



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# **UNLEASHING THE POTENTIAL OF THE CANADIAN AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD SECTOR THROUGH REGULATORY REFORM**

**Report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and  
Agri-Food**

**Michael Coteau, Chair**

**DECEMBER 2025  
45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

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Chair**

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## **NOTICE TO READER**

### **Reports from committees presented to the House of Commons**

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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# **THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

has the honour to present its

## **FIRST REPORT**

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the committee has studied the Government's regulatory reform initiative in agriculture and agri-food sector and has agreed to report the following:



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# LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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*As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.*

## **Recommendation 1**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada establish an internal and independent regulatory review mechanism or body, using the Agile Regulations Table as the primary forum for identifying regulatory issues and guided by clear science, risk and outcome-based criteria without compromising health and safety, in order to identify, eliminate or update outdated or obsolete regulations, thereby reducing the regulatory burden.** 11

## **Recommendation 2**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada change the mandate and culture of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency to ensure they consider the economy, food security and the cost of food in all their regulatory decisions without compromising on health and safety.** 13

## **Recommendation 3**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada pause any new regulatory measure related to plastics – notably Phase 2 of the Federal Plastics Registry – and work with provincial and territorial governments, in full respect of their jurisdictions, to harmonize plastic standards and reporting requirements.** 16

## **Recommendation 4**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada allow drone use when a crop protection product is already approved for aerial application while a finalized framework is being completed.** 17

### **Recommendation 5**

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada complete a standardized risk assessment for all potential sources of bees under an updated Canadian Food Inspection Agency mandate which includes an economic competitive lens and considers food security and the cost of food, without compromising health or safety. 20

### **Recommendation 6**

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada consider updating practices at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency, among others, by integrating electronic certificates in order to reduce paperwork and delays. 20

### **Recommendation 7**

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada make every effort to ensure compliance with Canadian standards, in particular by allocating more resources at the border and at inspection sites. 22

### **Recommendation 8**

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada review the requirements related to licensing under the *Safe Food for Canadians Act* in order to improve efficiency and transparency while avoiding redundancy. 22

### **Recommendation 9**

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada modernize food safety and inspection protocols by standardizing inspection criteria, recognizing third-party certifications, establishing a resolution process, and promoting accountability by implementing oversight measures to ensure corrective actions are reasonable, proportionate, and aligned with recognized best practices. 22

### **Recommendation 10**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada ensure greater transparency and more reasonable timelines for Canadian Food Inspection Agency on-site activities with agricultural producers during crises, such as animal disease outbreaks. In particular, more needs to be done to ensure that farmers can better anticipate what compensation they can expect to receive, within a reasonable time frame for entrepreneurs.**

**24**

### **Recommendation 11**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada update the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's compensation policy to include all additional costs when the destruction of animals is ordered and adopt an evergreen model like the wildlife predation compensation program delivered by the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation.**

**24**

### **Recommendation 12**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada review the structures of the Pest Management Regulatory Agency and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to mandate that these agencies take into account economic considerations, food security, and the cost of food in their regulatory decisions, while maintaining the highest standards of health and safety. Notably, the Government should assess whether it would be appropriate for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to report directly to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.**

**25**

### **Recommendation 13**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada consider convening the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's Ministerial Advisory Board and ask it to provide urgent advice on how the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and other agriculture-related regulatory agencies, including the Pest Management Regulatory Agency and the Canadian Grain Commission, could be restructured to improve efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness in the agriculture regulatory system.**

**26**

#### **Recommendation 14**

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada direct the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency to establish or enhance partnerships with trusted, science-based jurisdictions with which we already have trade relations in order to share expertise, knowledge, data, reviews, and the burden of registration studies, while ensuring that the country’s decision-making sovereignty is preserved—as well as the health and safety of citizens, agricultural producers and the environment—by making decisions that reflect our reality. 26

#### **Recommendation 15**

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada amend the relevant provisions of the *Feeds Act*, the *Seeds Act*, the *Pest Control Products Act*, and any other law, regulation, practice, or directive necessary to allow the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency the authority to grant provisional approval to agricultural products that two or more trusted jurisdictions have already approved, while exercising due diligence and ensuring no new risks are identified prior to their registering the product on a final basis. 26

