

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GROWING STRONGER: AIMING FOR RESILIENCE IN OUR CANADIAN FOOD SYSTEM

OTTAWA, Ontario, May 28, 2020 – From the earliest moments of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been questions and concerns around our food system. Canadians have seen a steady stream of stories about empty grocery store shelves, rising food bank use, excess food being dumped, fields left unplanted because of a lack of temporary foreign workers and meat packing plants becoming disease hotspots.

This pandemic is unprecedented, and it can be argued that our system responded well. But the world is fragile. There will be future crisis. The question must be asked, “Could we have done better?”

That’s the focus of a new national project launched by the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute (CAPI) and the University of Guelph’s Arrell Food Institute (AFI).

“Growing Stronger,” will connect all players within Canada’s food system through an online portal and series of virtual consultations over the summer and into the fall. This nationwide dialogue will result in policy recommendations, questions for future research projects and the creation of a learning network for participants. Draft conclusions and recommendations will be debated at the 2020 Arrell Food Summit before being presented in their final form in 2021 at the CAPI Big Solutions Forum.

“In the post- COVID19 world, seeking answers to the key question of “how to build a resilient Canadian agri-food system?” will become more urgent than ever, as this crisis brings to light both where we successfully adapted as well as revealing hidden vulnerabilities in the Canadian agri-food system,” said U of G Prof. Evan Fraser, director of AFI.

Fraser is co-chairing the project with former deputy minister for the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Deb Stark, who is currently a board member for both CAPI and U of G, and Don Buckingham, president and CEO of CAPI.

“What went well? What did not? Where do we go from here? If we can answer these questions, Canada’s food system will be even stronger. And that’s better for us all.” said Stark.

“Whether you are a producer, processor or retailer, a member of an indigenous community or a migrant farm worker, an urban consumer with job security or someone who depends on a foodbank, we’d like your advice on the food system,” said Buckingham. “We must listen and learn what rural, urban and remote communities faced during the lockdown and then use these learnings to inform our future policy directions for greater sustainability and resilience for Canada’s food system.”

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As an independent, non-partisan policy catalyst, the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute brings insight, evidence and balance to emerging issues. CAPI provides a neutral place to hold dialogues and generate perspectives among leaders across the food system. For more information, visit: www.capi-icpa.ca

Media Inquiries:

Kim Kelly, Director, Corporate Services

kellyk@capi-icpa.ca