

THE CAPI CONNECTION

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Elise Bigley | Editor

Upcoming Events

Say It Ain't So(il)!

Join us for a webinar showcasing our CAPI Doctoral Fellows research on soil health and Canadian agriculture. Moderated by Senator Rob Black.

[Register Today](#) | June 17

What's New at CAPI

CAPI Big Solutions Forum

- [Intro Video](#)
- [Pre-Dialogue Recording \(May 11\)](#)
- [Webinar Recording \(May 20\)](#)
- [Synthesis Report Executive Summary](#)

Budget 2021: What it means for Canada's Agri-Food System

- [Webinar Recording](#)
- [Highlights Video](#)

Dialogues on Trade and Climate Change

- [Conference Recording](#)

What We're Reading

The report, **Socio-Technical Innovation Bundles for Agri-Food Systems Transformation** summarizes the findings of a panel of experts from many different continents, disciplines and organizations who were tasked with assessing the current state of agri-food systems and identifying emergent technologies capable of addressing the transition needed to achieve a more sustainable, equitable, and inclusive global agri-food system. They conclude that to achieve these goals, we need to enable market, regulatory and sociocultural environments through “socio-techno innovation bundles”. The lead author was our keynote speaker at CAPI’s recent Pre-Dialogue forum on May 11, 2021.

Barrett, Christopher B. et al. Socio-Technical Innovation Bundles for Agri-food Systems Transformation, Report of the International Expert Panel on Innovations to Build Sustainable, Equitable, Inclusive Food Value Chains. Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell Atkinson Centre for Sustainability and Springer Nature, 2020. Available here: [Innovations to Build Sustainable, Equitable, Inclusive Food Value Chains \(cornell.edu\)](#) and here: [Bundling innovations to transform agri-food systems \(nature.com\)](#).



One Great Graphic

Recent trade data from the US Census Bureau shows just how important the Canadian export market for consumer-oriented food products was in 2020. [1] Exports to Canada rose to \$US 17 billion, to account for 25% of the total. This comes as no surprise since during CAPI's recent Big Solutions Forum dialogue, it was pointed out how U.S. food imports have grown from 15% to 30% of Canada's domestic food market since 1992, leading to calls for more value-added capacity here at home.



2020 may have been unusual in that open borders helped keep supplies coming when Canadian supply chains faced temporary shortages due to COVID, especially for meat. However, as food becomes a more strategic asset in the years ahead, Canada could leverage its importance to the US market while increasing Canadian value added consumer food products.

[1] Consumer- oriented food products include those products that require minimal transformation including fresh and processed fruit and vegetables, bakery products, and beef and beef products among others etc.

Celebrating the RBC Foundation

The Canadian Agri-Food Foundation (CAFF) is proud to be partnering with RBC Tech for Nature through which it will receive a donation from the RBC Foundation alongside more than 100 leading environmental organizations. Together, we're tackling the pressing environmental challenges of our times by leveraging technology, developing innovative solutions and building multi-sector partnerships. The project Spearheading Solutions: Helping Farmers Operate Better, Smarter and Environmentally Sustainable is funded in part by the RBC Foundation and we are actively seeking additional private and foundation partners. Please contact Jenel Bode, Director of Fundraising at bodej@capi-icpa.ca to learn more.

CAFF is a registered charity that was established as an independent organization to support the important work of CAPI.

Partner Spotlight RBC Tech for Nature - RBC Foundation



CAPI acknowledges the overall support of its many partners particularly Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.



Creating Prosperity from Chaos

In early 2020, the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute (CAPI) launched a research program under the theme Creating Prosperity from Chaos. Initially, the chaos referred to disruptions in global trade, the sustainability of agri-food systems, and food security. However, chaos took on a new meaning when the pandemic brought a chaotic “new normal” to our daily lives. Creating Prosperity from Chaos culminated last week with The Big Solutions Forum (BSF). It was here where we outlined the conclusions reached from the year-long program.

Overall, we believe the Canadian agri-food system has the capacity to contribute to sustainable food production and global food security while improving its competitive advantage. It operates at the nexus of trade, climate change and food security.

Conclusions

Specifically, we found:

1. **Sustainable intensification** is essential for growth and food security

2. **Sustainable agri-food supply chains** are essential for resilience of all sector participants and domestic food security

3. **Climate, animal, and plant disease risks** loom large for productivity, food security, human health, and socio-economic health

4. Growth in value-added capacity will require **the right business conditions** to attract investment

5. A **“One-Health” approach** to R&D, innovation, regulatory and policy development is critical

6. Canada’s past successes could be repeated for **high-value products**

7. **Rule-based trade** is essential to the growth of sustainable production and food security

8. **Different countries’ climate change policies** have the potential to further distort global trade

9. The current geo-political climate requires new approaches for **global solutions**

Next Steps

Four key actions are essential to delivering sustainable intensification by leading to new research and innovation, as well as new technologies that increase productivity without negative social, economic and environmental impacts. They could reduce the risk of future pandemics and lead to policies that promote agriculture’s role at the intersection of plant, animal and human health, and the shared environment in which they exist.

The following key actions are required to Create Prosperity from Chaos:

1. **Walls must be torn down** inside and across governments, industries and academia to maximize environmental, social and economic outcomes.

2. **The agri-food system must leverage the assets** it has today and those it will have in 20-30 years.

3. The nature and complexity of current and future issues require **meaningful public-private partnerships**.

4. **Aspirational leadership is imperative** to maximize outcomes and to move the agri-food system forward successfully.

Canada’s climate policies must consider Canadian agriculture’s environmental competitiveness, its role in solving climate change, and its sustainability. These policies must consider the climate’s impact on soil-water-plant-animal health; reward farmers for their efforts to reduce emissions and sequester carbon; and protect of Canadian soil, water and biodiversity.

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Canada's agri-food system faces increased risks abroad as the multilateral system weakens and geopolitical conflicts disrupt trade. The key actions can help develop strategies that obtain and maintain global market access; create alliances with like-minded countries to improve trade outcomes; lead in international standard setting; and diversify markets.

The greatest, and most underappreciated, opportunity for market diversification is the domestic market. The four key actions can increase value-added processing in Canada and lead to efficient regulation; investments in automation and efficient food processing; higher returns for differentiated products; increased domestic food security; decreased risk from trade barriers and exchange rates; and more high-paying jobs, all while delivering improved environmental outcomes.

The Big Solutions Forum underscored an important reality: silos, internal divisions, short-term thinking and acceptance of the status quo, fail to maximize the full potential of the agri-food system and put its future at risk. Without transformational changes in Canada's agri-food system and in agri-food policy, our grasslands will disappear, cropland soils will decline, value-added processing will move outside our borders, and the likelihood of another pandemic will only increase.

Throughout the Creating Prosperity from Chaos program, there was an intense amount of optimism due to the current performance future potential of the industry. The question remains, is the agri-food system prepared to implement the key actions or is that optimism misplaced?

Tyler McCann, Chief Engagement Officer