#### **Recommendation 16**

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada use studies from trusted risk-based national jurisdictions while streamlining emergency use registrations, re-evaluations and special reviews. 26

#### **Recommendation 17**

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada implement policy changes and introduce regulatory amendments to Canada’s Enhanced Feed Ban to harmonize Specified Risk Material regulations with the United States. 26

#### **Recommendation 18**

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada create a platform for businesses to report inconsistencies in the level of thoroughness and/or abuse involving inspections by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, allocating the resources necessary to implement it and ensure its effectiveness. 28

### **Recommendation 19**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada establish an independent mechanism or body to provide impartial oversight of the agricultural and agri-food regulatory system. This mechanism or body would be mandated to investigate complaints and systemic issues – including fairness, transparency, timeliness, and consistency – ensure compliance with established processes, and issue recommendations to improve the overall functioning of the system.**

**29**

### **Recommendation 20**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada improve pre-market consultations to increase transparency and predictability within the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency and establish a “concierge” who can help navigate the regulatory system.**

**30**

### **Recommendation 21**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada take the following actions with respect to the Pest Management Regulatory Agency:**

- **Consider sunseting its Transformation Agenda, including the Science Advisory Committee on Pest Control Products, and allocate more resources to the Agency’s core activities and improve its service standards, notably by providing more timely responses to requests from agricultural producers for emergency pesticide registrations;**
- **Establish an expedited conditional registration system similar to the Environmental Protection Agency’s “Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS)” category for low-risk products;**
- **Limit new data requirements to efficacy data for plant use when a product already holds a Drug Identification Number for human or animal use;**
- **Extend the default validation period to three years for Emergency Use Registration and streamline renewals through digital templates such as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency’s import permit renewal model;**

- Establish a web portal to allow agricultural producers to track their registration applications to improve the decision-making process and to make it more transparent; and
- Mandate the Agency to meet 100% of its performance targets and ensure that these targets are in line with those of regulators in other trusted, science-based jurisdictions.

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### Recommendation 22

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada establish a *Regulatory Performance Framework* to ensure agriculture and agri-food regulators deliver timely, transparent, and risk-based decisions, while continuously improving the efficiency of the regulatory system. The framework would set clear service standards and public reporting requirements; require regular review of existing regulations to assess their costs and benefits; and remove outdated or duplicative rules that hinder productivity; and apply a “one-for-one” regulatory offset so that any new regulatory burden is balanced by reductions elsewhere, without compromising health, safety, or environmental protection.

32

### Recommendation 23

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada reduce the red tape associated with the Temporary Foreign Worker Program in the agriculture and agri-food sector and maintain the Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program.

33

### Recommendation 24

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada review Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s Advance Payments Program to simplify the process, improve efficiency, accelerate the release of funds, and enhance transparency, and that it consider making the increased program limit permanent.

33

### Recommendation 25

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada align its Labour Market Impact and worker permit approval process.

33

### **Recommendation 26**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada publish agriculture and agri-food related import and export sale statistics, at the Canadian level, including a section dedicated to the organic sector, to establish a common policy framework for public and private investment in research, programming, digital skills, outcome-based measurement and reporting.**

**33**





# UNLEASHING THE POTENTIAL OF THE CANADIAN AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD SECTOR THROUGH REGULATORY REFORM

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## INTRODUCTION

In Canada’s system of governance, legislators grant ministers the authority to enact regulations to administer laws that their departments and agencies are responsible for enforcing. In the agriculture and agri-food sector, these regulations are intended to ensure the health and safety of consumers and agricultural workers and to contribute to the reputation for high quality that Canadian products enjoy internationally. The sector is an important part of the Canadian economy, generating 7% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employing 2.3 million people<sup>1</sup>, while also ensuring the country’s food security through a resilient food value chain. Poorly written, duplicative, or overly prescriptive regulations can, however, make producers and firms less competitive, stifle innovation, and prevent the sector from reaching its full economic potential, while encouraging imports that are not subject to Canada’s burdensome system.

