

For Immediate Release

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Fall Harvest 2024: Canadian Fresh Produce Industry Engages Parliamentarians on Key Issues

OTTAWA, ON — As Canada approaches a federal election, the Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada (FVGC) and the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) gathered in Ottawa for their annual Fall Harvest advocacy event, held from November 18-20. This year's discussions centered on ensuring a resilient fresh produce sector that can keep Canadian tables stocked with nutritious fresh fruit and vegetables in the face of growing challenges.

Throughout Fall Harvest, CPMA and FVGC representatives held meetings with Parliamentarians and senior officials, including the Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food; Minister Gudie Hutchings, Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA); agriculture spokespeople for all three major opposition parties, John Barlow (Conservative), Yves Perron (Bloc Québécois), and Richard Cannings (NDP); Tom Rosser, Assistant Deputy Minister, Market and Industry Services Branch of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; and John Moffet, Associate Deputy Minister, Environment and Climate Change Canada. These meetings helped to advance the priorities of Canada's fresh produce sector and emphasize the need to safeguard the nation's food supply.

From labour shortages to sustainable practices, FVGC and CPMA emphasized the importance of evidence-based policies aligned with the realities of food production, underscoring that decisions made on Parliament Hill impact Canadians' access to fresh fruits and vegetables. This year's advocacy focused on two key issues:

- **Bridging the Workforce Gap:** Labour shortages continue to impact the fresh produce sector, especially given the seasonal and perishable nature of products. FVGC and CPMA members called for targeted solutions to attract and retain a reliable workforce across the supply chain and emphasized the importance of ensuring the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) and the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) meet the sector's unique needs.
- **Investing in Data-Driven Sustainability Solutions:** CPMA and FVGC members highlighted the need for strategic investment in a robust Data Strategy that allows for accurate measurement and outcome-based solutions, enabling Canada's produce industry to meet ambitious sustainability goals, reduce emissions, adopt sustainable packaging, and mitigate food loss and waste across the supply chain.

Fall Harvest 2024 kicked off with a panel discussion with members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, **MP Kody Blois**, **MP John Barlow**, **MP Yves Perron**, and **MP Richard Cannings**, moderated by **David Coletto** of Abacus Data. The panel highlighted the need for strategic government investments and partnerships to enhance the long-term sustainability of Canadian agriculture, emphasizing labour support, regulatory improvements, and the critical importance of passing Bill C-280 in its original form to ensure financial protection for fruit and vegetable growers and sellers, vital to Canada's food security.

Following the panel, Mr. Coletto also provided industry participants with key insights on the political landscape in Canada as we look ahead to the next federal election. He explored the impact of Canada's scarcity mindset on public perceptions, emphasizing the need to connect industry priorities—like labour, policy changes, and supply chain resilience—with consumer concerns such as affordability and access to fresh produce.

On the evening of November 19, the two organizations hosted a reception that brought together 250 Parliamentarians, officials, staff, and industry representatives providing an opportunity to connect and strengthen collaborative relationships.

FVGC President Marcus Janzen stated, "Ensuring a sustainable fresh produce sector requires a committed focus on workforce solutions and policies prioritizing food security. We are calling on the government to view all policies through a food lens—recognizing that every policy decision impacts Canadian farms and the nation's food security. With government support, our sector can continue to meet the demands of Canadians while overcoming the unique labour, environmental and market challenges we face."

"The fresh produce industry is a vital part of Canada's economy, supporting jobs in rural and urban communities across the country – while also playing a pivotal role in our health and well-being," said CPMA Chair George Pitsikoulis. "This week's discussions with Parliamentarians and officials reinforced our commitment to ensuring Canadian families have access to nutritious and delicious fruits and vegetables."

CPMA and FVGC thank all sponsors, Parliamentarians, and participants for making Fall Harvest 2024 a success. For further information, [please visit our website](#).

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About the Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada

The Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada (FVGC) represents growers across the country involved in the production of over 120 different types of crops on over 14,000 farms, with a farm gate value of

\$6.8 billion in 2022. FVGC is an Ottawa-based voluntary, not-for-profit, national association, and, since 1922, has advocated on important issues that impact Canada's fresh produce sector, promoting healthy, safe, and sustainable food, ensuring the continued success and growth of the industry.

About the Canadian Produce Marketing Association

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.