

# THE CAPI CONNECTION

Elise Bigley | Editor

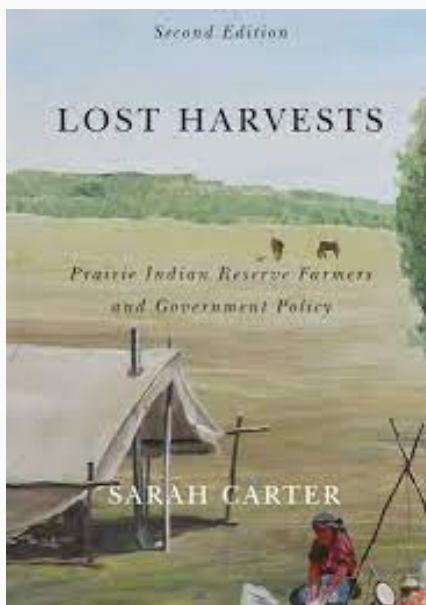
## A Missed Opportunity for Debate

Canada's 44th General Election has come and gone without a serious debate about agri-food policy. While that may reflect the dynamics of modern personality-driven campaigns, influenced by soundbites and social media, it does not mean there is consensus about the future of agri-food policy in Canada.

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## What We're Reading

Dr. Sarah Carter, in her 1990 book **Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy** challenges assumptions around the failure of agriculture on Plains reserves, which was attributed to a lack of interest of aptitude for farming of Indigenous people. Carter addresses the assumption "by demonstrating that reserve residents expended considerable effort on cultivation; government policies, more than anything else, acted to undermine their success."



Through extensive research, Dr. Carter provides the reader with an in-depth analysis of government policy, responses of Indigenous peoples and the impact of those policies on the socio-economic condition of the reserve communities on the prairies. Lost Harvests was recently featured on the podcast **The Diversity Imperative**. We encourage you to listen to the interview with Dr. Carter [here](#).

## What's New at CAPI

**After E-Day: The challenges and opportunities of Canada's federal government**

Webinar Recording (French [here](#))

## CAPI in the News

**"Election campaign largely ignored agriculture sector"**

Laura Rance, Winnipeg Free Press

**"Bees with jobs, post-election direction, Canada's 'super ministry'"**

Kim McConnell on Between the Rows

**"Découvrez L'ICPA"**

Tyler McCann and Gaetan Lussier on La Quotidienne

**"Agri-food should be in the driver's seat of a post pandemic recovery"**

Tyler McCann for The Hub

**"Next cabinet needs to get serious about foods, agriculture leaders say"**

Jake Edmiston, Financial Post

**"CAPI names four agri-food experts as distinguished fellows"**

RealAgriculture

**"L'Institut canadien des politiques agroalimentaires fait l'annonce de ses nouveaux boursiers distingués"**

SamyRabbat

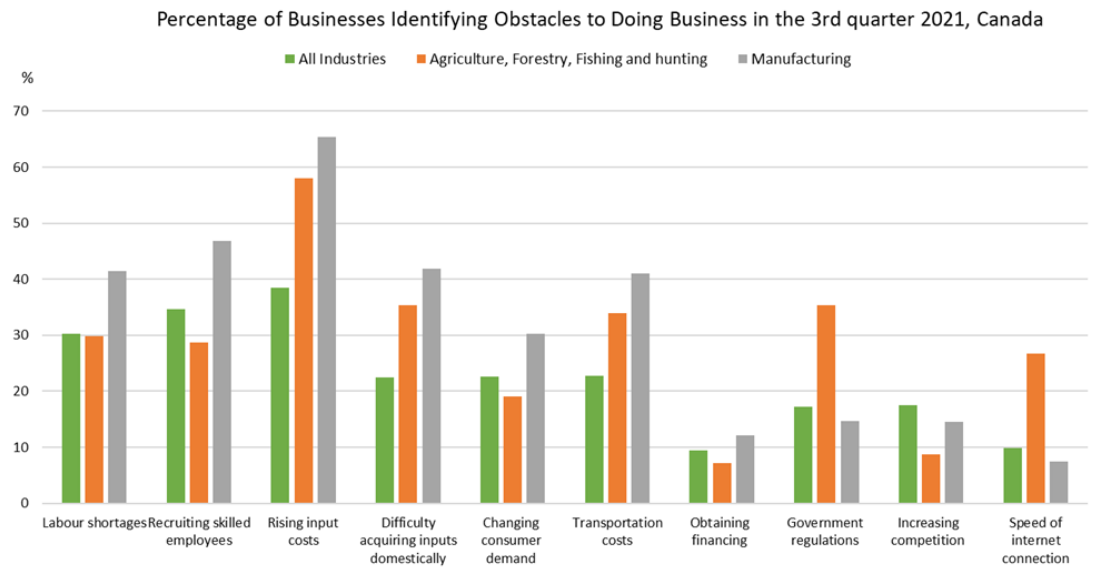
**"Goddard highlights agriculture's role in health"**