On 9 July 2025, the President of the Treasury Board instructed cabinet ministers to review the regulations that departments and agencies in their portfolios enforce in order to “eliminate red tape—including removing outdated regulation, reducing duplication with provincial rules, and making it easier to access and deliver services” and to report on the results of their reviews within 60 days. On 8 September 2025, the Treasury Board Secretariat’s Red Tape Reduction Office published these progress reports on its website.

On 18 September 2025, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food (the Committee) adopted a motion to

undertake a study on the government’s regulatory reform initiative in agriculture and agri-food at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency, with a focus on identifying where reforms can be expedited, where costs to producers and processors can be reduced without compromising health or trade, and where political leadership is required to move forward on long-standing files[.]

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1 Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, [Overview of Canada’s agriculture and agri-Food Sector](#).



Between 25 September 2025 and 6 November 2025, the Committee heard from 47 witnesses including agriculture and agri-food stakeholders, federal officials, and policy matter experts. This report summarizes their testimony and recommends further actions on regulatory reform for federal policymakers.

## OVERVIEW OF RED TAPE REDUCTION PROGRESS REPORTS

The Committee heard from representatives of three federal departments and agencies whose regulatory activities involve the agriculture and agri-food sector: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), and the Pest Regulatory Management Agency (PMRA). [Steven Jurgutis](#) of AAFC and [Robert Ianiro](#) of the CFIA explained that their organizations had already been engaged in efforts to reduce overall regulatory burden on businesses through the [Agri-food and Aquaculture Regulatory Roadmap](#) and the [Agri-Food Economic Strategy Table](#), which includes a special working group on [Agile Regulations](#). [Mr. Jurgutis](#) explained that the Table had identified “some 150” regulatory irritants, of which it was able to resolve “34 or 35,” but he did not provide further information on these efforts.

[Matt Jones](#) of the PMRA explained that his agency, which is part of Health Canada’s portfolio, announced several new initiatives as part of its progress report, including expanding joint reviews of new pest control products with “trusted” foreign regulators, introducing a digital portal for application tracking and labelling activities, and amending existing regulatory requirements for the periodic review of existing pest control products.

## STAKEHOLDER REACTION TO RED TAPE REDUCTION REPORTS

The Committee heard from stakeholders throughout the agriculture and agri-food value chain to gauge their response to these announced initiatives and to learn what further steps the federal government could take to reduce the regulatory burden the sector faces and to stimulate its competitiveness. Several witnesses reported that the federal government did not consult them directly in writing these reports<sup>2</sup>. [Mr. Ianiro](#) explained that while the CFIA did not formally consult stakeholders in writing its report, it did draw on points which stakeholders had previously raised.

[Émilie Bergeron](#) of CropLife Canada called the PMRA’s announced regulatory measures “disappointing,” expressing her view that they would do little to remove red tape or drive

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2 House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food (AGRI), *Evidence*, 45<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session: [Gregory Kolz](#) (CropLife Canada), [Mac Ross](#) (Canada Grains Council), [Stéphanie Levasseur](#) (Canadian Federation of Agriculture), [Brian Innes](#) (Soy Canada), and [Greg Northey](#) (Pulse Canada),

economic growth in the sector. [Ms. Bergeron](#) explained that CropLife Canada and other stakeholders had been calling for the Agency to make its re-evaluation of pest control products more timely, efficient, and transparent for over a decade, with scant effect. [Gregory Kolz](#), also of CropLife Canada, criticized the PMRA's approach:

[T]he recommendations that were put forward back in early September were underwhelming at best. To the point made earlier that they didn't consult with us during the process, most of what they're discussing currently are things that have been discussed for years. Their timeline for implementation is years down the road. Both of those things combined are concerning. There seems to be a lack of ambition[.]

[Greg Northey](#) of Pulse Canada noted that his sector had participated in federal regulatory reform initiatives dating back to the early 2000s, but that many of the barriers it identified 20 years ago still exist today. [Mr. Northey](#) described the overall tone of the PMRA's progress report as positive, but noted that, in his view, it contained "no action, no timeline, [and] no measurable outcome."

