

THE CAPI CONNECTION

Elise Bigley | Editor

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Photo courtesy Toban Dyck

COMMENTARY

A Case for Evidence and Advocacy

by Tyler McCann
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In our increasingly fast-paced, chaotic world, politicians and policymakers are under significant pressure to make the “right” decisions. The changing role that evidence and advocacy play impacts how “right” is defined. While evidence and advocacy may often seem to be at odds with each other, some of CAPI’s recent work has demonstrated how they need to work together to ensure that policy decisions deliver the best outcomes for the agri-food system.

Over the last several years, there have been many references to the importance of “evidence-based” decision-making. These claims may lead some to think of policy development as a black-and-white process where the “evidence” provides clear options for policymakers on



which to “base” decisions.

While evidence-based decision-making may be a catchy phrase to throw around, the decision-making process involves a lot more grey than black and white. There are trade-offs, consequences (both intended and unintended), political considerations, fiscal pressures, and precedents to consider.

This dynamic came through clearly over several months as

CAPI worked with the coalition on the National Index on Agri-Food Performance, exploring the Sustainability Index’s role in policy development. The process involved engaging policymakers and influencers in a dialogue about what information they use today, where gaps exist, what role the Index can play, and the limitations.

Sustainability is still evolving within agriculture policy. There is a growing consensus about the need for a holistic definition that includes economic, environmental, and social sustainability, but the consensus is less solid when you move past that high level. The Index coalition has built a process where 75 plus partners have come together to deliver a far more complete framework with indicators defining and measuring sustainability in Canada’s agri-food system.

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WHAT'S NEW AT CAPI

Webinar Recording

RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE:
What it Means for Agriculture and Food Security

Perspective Report

AGRI-FOOD PRODUCTIVITY AND TRADE:
Policy Gaps and Possibilities

Research Report

FOOD SECURITY IN THE WAKE OF THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS:
How Can Canada Play a Role

Webinar Recording

RAIL RELIABILITY:
Challenges and Policy Solutions

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The final report will be shared in the future, but a key conclusion that came from the report is that while the framework may not have a direct influence on policy decisions, it can play an important role in establishing consensus and a common starting point for the policy development process.

Bringing actors together with a stake in policymaking (industry, civil society, academia, and government) at the beginning of the policy process may not make it easier to remain united when it comes to making decisions, but it should facilitate dialogue on this critical issue for the sector.

During interviews for the review of the Index, one stakeholder commented that rather than talking about evidence-based decision making, it is more accurate to refer to evidence-informed decision making. While “evidence-informed” may be more precise, it may still seem like many decisions today are not well-informed by evidence.

There are times when that may be because the evidence is evolving, or times when other factors mentioned above (fiscal pressures, political considerations) are playing a role.

These other factors were discussed in a dialogue where CAPI presented at the **Australian Farm Institute (AFI)** annual conference in early March 2022. The conference asked, “Where to next for advocacy?” and I participated in the kick-off panel discussion exploring the factors influencing advocacy and policy development.

Drawing on both the work done assessing the role the Sustainability Index can play and on personal experience, I present-

ed three conclusions and three recommendations to the AFI audience:

- 1) The old ways of advocacy aren’t good enough anymore;
- 2) Governments will act but are looking beyond traditional economic considerations; and finally,
- 3) Agriculture is having a hard time adjusting.

The recommendations I made for improving the future of advocacy were:

- 1) Bring new solutions – the policy development process needs to look beyond the status quo to new and novel solutions that can deliver more than just economic outcomes.
- 2) Be prepared and have backup – backup means having both evidence that supports policy positions and a coalition of supporters to attract legitimization positions and secure support.
- 3) Work harder and smarter – now more than ever, it is essential to understand where decisions are made and what influences the decision-makers. The traditional power centres have shifted, and advocacy needs to shift too.

At the end of the day, while there is often no single “right” decision to most big policy questions, evidence and advocacy can make decisions better. The combination of evidence and advocacy is also often greater than the sum of its parts.

WHAT WE ARE READING

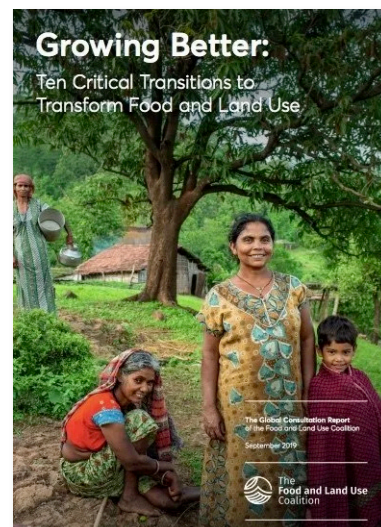
Growing Better: Ten Critical Transitions to Transform Food and Land Use

Agri-food producers are thinking more about sustainable agriculture, and Canada is no exception: the new Agricultural Policy Framework (2023–2028) is being framed around making Canada a world leader in sustainable agriculture.

This month, CAPI highlights a report by the Food and Land Use Coalition, which contains recommendations on how countries can achieve the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the Paris climate targets by 2030 and 2050.

The authors recommend increased spending on these (and other) areas:

- forest and natural area protection and restoration;
- extension services (training and access to new technology);
- research and development for alternative proteins (especially plant-based, insect-based, and laboratory-cultured);
- payments for ecosystem services;



- maternal and child health and nutrition; and
- education of women and girls.

The report also suggests how to attract business investment into sustainable supply chains: develop innovative finance tools, foster an enabling business environment, and improve rural roads and digital infrastructure.

To learn about these actions and more (check out the ten critical transitions on page 11!), visit the full report [here](#).