Jim Romahn, Agri 007

# One Great Graphic

## *Future Obstacles to Doing Business for Agricultural Businesses in the Third Quarter 2021*

Statistics Canada just released results from its Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, conducted to understand better the impact of COVID-19 on specific groups and industries. During the third quarter of 2021, a higher share of business owners in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting industry expect obstacles from rising input costs, difficulty



acquiring inputs, and transportation costs compared to an all-industry average. This is not surprising given recent drought conditions, commodity price pressures and supply chain issues. On the other hand, more manufacturing businesses such as food processing, expected obstacles from labour shortages and recruiting skilled workers as well as rising input costs. Not surprisingly, for agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting businesses, which primarily operate in more rural areas, the speed of internet connection was expected to be a major obstacle compared to other industries, while government regulations were also identified as a more important obstacle for agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting in the third quarter of 2021.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, Third Quarter 2021.

## A missed opportunity for debate on serious agri-food issues

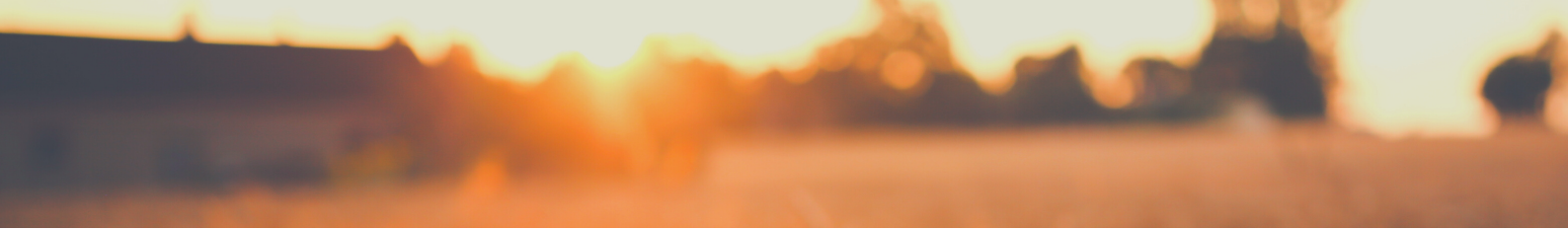
Canada's 44th General Election has come and gone without a serious debate about agri-food policy. While that may reflect the dynamics of modern personality-driven campaigns, influenced by soundbites and social media, it does not mean there is consensus about the future of agri-food policy in Canada.

Those within the agri-food system would have liked to see some recognition of the system's existing economic, environmental, and social contributions throughout the campaign. From input supplier to farmer, processor, retailer, consumer, and everyone in between, those contributions are felt across the country in rural, suburban and urban communities.

Those within the system would have also liked to see some recognition of the role it can play in Canada's post-pandemic recovery. The system already has a positive impact, and it can do more.

However, recognizing the current and potential contributions of the agri-food system is only a first step. Campaigns are also an opportunity to have a meaningful debate about the future of agri-food policy. There is certainly no shortage of issues that warrant real dialogue.