[Brent Collins](#) of Seeds Canada welcomed some of the proposals in the CFIA's report but described it as falling short of the "transformative modernization" that had been promised at the beginning of the exercise. Mr. Collins noted that some of the announced changes could increase costs for his industry and expressed concern that the Agency had framed many of its proposals as "explorations rather than concrete reforms."

[Kristina Farrell](#) of Food and Beverage Canada called the progress reports "promising" but noted that departments and agencies have not been transparent in explaining how they have addressed regulatory irritants already identified by industry through the Sector Engagement Table's Agile Regulations working group. [Ms. Farrell](#) called for departments to consult with the sector not only on new regulations, but also on removing or amending older ones that are no longer fit for purpose.

### **Recommendation 1**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada establish an internal and independent regulatory review mechanism or body, using the Agile Regulations Table as the primary forum for identifying regulatory issues and guided by clear science, risk and outcome-based criteria without compromising health and safety, in order to identify, eliminate or update outdated or obsolete regulations, thereby reducing the regulatory burden.**



## MANDATE AND CULTURE

In its [2025 election platform](#), the government pledged to “[a]mend the mandates of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency to ensure they consider food security and the cost of food in all their regulatory decisions without compromising on health and safety.” The document further explains that these agencies “only look at their respective mandates through a health and safety lens.”

[Mr. Jones](#) explained that the PMRA assesses new pest control products using data and tests that measure their effect on human health and the environment. The Agency also considers “socio-economic impacts and overall contribution to pest management,” a category that includes trade impacts on Canadian producers, crop value gains, economic efficiency, and “broader social benefits,” such as food security.

[Mr. Ianiro](#) similarly explained that the CFIA aims to uphold high standards for food and agricultural systems without compromising science, food safety, or market access. In response to a question about amending his mandate to require it to specifically consider food security and affordability, he explained that a formal legislative change is not necessary as the preamble to the [Canadian Food Inspection Agency Act](#) already mentions the promotion of trade and commerce as among the Agency’s activities.

[Stéphanie Levasseur](#) of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture explained that while federal regulators play an important role in maintaining Canada’s international reputation as a producer of safe and high-quality food, they frequently make decisions without considering their effect on food security and food affordability or their economic impact on the agricultural sector. [Michael Graydon](#) of Food, Health & Consumer Products of Canada, while noting the role regulations play in building Canada’s strong international reputation for safe food products, explained that producers’ regulatory burden has grown such that it is now starting to restrict their ability to enter new markets.

Witnesses highlighted the importance of changing the predominant culture within federal regulators and underlined the importance of their adopting a more substantive understanding of the industries they regulate as well as the impact of regulatory decisions on their economic competitiveness and on food production. [Ms. Farrell](#) called for “a culture change within our regulators,” underlining that they should not be “adding regulations for the sake of regulating.” [Greg Donald](#) of the Prince Edward Island Potato Board similarly recommended a “cultural shift” at the CFIA and the PMRA in which they would “adopt a more business- and trade-oriented mindset.” He described the agencies’ current approach as “overly cautious, slow-moving and disconnected from industry realities” and added that agricultural producers should see them not as “a barrier to trade but as a partner in trade.” [Daniel McCann](#) of Precision AI highlighted the

importance of “adopting a culture within these organizations that recognizes the pace of change” in industry. Finally, [Mr. Kolz](#) called for widespread change throughout agencies, including their leadership:

Again, I think it comes from a shift in culture, and that starts at the top. In order for them to shift their approach, I would suggest that it probably should be a directive from the minister or the government as a whole.

Witnesses were unanimous in encouraging regulators to maintain high standards for health and safety while also improving predictability for industry and minimizing their negative impact on food producers by adopting a food lens or asking, “What does this decision mean for food security and a stable domestic food supply?” as part of their activities. As [Mac Ross](#) of the Canada Grains Council noted, these two considerations are not mutually exclusive:

When we talk about requiring the [PMRA] to consider food security and economic impacts, we want them to do that without compromising on health and safety, and the key to that is science. We're not talking about changing the level of health and safety protection that Health Canada has established as a goal. We're talking about how to achieve that same level of protection while still empowering our sector.

