



Canadian Agri-Food in a Value-Added World

October 6-7, 2026 | Ottawa, ON

Conference Agenda and Overview

Overview:

In today's rapidly changing global environment, Canada can no longer rely on the old way of doing things, from rules-based trade or production volumes to drive agri-food growth. The benefits of adding more value are substantial. It delivers economic growth, reduces risk, expands the economic and social impact of the sector and repositions agriculture and food as more than just a resource sector. But this cannot be done haphazardly. A policy reset, laser focused on how to add value to the sector, is needed.

CAPI's fourth annual Exchange Conference, *Canadian Agri-Food in a Value-Added World* will confront these challenges head-on, **exploring the actions needed to unlock value and secure Canada's competitive edge in a critical sector**. Don't miss your chance to be part of the conversations that will define the future of Canadian agriculture and food.

Day 1 October 6, 2026	
7:30am-8:30am	Registration, Coffee, Networking
8:30am-8:45am	Welcome • Tyler McCann, Managing Director, Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute • Amanda Richardson, Executive Director, Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking
8:45am-9:45am	Session #1.1: Opening Fireside Chat: What is Value-Added? What is it Not? This opening fireside chat will tackle the fundamental question: what does “value-added” actually mean in the Canadian agriculture and food context? Where does the concept begin and end? This session will frame the subsequent conference dialogue around practical pathways for unlocking value and strengthening Canada’s competitive edge.
9:45am-10:15am	Break, Coffee, Networking
10:15am-11:15am	Session #1.2: Value Added in Action: Businesses Redefining Opportunity Canada has the agricultural strength, talent, and market access to capture significantly more value from the food we grow and produce. Realizing that opportunity requires a stronger focus on domestic processing capacity, commercialization, scale-up, automation, branding, and business models that allow Canadian companies to compete and grow. This panel will bring together businesses that are putting value-added growth into action: transforming Canadian ingredients into higher-value products, building new markets, strengthening supply chains, and demonstrating how targeted investment can unlock productivity, resilience, and long-term competitiveness. • Moderator: Kristina Farrell, Food & Beverage Canada Sponsored by: Food & Beverage Canada
11:15am-12:15pm	Session #1.3: Digital Agri-Food: Added Value or Added Cost? From precision agriculture and artificial intelligence to data platforms and digital supply chains, technology is reshaping Canada's agri-food sector. While these innovations offer significant potential to improve efficiency, sustainability, and decision-making, they also raise important questions

	around cost, access, trust, interoperability, and data governance. This panel will explore both the opportunities and challenges of digital agriculture, examining what is driving adoption, what is holding it back, and how industry, government, and producers can work together to ensure digital innovation creates value across the agri-food system. • <u>Moderator:</u> Jolene MacEachern, Director, Faculty Strategy & Strategic Projects, Faculty of Agriculture, Dalhousie University • <u>Speaker:</u> Joe Dales, RHA Ventures • <u>Speaker:</u> Sangeeta Lalli, Public Policy Director at TELUS Agriculture & Consumer Goods • <u>Speaker:</u> Michael Del Ciano, DC Farms
12:15pm-1:30pm	Lunch, Networking
1:30pm-2:30pm	Session #1.4: Keynote: Productivity This keynote on productivity will explore why productivity growth remains central to Canada's agricultural and economic competitiveness in a changing global environment. Drawing on emerging analysis and insights from the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute, the presentation will examine how productivity improvements drive value creation, resilience, and long-term growth. The address will set the stage for broader discussions on policy and industry actions needed to strengthen the agri-food sector's performance and competitive edge.
2:30pm- 3:30pm	Session #1.5: Value Added and Productivity: Driving Competitive Growth This panel will explore the critical connection between productivity and value added as drivers of Canada's agri-food competitiveness. Drawing on CAPI analysis on productivity in food manufacturing and value-added opportunities (publications forthcoming), will set the stage to inform discussions on growth and competitiveness in the agri-food sector. • <u>Speaker:</u> Ted Bilyea, Distinguished Fellow, CAPI • <u>Speaker:</u> Craig Klemmer, Manager, Thought Leadership, Farm Credit Canada
3:30pm-4:00pm	Break, Coffee, Networking
4:00pm-5:00pm	Session #1.6: Sustainability, Value-Add, and the Evidence That Connects Them