ONE GREAT GRAPH

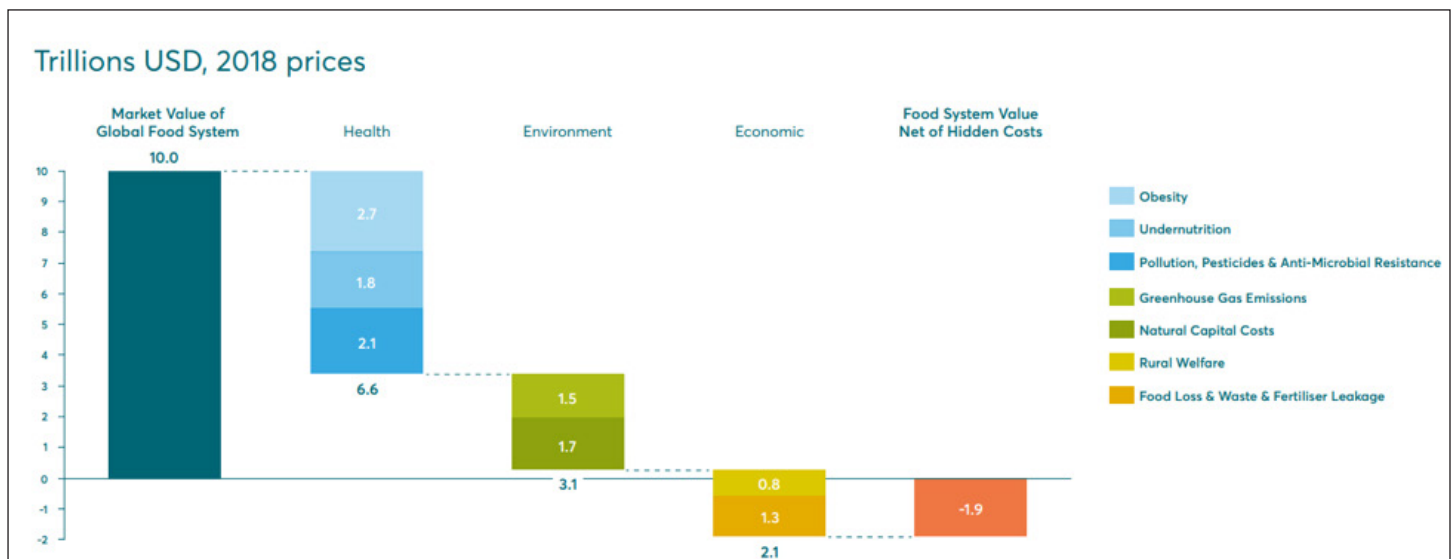
The hidden costs of global food and land use systems

Sustainability is a growing concern, especially for large agri-food exporters around the world. As a net-exporting country, Canada should be aware of the hidden costs to society and the environment of the global food system as trade agreements increasingly have chapters on agri-food sustainability.

According to the Food and Land Use Coalition (2019), the market value of the global food system amounted to \$10 trillion US in 2018 prices – but its hidden or true costs were even larger, at \$12 trillion. This results in a net value of negative \$2 trillion. The components of these hidden costs are:

- health (\$6.6 T) due to obesity, undernutrition, pollution, and anti-microbial resistance;
- environmental costs (\$3.1 T) due to greenhouse gas emissions and natural resource losses;
- and socioeconomic costs (\$2.1 T) due to rural poverty and food loss and waste.

The report goes on to propose a series of recommendations to reduce these costs and ensure the global food and land use system is sustainable.



ONE GREAT GRAPH: The hidden costs of global food and land use systems sum to \$12 trillion, compared to a market value of the global food system of \$10 trillion.

MARCH 2022 • CAPI IN THE NEWS

FINANCIAL POST

Mrs. Dunster's dilemma: Volatile wheat market is putting the squeeze on bakers

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has sent wheat prices into a panic, forcing Canadian bakers into some tough calls

farmonline
NATIONAL

Farmers must bring more to negotiating table, AFI conference hears



Is it possible to speak with 'a single voice' on behalf of all producers?

The
Timmins Times

As gas prices soar in wake of Ukraine war, Canadians could see cost of goods go up

'Before the war, we were already seeing very rapidly escalating prices of all sorts of goods'

OKOTOKS
online

CAPI hosts webinar to discuss Russia's invasion of Ukraine

leBulletin
des agriculteurs

L'agriculture et le monde en zone inconnue

Manitoba Express
MC

How Russia's war will affect farmers, food security

Canadian grain growers can expect profits despite higher input costs, while some people will eat less

H the HUB

Tyler McCann: Russia's invasion of Ukraine is affecting global food security—Here's how Canada can help

Globally, 25 percent of people are considered moderately to severely food insecure

THE
GROWER

CANADIAN AGRI-FOOD POLICY INSTITUTE RELEASES POLICY PERSPECTIVE

TORONTO STAR

Russia's invasion of Ukraine means higher food prices in Canada and around the world

The war will have devastating effects on food security in developing countries, and among low-income populations around the world, Heather Scofield writes.

THE WESTERN
PRODUCER

Food security grabs world's attention

'Essential' designation for rail service unlikely, says expert

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Pour comprendre l'invasion de l'Ukraine par la Russie et ce que cela signifie pour l'agriculture et la sécurité alimentaire : un panel de l'Institut Canadien des politiques agroalimentaires (ICPA/CAPI)

Tyler McCan et Sebastien Pouliot expliquent les impacts de la guerre en Ukraine sur nos productions



Rail reliability remains a key topic of discussion



Less Than a Week Away from USDA's Official Acreage Survey, Yet That's Not What's Moving the Markets



Long-Term Approach for Rail Requested

Canadian Rail Service Stoppage, Reliability Discussed by Panel

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 provides 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.