## Recommendation 2

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada change the mandate and culture of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency to ensure they consider the economy, food security and the cost of food in all their regulatory decisions without compromising on health and safety.**

## CHALLENGES

Witnesses described some of the ways Canada’s regulatory regimes prevented the agriculture and agri-food sector from increasing its productivity, reaching new markets, and competing internationally. This section lays out some of the burdens regulations and regulatory processes place on producers and firms.

### Economic Competitiveness

[Mr. Ross](#) expressed his view that the regulatory burden Canada places on its agriculture and agri-food producers is slowing investment, growth, and innovation, placing at risk their ability to do business in an increasingly competitive international marketplace. Mr. Ross cited figures from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) showing that, in 2023, Canada ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> out of 43 countries studied in terms of



the administrative and regulatory burden it imposes on businesses, indicating an unfriendly environment to competition.<sup>3</sup> [Ms. Levasseur](#) sounded the alarm about declining productivity in Canadian agriculture, particularly as demand for the sector's products and concerns over food security have increased.

[Ms. Farrell](#) explained that regulations place a particularly large burden on small and medium-sized businesses, which compose the majority of Canada's food manufacturing sector. These firms, she explained, typically lack the in-house expertise or manpower needed to understand and conform to new regulations. In a [written brief](#), Food and Beverage Canada estimated that complying with a single act's reporting requirements can cost a medium-sized business between \$10,000 and \$50,000 in consulting fees. Revenue spent by firms on regulatory compliance, it highlights, cannot be invested in automation, research and development, or other initiatives.

[Mr. Graydon](#) similarly expressed his view that firms in his sector devote too much of their time and energy to navigating and complying with regulations rather than innovating or trying to reach new markets. [He](#) explained that the Canadian food manufacturing sector is "ready to invest, innovate and grow" but that it cannot do so because of "outdated regulations that raise costs and hold [it] back." [He](#) also cautioned that some firms in his industry were "tak[ing] a second look" at Canada as a business and investment destination because of this regulatory burden, which, in his opinion, had caused the country's food manufacturing capacity to "evaporat[e]" over the past quarter century:

If you look at the last 25 years, we're probably looking at 30% of our capacity disappearing. As we've gone through the trade issues with the United States and there has been restrictiveness in regard to access to products, you're seeing, because of our high dependency on trade in the United States, an imbalance of products made in Canada and on Canadian shelves. If you were to go back 25 years, we wouldn't be having 55% of the products on shelves being from the United States. They probably would have been 75% manufactured here in Canada. Companies have decided to exit the country and utilize Canada more as a distribution centre than a centre of manufacturing capacity.

## Plastics

[Ms. Farrell](#) and [Ron Lemaire](#) of the Canadian Produce Marketing Association both mentioned the federal government's [Federal Plastic Registry](#) (FPR) as an example of a regulatory requirement that places an undue administrative burden on businesses, particularly small and medium-sized firms and producers. The FPR requires producers

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3 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, [OECD Product and Marketing Regulation \(PMR\) indicators: How does Canada compare?](#)

who manufacture, import, or place more than 1,000 kilograms (1 tonne) of plastic packaging on the market per year to collect and report data on the amount and type of plastic they use to provide the federal government with national data on plastic use and waste to better inform its efforts to limit pollution. Firms who do not comply with this requirement are subject to legal penalties, including fines of up to \$500,000.

As [Ms. Farrell](#) explained, many food producers who report data to the FPR are also required to provide data to similar initiatives at the provincial level. The FPR [website](#) acknowledges these initiatives but explains that they vary in their reporting requirements and do not share their data with the federal government. In Ms. Farrell's view, these unharmonized reporting requirements place a duplicative administrative burden on businesses that requires them to devote additional time and resources to collecting and entering data in these separate systems. [Mr. Lemaire](#) shared the example of a Quebec firm who hired additional staff simply to comply with these requirements.

