

Forum on agri-food future sparks dialogue

OTTAWA, November 19, 2015 — The Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute (CAPI) and Canada 2020, two leading Canadian think tanks, held The Forum on Canada's Agri-Food Future in Ottawa on November 3-4.

The sold-out event brought together advocates of change from across Canada and abroad to answer the question: *What do you feel is truly possible for Canada's agri-food sector to achieve in the future?* It also posed a more provocative question to focus the discussions: *Could Canada become the most trusted food system on the planet?* Given the election of the new federal government just two weeks before, the Forum was timed to explore Canada's policy and strategic choices and its future path to greater competitiveness.

"The Forum tapped into a deep-seated feeling held among many – that Canada can express a bolder aspiration in terms of its role as a food provider," notes David McInnes, President and CEO of CAPI. "And the issue of "trust," when broadly considered, is a lens to gauge and guide the agri-food sector's performance in this changing food world."

The event attracted over 275 agri-food leaders and representatives from the broader food system, including government, financial services, civil society, academia, scientists and others. The high calibre of guest speakers inspired the dialogue, and included:

- Karen Ross, Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture
- Bill Buckner, Senior Vice President, Cargill
- Jason Clay, Senior Vice President, Food and Markets, WWF
- Michael Evans, President, Alibaba Group
- Michael McCain, President and CEO of Maple Leaf Foods

The complete list of speakers and details can be found at www.caff15.ca. A broad array of agri-food and sector partners and sponsors came together to help make the Forum a quality event and a success. CAPI is now in the process of linking speaker presentations to its website.

CAPI did not hold "just another conference" but, rather, engaged in a process to solicit ideas beforehand; those submissions, and some posted since the event, are also available now on the Forum website. Based on what CAPI heard at the Forum, and from these ideas and even further follow-up consultations, CAPI will publish in January 2016 a very succinct and must-read call to action for government and agri-food leaders. In 2016, new policy agendas across Canada will be getting underway and this report is timed to be relevant to the next policy dialogues and priorities.

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