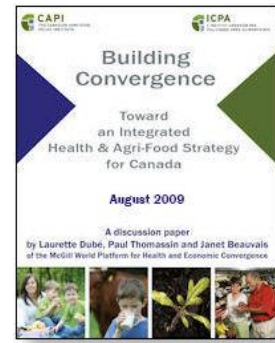


# Improving the economics of agriculture linked to improving the health of Canadians, says new CAPI report

OTTAWA, August 18, 2009 — A report commissioned by the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute (CAPI), *Building Convergence: Toward an Integrated Health and Agri-Food Strategy for Canada*, makes the case for linking agriculture and health policy in Canada.



"Canada is facing a diet-related health crisis and a farm income crisis driven by very different challenges," said Dr. Laurette Dubé, Professor and Founding Chair and Scientific Director of the McGill World Platform for Health and Economic Convergence. "But a solution to both rests increasingly on the convergence of health and agriculture policy."

Obesity rates are rising. Diet-related chronic diseases are resulting in higher rates of cancer, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes. The cost of providing health care continues to rise. Chronic diseases consume up to two-thirds of the direct costs of the health system.

In agriculture, government program payments to farmers sometimes exceed net farm income. While farm incomes vary across the sector and can fluctuate year to year (such as with changes in commodity prices), perpetual government support costs are substantial. In 2005, program payments were some \$5 billion.

"By working together, the agri-food industry and the health care system can simultaneously improve the health of Canadians, reduce health care budgets, stimulate agri-food innovation and improve the economic viability of the agri-food industry," said Dr. David Sparling, Chair of Agri-Food Innovation and Regulation at the Richard Ivey School of Business, who prepared an abridged version of the report for CAPI.

The report recognizes initiatives being taken by governments to respond to these challenges. It also points to the need for change, such as the need for greater public investment in food related R&D, improving the regulatory environment, advancing health claims for foods, and promoting traceability. As well, the report promotes the concept of a "Canadian diet" to promote awareness of health benefits from Canadian foods.

The report suggests that the agriculture and agri-food sector can benefit from responding to the healthcare challenge and shift in consumer preferences, through strategies that will drive up exports and increase domestic consumption of healthier foods.

The report was prepared for CAPI by The McGill World Platform for Health and Economic Convergence, authored by Dr. Laurette Dubé, Paul Thomassin and Janet Beauvais.

"The message for policy-makers is clear," said David McInnes, CAPI's President and Chief Executive Officer. "A coordinated and effective policy framework is required for health and agriculture and this is the basis to further engage producers, industry and researchers, among others, to bring about the benefits of convergence." CAPI is now considering further research required to advance the concept of an integrated agri-food and health strategy for Canada.

The Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute (CAPI) is an independent, unbiased policy forum that is dedicated to the success of Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector. CAPI is a catalyst. It identifies emerging issues, promotes dialogue and advances alternative solutions to issues with stakeholders across the diverse agriculture and agri-food value chain, and among academia, research institutes, governments and other sectors in Canada. Based in Ottawa, CAPI was established as a not-for-profit corporation in 2004 by the federal government and is guided by a diverse Board of Directors and an Advisory Committee.