

May 16, 2024

Career opportunity: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking

Location: Flexible for work in key regions

Status: Ideally Fulltime Indeterminate (open to discussion)

Language Requirement: Fluency in English is required; working knowledge of French (oral and written) is highly desirable.

Job Purpose:

Oversee and improve upon a novel tool to benchmark the sustainability of Canada’s agriculture and food sector, the National Index on Agri-Food Performance (“Index”). Working closely with partners and stakeholders, the Executive Director will manage and evolve the Centre of Agri-Food Benchmarking (“Centre”), along with a small team, to ensure that the Index adds value to partners and aims for greater relevance with the broader food system.

Who we are:

About the Centre:

Housed within the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute (“CAPI”), the Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking operates as a distinct operating entity. The Centre maintains its own brand, website, and dedicated governance model to manage Centre business within the CAPI corporate structure and budget, but it benefits from sharing key resources and support from CAPI. The Executive Director reports to CAPI’s Managing Director.

The Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking has been recently established to advance the Index. The Index pilot was published in May 2023 by an unprecedented coalition of private-public partners from across Canada’s agri-food system and the partnership continues to grow. The Index is receiving greater global interest as a model approach to align a national agri-food sector around measuring sustainability. Last year, the Centre received funding to take this work forward from 2023-2027 and with the possibility for an additional year beyond that. A comprehensive plan to evolve this work and improve the Index (version 2.0) is now underway.

The Index is broadly responding to one of the most pressing issues facing humanity: producing food more sustainably and showing it. The Index plays its part in doing so by increasing transparency of Canada’s agri-food sector sustainability performance. The sector is well-positioned to demonstrate its sustainability credentials and progress and Canada’s first agri-food sustainability index is a unique tool to do so. It presents for the first time a comprehensive and holistic view of sector sustainability for the domestic and global marketplace.

The founder of this initiative, David McInnes, started this work in 2020 with an eye to handing over the helm after reaching such milestones, noted above. Building on this momentum, it is now time for the next Executive Director to take this work forward, working with a coalition of partners.

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The Opportunity:

The Executive Director plays a key role in ensuring the credibility, relevance, and utility of the index, fulfilling the Centre's mission (see Appendix 1), and, with the support of diverse partners, enabling the country's global sustainability leadership. Reporting to CAPI's Managing Director and with direct engagement with coalition partners, including through the Centre's Steering Committee, the positions key responsibilities include:

A. Working with Coalition Partners:

- Maintain the confidence and spirit of this pre-competitive coalition as the work unfolds, guided by the coalition's operating principles (see Appendix 2).
- Grow the coalition with an eye to ensuring its diversity and representation of the Canadian agri-food sector and broader food system and deepen relationships with global stakeholders.
- Manage the Centre's committees and project working groups so to deliver on the work plan, enable cross-pollination of ideas and produce final work with consensus or no sustained objection.
- Encourage partner engagement, including advising partners on how they can participate in committees and working groups, and manage partner turnover, to ensure appropriate expertise and balance of such committees and working groups.
- Develop and manage all partner communications to support partner engagement, including updates at regular All-partner Committee meetings.

B. Managing the Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking:

- Manage the Centre's staff, including a research analyst and other staff shared with CAPI, including a part-time researcher, communications officer, and finance officer.
- Maintain good governance practices.
- Fulfill external funding agreements' terms and compliance.
- Manage external researchers and outsourcing activities.
- Conduct annual planning, scheduling, budget management and reporting.

C. Evolving the National Index on Agri-Food Performance:

- Implement the Centre's work plan to improve, apply and communicate the Index. Appendix 3 presents the 2023-2027 plan. The work plan is the basis for the Index's funding agreements.
- Develop and deliver upon a longer-term plan to ensure sustainable funding.
- Demonstrate the Index's value to partners and stakeholders (both in Canada and abroad), promoting its use and application. The Index's utility and relevance is key to building greater coalition momentum and financial support.

D. Engaging External Stakeholders:

- Manage outreach and communications with domestic and global stakeholders (i.e., non-partners) to build visibility for the Centre, the Index, and the coalition.
- Deliver insightful and impactful presentations to support such outreach to help fulfill the mission.
- Conduct media relations. The Executive Director is a primary spokesperson for the initiative.
- Manage and evolve external communications tools, notably the website, and advancing ways to improve communications.

