



## PRESS RELEASE

### **Government of Canada-commissioned study highlights the importance of plastic packaging in ensuring a sustainable fresh produce sector**

*Government's study highlights the importance of fresh produce packaging in ensuring sustainable fresh produce supply chains*

August 22, 2024 (Ottawa, ON) – A study commissioned by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) highlights the critical role of packaging in fresh produce supply chains by quantifying the functionality of plastic packaging in fresh produce from a needs/benefit perspective. Although the study does not consider the impacts of packaging regulatory scenarios on fresh produce cost and availability, it contributes valuable insights to the industry's ongoing efforts to minimize fresh produce packaging waste.

Minimizing plastic packaging waste is a leading priority of the fresh produce industry. However, addressing packaging waste must not come at the expense of other key sustainability outcomes such as food safety, avoiding food waste or ensuring sustainable fresh produce supply chains. Recent regulatory initiatives in Canada have unfortunately been undertaken without fully accounting for the critical functionality that fresh produce packaging provides to meet a wide array of important supply-chain related outcomes. CPMA highlighted these concerns when it published its [regulatory impact studies in December 2023](#) in response to federal government's proposed fresh produce packaging regulations.

"CPMA is pleased to see the Government of Canada commission an industry-informed study which highlights the critical role and function that fresh produce packaging plays to ensure that high quality fruits and vegetables are available to Canadians year-round," said CPMA President Ron Lemaire. "Consumers are requesting safe, affordable, and high-quality fresh produce which is only available when respective supply chains – and the critical packaging forms they rely upon – are readily accessible."

The Government's study entitled "[Quantifying the Functionality Importance of Plastic Packaging in Fresh Produce from a Needs/Benefit Perspective](#)," provides an innovative framework for describing the critical functionality provided by fresh produce packaging, including containment (seal integrity and physical robustness), convenient (portion control and ease of handling) and communication (storage and handling instructions, as well as traceability). The study's functionality framework also captures one of the key functions provided by packaging: protection. This includes ensuring preservation, microbial control, as well as preventing contamination during transportation and storage. CPMA is pleased to see the Government's study reiterate many of the critical functions outlined in its [regulatory impact studies published in December 2023](#).

It is worth noting that although the study did not consider the impact of packaging on fresh produce affordability – a key criterion during the assessment and selection of packaging composition and design – the report does provide important insights into packaging selection across almost 95% of fresh produce sold by volume. Similarly, the study did not account for the impact on food availability year-round – a complex and important consideration given that four out of five dollars are spent on imported fresh



produce. Consequently, the study's reduction scenarios and associated conclusions must be weighted by the fact that these two key considerations – fresh produce affordability and availability – are significant factors when assessing and selecting a fresh produce packaging solution.

The study's categorization of fresh produce into groupings with shared packaging functionality requirements is acknowledged by CPMA as a novel approach to addressing the challenges of packaging waste, while also aiming to develop pragmatic sustainable packaging guidelines.

Given the complexity of fresh produce packaging and the functionality requirements packaging must provide to ensure safe and high-quality fresh produce year-round, CPMA commends the Government of Canada for commissioning the industry-informed study. It also encourages government departments and agencies whose mandates impact or are influenced by sustainable fresh produce supply chains to consider the report as an example of the importance of understanding the functionality of food packaging before developing policies or regulations.

CPMA and Western Growers (WG) recently joined forces to develop sustainable produce packaging guidelines which will benefit from the study's findings, most notably the functionality framework and the proposed produce categorization. Consequently, the study will be included among key references as CPMA and WG undertake their work over the coming months.

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**About Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA)**

Based in Ottawa, Ontario, CPMA is a not-for-profit organization that has been supporting a diverse membership made up of every segment of the fresh produce supply chain for 100 years. CPMA represents nearly 900 member companies responsible for 90% of the fresh fruits and vegetable sales in Canada and an industry that contributes nearly \$15 billion to Canada's GDP annually, supports over 185,000 jobs, and improves the health and productivity of Canadians.