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For example, Business Risk Management (BRM) programs cost federal and provincial governments almost \$2 billion a year, and are in the midst of being renegotiated, yet the last campaign featured little discussion about what the future of those programs should be.

Where platforms did mention BRM programs (not all of them did), no specifics were offered. However, there are real policy alternatives that could have been debated. For example, one party might support spending more to increase the AgriStability payment trigger. Another might commit to replacing AgriStability and AgriInvest with an insurance-based margin program. Commitments could also be made to leverage the private sector or increase cross-compliance to improve environmental outcomes. A rich policy debate with pros and cons would serve farmers, governments, and taxpayers well.

There is also a crucial debate needed on the future of food and how Canada will meet the critical needs of food security, environmental sustainability, and farm profitability. Will it be through an approach that embraces innovation, that commits to modernizing regulatory frameworks, supports new tools like gene-editing, relies on new research and encourages scientific risk-taking?

Or will it be through an approach that uses more conventional methods, prioritizing small scale production in local, closed systems? An approach that pushed more restrictive, hazard-based regulations. A focus less on inventing new tools but instead on minimizing the impacts of food production.

These different approaches could underpin a serious debate about the future of food. A serious debate based on research and analysis, including the pros and cons of proposed solutions and alternative options would serve the agri-food system well.

While it may be difficult to imagine this type of policy debate during a campaign, policy debates and competing visions are possible during an election. We saw this on important issues like housing and childcare. So why not on agri-food?

The lack of a policy debate about food issues may reflect a policy consensus on the challenges and opportunities facing the agri-food system. If that is the case, one would hope it would make it easier for governments to act.

The apparent consensus may also mean that parties accept the status quo. However, the status quo is rooted in the policy challenges of the past and not well-suited for the policy challenges of the future. Acceptance of the status quo misses the opportunity to ask difficult questions about the future and to shape the policies that will strengthen Canada's agri-food system and position it to lead the post-pandemic recovery.

How food is produced, sold and consumed is changing and will likely look very different in the future than it does today. That is one of the many reasons why Canada's agri-food system would benefit from more policy research and analysis, dialogue and debate. An election would have been a good opportunity to put forward bold visions for the future of food and to make agri-food policy a focus for Canadians.

Tyler McCann, Managing Director



# Funding Opportunities at CAPI

**Your commitment is vital.** It is urgent to intensify our efforts as agriculture and agri-food can be essential solution providers for the economy, environment, health and global food security. But creative policy changes are critical.

## Agri-Food Policy Competition

Fall of 2021

We are actively seeking  
partners to fund this initiative

**CAPI is pleased to announce it will be hosting its first-ever Agri-Food Policy Competition in the fall of 2021!**

CAPI is committed to seeking out bold, innovative policy ideas that will address the Canadian agri-food system's critical need: to build a more resilient agri-food system that produces more and better, sustainably, and profitably to meet the growing needs of consumers in Canada and around the globe.

The competition will call for creative ideas on how public and private actors can help meet this need. Grants will be awarded to turn those ideas into concrete policy proposals.

### *Investing in the Environment*

New technologies and tools are changing the way today's farmers operate. However, there can be a cost to adopting new technologies or changing the way food is produced that can prevent farmers from increasing their contributions to the fight against climate change and protecting biodiversity.

These new technologies and practices can positively impact the environment, but that only happens if farmers adopt them.

The project aims to determine what public and private policies can be used to rapidly increase the adoption, implementation of new tools, and the practices to maximize environmental outcomes.

***This project is funded in part by the RBC Foundation and we are actively seeking additional private and foundation partners to officially launch the project.***



### **Spearheading Solutions**

Helping Farmers Operate Better, Smarter &  
Environmentally Sustainably

## Support CAPI

**You can make a difference!** Become a partner or supporter of our work through the Canadian Agri-Food Foundation, a registered charity. Your commitment is vital as it is urgent to intensify our efforts as agriculture and agri-food can be essential solution providers for the economy, environment, health, food and global security but creative policy changes are essential. Click [\*\*here\*\*](#) to learn more.

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

**Canada**