

New report a wake-up for Canada's agri-food sector

OTTAWA, February 7, 2011 — Canada is not realizing the full potential of a major strategic asset — the country's agri-food sector. The consequences of falling profitability, lost opportunity and declining relevance are impairing Canada's ability to capitalize on the tremendous opportunities that lie ahead. That's the main message in a new report from the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute (CAPI), *Canada's Agri-Food Destination*.

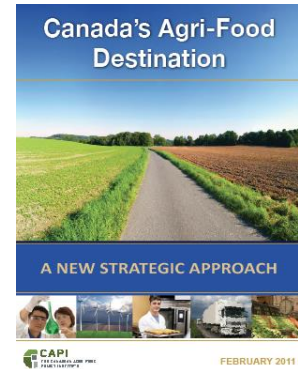
Canada's agri-food industry is the country's largest employer and a major exporter. Yet chronic unprofitability, rising food imports and the risk of being surpassed by other exporting nations flag serious underlying deficiencies in the system. Add to this a dramatic rise in diet-related diseases and obesity, environmental threats, falling research and development investments and the persistent call for a modern regulatory process. The status quo is unacceptable. Canada's agri-food industry has the natural and human resources to do much better — yet Canada risks sleeping right through its greatest potential.

CAPI is hoping to wake the country up by sparking discussions designed to pioneer a new agri-food plan. Industry and government need to embrace new approaches, including transforming the traditional value chain mindset, adopting a new innovation model and reforming government support programs. The plan also advances ideas for healthier food choices, environmental sustainability and regulatory change.

Achieving our potential requires that **Canada must have the most successful good food systems on the planet**. The agri-food industry, its suppliers, researchers, adjacent sectors and governments need to work in closely integrated food systems to achieve this "destination" in order to reach the following targets – which are catalysts for change – by 2025:

- **To double Canada's dollar value of agri-food exports to \$75 billion (currently: \$38.8 billion).**
- **To produce and supply 75% of our own food (currently: 68%).**
- **To have over 75% of the agri-food sector rely on biomaterials and/or biofuels to develop new revenues or reduce expenses.**

"We hope the ideas in this report will spur creative discussion among all stakeholders – from farmers to foodies, from researchers to regulators, from environmentalists to economists, from the health community to consumers and back again," said Gaëtan Lussier, Chair of CAPI. "We need all participants in the agri-food sector and all those involved in food to step up to the plate. The opportunity is clear. We need consumers here and abroad to choose Canadian food. We want investors to choose Canada. We know that the agri-food sector can contribute even more to Canada's prospects."



The ideas for this report were developed since late 2009 with the establishment of three Leadership Panels (on food and wellness connection, sustainability and viability) to explore key agri-food issues and propose solutions. Participants represented the breadth of the agri-food sector, including primary agriculture, processors, agri-food businesses and organizations, input providers and retail, and from health and environment organizations and research institutes, academia, and federal and provincial governments.

"We need an agri-food plan that transcends our traditional five-year planning horizon and rediscovers the vitality and sense of excitement that comes with new opportunities," said Lussier. "An intensively collaborative attitude across each food system will lead to good food responsibly produced and reliably supplied."

The next step is to receive feedback from industry, government, and other stakeholders on how best to implement these strategic changes. CAPI invites comments and insights. CAPI will focus its efforts now on how best to implement the core ideas in the destination report and expects to provide an update on the feedback in May 2011.

CAPI is also releasing a number of research papers on its website that helped support the development of this work (www.capi-icpa.ca).

About CAPI

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.

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