



Fueling our Competitiveness through Innovation and Infrastructure Federal Election 2021

TALKING POINTS:

When in doubt, think Connect (why is it important to YOU?), Contrast (what's missing?), Solve (how can the government/candidate help?)

- **Connect:** The fresh produce industry and the broader agricultural sector have the potential to act as the backbone of Canada's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and to support the economic development of communities across Canada, now and into the future.
- **Contrast:** A strong and growing Canadian produce industry will depend on our ability to leverage innovation and to take advantage of the opportunities posed by market shifts coming out of the pandemic, but more investment is needed to support our sector's growth.
- **Solve:** Government investments in innovation, critical and digital infrastructure are needed to position the Canadian fresh produce sector for success and foster our ongoing competitiveness.

OUR ASKS:

1. Will your party provide innovation funding and whole-of-government support specific to the fresh produce supply chain?
2. Will your party support small- and medium-sized businesses making the shift to digital and ensure sufficient, dedicated funding to support the rapid expansion of high-speed internet infrastructure and cell phone service coverage so that all Canadians and Canadian businesses have access to the digital infrastructure they need?
3. Will your party deliver sufficient, dedicated federal funding to invest in rural infrastructure, including roads, energy, and service infrastructure, such as waste management?

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND:

- **Canada can and should be a leader in agricultural innovation, but more government support is needed for us to compete on the world stage.** A [2019 RBC report](#) found that Canada's share of global AgTech investment is only 3.4%, falling behind countries such as Brazil and India.
- **The COVID-19 environment has resulted in a marked acceleration of trends towards online purchasing, delivery and curbside pick-up.** These trends pose great opportunities for fresh produce businesses in communities across Canada that are able to adapt and build their presence online.
- Recent surveys have found that 2.7 million Canadians intend to shop for groceries online post-pandemic¹ and nearly 50% would be interested in shopping at an online farmers' market².
- **The growth of e-commerce and increased government digitization efforts make access to broadband internet and cell phone coverage even more important.** As noted by the [Agri-Food Economic Strategy Table](#), the lack of digital infrastructure remains a major roadblock to innovation for many growers and other businesses in the fresh produce industry.
- **Without the necessary infrastructure in place, our rural communities will be left behind.** It is essential that communities across Canada see investments in critical infrastructure, including roads, energy, and service infrastructure, such as waste management.

¹ Source: Abacus Data, 2021.

² Source: Caddle, 2021.