Skills and Abilities for Success in this Role:

- Embraces CAPI's core values of Objectivity, Credibility, Inclusivity and Engagement. Demonstrated commitment to high professional ethical standards.
- Minimum of 10 years' leadership experience in a relevant or similar industry organization.
- Strategic capability with ability to create a clear vision and model end-to-end value creation, and scale from big picture thinking to effective implementation details.
- Strong interpersonal skills for building relationships with multiple stakeholders including knowledge of the partners, the agriculture and agri-food sector and the broader food system and adjacent sectors to expand the Centre capability.
- Excellent communicator and storyteller – clear, concise, and articulate both written and verbal with the ability to write high quality, compelling copy for various mediums and audiences and a keen eye for detail and synthesize complex issues and present them succinctly.
- Effective project and time management with the ability to proactively plan, prioritize and meet competing deadlines for multiple projects, and demonstrated record of ensuring quality of work outcomes.
- Demonstrated general management and leadership experience, such as running an organization or initiative which includes managing staff, budgets and working with a board or other governance model.
- Has excelled at managing multi-stakeholder processes, consultations, or similar initiatives.
- Has a knack for finding and retaining common ground among diverse stakeholder interests.
- Experience with external funders, partners, and/or sponsors.
- Has a good understanding of or experience working with the agriculture or food sector, or the broader food system (i.e., adjacent sectors that support this sector, such as among NGOs, government, academia, etc.).
- Well-versed in sustainability issues/trends, and in related benchmarking developments.
- Experience or network within the industry and across all levels of government. Knowledge and/or experience in government decision-making (federal, provincial, municipal).
- University degree, diploma, or certificate from an accredited post-secondary institution, ideally in a relevant field of study related to the work of the Centre.

Why Work at Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking:

We offer a flexible, inclusive, and innovative work environment, including:

- Position salary range between \$140,000 - \$175,000 depending on skills and experience.
- Support for supplementary benefits.
- Competitive paid leave programs.
- Opportunity to be part of an organization at the forefront of innovating the future of the agri-food industry.
- CAPI is an equal opportunity employer. We celebrate diversity and are committed to creating an inclusive environment for all employees. We accommodate people with disabilities throughout the recruitment and selection process. Please indicate your need for accommodation in your application.

How to Apply:

Please submit your resumé with a cover letter indicating why you are uniquely qualified for this position and send these to: execdirector@agrifoodindex.ca

We thank all candidates for their interest in the Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking; however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

Applications will be accepted until the position is filled; reviews of applications will start on June 3, 2024.

Appendix 1: Mission

The Centre’s mission – via the National Index on Agri-Food Performance – is to credibly present the agri-food sector’s sustainability credentials to create value.

- The intent is to inspire, encourage, and increase reporting across the sector, thereby improving food system-wide alignment on how sustainability *ought* to be measured.
- In doing so, the Index complements proprietary producer, company, sub-sector, and government efforts underway to measure and present sustainability.
- Be recognized as the authority for benchmarking Canada’s agri-food sustainability outcomes.

Appendix 2: *Partner Operating Principles* guide partner interactions in fulfilling the Centre’s mission:¹

1. **Holistic:**

- Economic viability is linked to environmental and social sustainability.

2. **Collaborative:**

- Food system-wide participation. Pre-competitive. Intent is reaching consensus.

3. **Consultative:**

- Engage with external stakeholders in Canada and abroad about emerging benchmarking practices.

4. **Responsive:**

- Index remains relevant to changing sustainability requirements and expectations, including ESG factors.

5. **Continuous improvement:**

- Mark progress, not seek perfection.

6. **Quality (credibility):**

- Confidence in the Index requires credible measures and balanced reporting. Mitigate greenwashing risk.

7. **Transparency:**

- Be forthright about sources of funding and the governance process. Disclose sources and methodologies of Index metrics, etc. (on the website in French and English).

¹ Adapted from *Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking, Final Report, Part 4, May 2023*. Partners also developed a set of data sourcing principles, not shown.

Appendix 3: Work plan presents a description and diagram of three work plan activities:

ACTIVITY #1: ENGAGING THE COALITION

- This is about enabling partners to actively participate in improving the National Index on Agri-Food Performance – a key to the Index’s relevance and broad support. In doing so, this requires maintaining (and improving) its inclusive processes and adhering to good governance practices to operate the Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking. Research work and partner dialogues include considering how to evolve the Index as a recognized and credible benchmarking tool.

ACTIVITY #2: IMPROVING THE INDEX AND DATA

- This is about getting suitable data to improve the Index’s sustainability picture.* This includes triaging and addressing priority data gaps and ensuring the adequacy of pilot metrics while adhering to the Index’s scope and intent. This activity includes developing data sourcing processes, such as standardizing practices, assessing methodologies and ensuring data integrity. (*See *Index Pilot: Indicators and Metrics, Part 2 Final Report, May 2023*, at agrifoodindex.ca)

ACTIVITY #3: APPLYING THE INDEX AND OUTREACH

- This is about applying the Index across the agri-food system and learning from such work to help improve the Index’s utility and value. Project work includes considering shifts in ESG’s application and what this means for the sector and the Index. As well, this activity includes outreach and enhancing visibility of all work. It also involves interpreting and presenting Index results so to inform stakeholder dialogues regarding sustainability, both domestically and globally.

