain lens to ensure that all aspects of the agriculture and agri-food sector – from the farm to the dinner plate – are considered and supported.

Government Relations Actions for 2023

- Advocate for a National Agricultural Labour Strategy that leverages the knowledge, expertise and recommendations of the work currently being undertaken by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA), Food and Beverage Canada (FBC) and the Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council (CAHRC), to improve the labour situation in the agricultural and food processing sectors across Canada.
- Advance the development and implementation of a Trusted Employer Program to further streamline and standardize the Labour Market Impact Assessment application process.
- Continue to work with our partners to push for improved service standards and processing times for applications under the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program and the Agricultural Stream of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.
- Ensure that CPMA's comments to government consultations and Parliamentary studies apply a supply chain lens to the issue of labour shortages and emphasize the development of a labour pool to meet the needs of all parts of the sector.

Produce sector stability and viability – Particularly in light of the many supply chain and inflationary pressures facing Canadians, it is crucial that the government provides all possible safeguards for the food supply chain to secure a stable food system now, and support sector viability long-term. After decades of advocacy, CPMA welcomed the introduction of Bill C-280, the *Financial Protection for Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Farmers Act*, which would 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 addition to this critical tool, we know that greater investments are needed to support the ability of the Canadian produce industry to leverage innovation. In 2023, CPMA will continue to advocate for government innovation funding specific to the fresh produce supply chain to foster our industry’s ongoing competitiveness.

Government Relations Actions for 2023

- Prioritize engagement efforts with Parliamentarians to advance the passage of Bill C-280, the *Financial Protection for Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Farmers Act*, including working with our members on direct outreach to confirm support from Members of Parliament.
- Advocate for innovation funding and whole-of-government support specific to the fresh produce supply chain.
- Work with our partners to increase awareness within government of regulatory barriers to innovation in the fresh produce sector, and to find collaborative solutions to these challenges.

Other Government Relations Priorities

- **Sustainability and plastics** – CPMA is proud to represent an industry whose members that have been stewards of the land, and leaders in implementing sustainable practices, long before sustainability became a core value for organizations, government and society as a whole. The fresh produce sector has shown leadership in addressing areas such as biodiversity, greenhouse gas emissions and carbon sequestration, food loss and waste, renewable energy, soil health, water conservation, and sustainable packaging. In 2023, CPMA will continue to engage with government to share the produce sustainability story, ensure that government policy and programming provides reasonable and fair recognition for past efforts to implement more environmentally sustainable practices, and advocate in support of initiatives such as the National Index on Agri-food Performance and a long-term strategy for sustainable water management. We will also continue to develop resources to support our members in reducing the use of unnecessary and problematic plastics, and to push for federal leadership and funding to support the development of harmonized, efficient and cost-effective recycling and composting collection within communities across Canada.
- **Regulatory modernization and improved government consultation** – 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. In 2023, 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, to foster better government understanding of the impacts of proposed regulations and promote a more effective regulatory modernization process. In addition, to expedite regulatory reform efforts, we will continue to advocate for government recognition and use of data and reviews from countries recognized as trusted regulatory authorities.

- **International Trade** – Geopolitical conflict, a changing climate and supply chain disruptions have all highlighted the need for Canada to foster a strong network of trading relationships, but the Canadian produce industry continues to face challenges to trade. In 2023, CPMA will continue to work 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.
- **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 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 2023, 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 to ensure that all Canadians and Canadian businesses have access to the critical infrastructure they need.
- **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 can continue to fulfill these important roles. In 2023, CPMA will advocate for greater government efforts to support the organic sector, including ongoing, dedicated resources to enable the cyclical review of the Canadian Organic Standards.
- **Next Round of the Canadian Agricultural Partnership** – With the next Agricultural Policy Framework set to begin in 2023, CPMA will continue to engage with our provincial partners and with federal and provincial governments to ensure that our members’ needs and priorities are reflected in this process.

Collaboration with other agri-food and supply chain organizations continues to grow in importance for CPMA as strategic tool in advancing and amplifying our messages to government on some of the key issues facing our sector. In 2023, we will continue to build on these collaborative efforts on major issues of concern for our members – including through the formation of an Agri-Food Common Interest Group focused on advancing joint priorities in the federal budget.

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