	The evidence to support Canada's agri-food sustainability story is growing. Environmental, economic, and social performance data can open market doors, attract investment, and position Canadian agriculture as a global leader, not just a volume supplier. But as the global landscape shifts, so must our assumptions. Which sustainability credentials are genuinely driving value today? Where are the gaps between our performance and what international markets require? And are we investing in the right priorities to stay ahead? Drawing on the National Index on Agri-Food Performance, this session takes stock of where the sustainability value-add case is strongest — and where Canada needs to push further. Panelists from across the value chain will engage with what the data actually shows, stress-test the assumptions we've been working from, and identify the opportunities a value-add policy reset needs to prioritize. Canada's sustainability advantage is real. This session is about making sure we're building on the right foundation. • Moderator: Amanda Richardson, Executive Director, Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking • Speaker: Michelle Edwards, U of G • Speaker: Tom Ogaranko, Viresco
5:00pm-5:15pm	Closing Remarks • Tyler McCann, Managing Director, Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute • Amanda Richardson, Executive Director, Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking
5:15pm-7:00pm	CAPI × FOOD FORWARD on the Hill: Shaping Canada's Food Future reception & panel

8:00am-8:30am	Coffee, Networking
8:30am-8:45am	Welcome Back • <i>Tyler McCann</i>, <i>Managing Director, Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute</i> • <i>Amanda Richardson</i>, <i>Executive Director, Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking</i>
8:45am-10:30am	Session #2.1: AgTech Policy Pitches: Technology Meets Policy This session features short, action-oriented pitches from innovators showcasing active technology solutions that could drive productivity and value but face regulatory, policy, or implementation barriers. Presenters will outline concrete proposals of changes to policy, streamlined regulations or collaborative approaches that would unlock the full potential of their technologies. The goal is to ground policy discussion in realities so that responses reflect the challenges innovators face in the marketplace. • <u>Moderator:</u> Darrell Petras
10:30am-11:00am	Break, Coffee, Networking
11:00am-12:00pm	Session #2.2: Credibility Infrastructure: What Will It Take for Canada's Value-Add Story to Land? Telling Canada's value-add story is one thing. Getting markets, investors, and regulators to believe it is another. This session asks what it actually takes — the data systems, the governance, the alignment across sectors — to close that gap before our competitors do. • <u>Moderator:</u> Amanda Richardson, <i>Executive Director, Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking</i> • <u>Speaker:</u> David McIness, <i>Founder & Senior Fellow, Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking, and Principal, DMci Strategies</i> • <u>Speaker:</u> Monica Hadarits, <i>the Executive Director of CRSB.</i> • <u>Speaker:</u> Shelley Seed, <i>Co-Executive Director at Regeneration Canada</i>

12:00pm-1:00pm	Lunch
1:00pm-2:00pm	Session #2.3: Debate: Is Canada too Focused on the Farm? This debate asks whether Canada’s agricultural policy and public discourse place too much emphasis on the farm itself, and what that means for value creation across the broader agri-food system. Participants will argue the implications of a farm-centric focus versus an approach that prioritizes innovation, processing, and downstream value. A winner will be declared based on the strength of argument and evidence presented. • Speaker: Sara Kate Smith • Speaker: Jesse Hirsh, Futurist & Digital Strategist • Speaker: Sylvie Cloutier, CTAAQ
2:00pm-3:00pm	Session #2.4: Closing Panel: Food Security and Beyond: Building Canada’s Agri-Food Advantage Following two days of discussion on the policies and investments needed to unlock value across Canada’s agri-food sector, this panel will look to what comes next and turn the conversation toward Canada’s future. Panelists will unpack the key priorities and goals for Canada’s National Food Security Strategy and consider how the sector can work together to build a more productive, innovative, and competitive food system. Drawing on key themes from the conference, the discussion will consider how Canada can strengthen food security, while driving economic growth, resilience, and long-term competitiveness. • Moderator: Kate Helmore, <i>Globe & Mail</i> • Speaker: Evan Fraser, <i>Arrell Food Institute</i> • Speaker: Margaret Hudson, <i>Burnbrae Farms</i>
3:00pm	Event Close • Tyler McCann, <i>Managing Director, Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute</i> • Amanda Richardson, <i>Executive Director, Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking</i>