[Mr. Graydon](#) characterized the federal government's approach to plastics as limiting his sector's competitiveness while failing to achieve better outcomes:

Plastics regulations are also a pressing issue. [Food Health and Consumer Products Canada] was a founding member of the Canada Plastics Pact and the first association in Canada to support the Ellen MacArthur Foundation principles for a circular economy. Our members are committed to reducing packaging, but the federal plastics registry duplicates provincial systems and creates costly reporting without better outcomes. The single-use plastics ban, introduced without coordination with trading partners, risks disadvantaging Canadian exporters. The United States has already flagged Canada's plastics policy as a trade barrier.

[Sylvain Charlebois](#) of the Agri-Food Analytics Lab explained that while the FPR and the federal government's 2023 [pollution prevention planning notice for primary food plastic packaging](#) were well-intentioned, they place more red tape and costs on producers while also making food less affordable. [Ms. Farrell](#) highlighted a lack of alignment between different federal priorities:

On the one hand, the government encourages industry to help address food affordability, but on the other hand, overlapping rules like the proposed pollution prevention planning notices and anticipated new PFAS regulations, which will directly impact packaging decisions, add costs that make food more expensive. At the same time, timelines for front-of-pack labelling requirements risk leaving companies in some cases with no choice but to discard large volumes of packaging inventory. It's an unnecessary waste that further drives up costs.



### Recommendation 3

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada pause any new regulatory measure related to plastics – notably Phase 2 of the Federal Plastics Registry – and work with provincial and territorial governments, in full respect of their jurisdictions, to harmonize plastic standards and reporting requirements.**

### Product Approvals

Witnesses noted that long regulatory approval times for new products at the CFIA, which registers products such as animal feeds and fertilizers, and the PMRA, which registers pest control products such as pesticides and herbicides, can make Canadian producers and firms less competitive. [Mr. Kolz](#), for example, explained that agriculture has the potential to double its contribution to Canada’s GDP over the next decade, but to do so producers need access to the latest innovative seed and crop protection tools to increase their productivity and remain competitive with farmers in jurisdictions that already have them. [Dennis Laycraft](#) of the Canadian Cattle Association noted that agricultural producers in the United States experience considerably shorter timelines for the regulatory approval of some products, making them more competitive internationally:

If you look at the United States, they have the AMS, the Agricultural Marketing Service, under the [United States Department of Agriculture]. For the number of the approvals and their work on quality assessment, we've seen large numbers of approvals occur in months, whereas in Canada it takes years to get that done, and time is money when you're in the process of competing in these various markets that we're looking at.

### Drones

One such innovative tool is the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) to apply pest control products on crops. Agricultural producers in several industrialized countries, including [Australia](#) and the [United States](#), use drones to apply pest control products approved for aerial use to their operations. Drones allow producers to apply these products more precisely, lowering their operational costs and limiting overall pesticide use. [Frédéric Bissonnette](#) of the PMRA explained, however, that Canada is still studying drone application to determine the level of risk it poses to consumers and producers compared to traditional aircraft. While Mr. Bissonnette explained that he was “pushing [his] team to have something in place for next year,” [Catherine Lessard](#) of the Association des producteurs maraîchers du Québec predicted that, even once this initial approval was in place, the PMRA would still have to consider label change applications for individual pest control products, creating further delays. [Mr. Ross](#) explained that the PMRA’s lack of a regulatory pathway for drone use places Canadian producers at a competitive

disadvantage to producers in other jurisdictions who already use this technology in their operations.

The Committee also heard from innovators developing drones and other new technologies for the agriculture sector. [Daniel McCann](#) of Precision AI, a firm that has developed drones that use artificial intelligence to target and spray products on weeds, claimed that his product helps producers reduce their input use by considerable margins, while also improving yields. Despite Mr. McCann having been raised on a farm in Saskatchewan, he noted that Canada's lack of a regulatory pathway for this technology led him to test, register, and market it in the United States instead.

[Eric Cheff](#) of At Heights Drone Services expressed his view that drones are safer than conventional aircraft used for spraying pesticides as they are less likely to cause injuries or fatalities, carry smaller amounts of pest control products, and use Global Positioning System technology to apply them to crops more precisely. He noted that since starting his agricultural drone firm four years ago, the PMRA has continued to delay its timeline for considering drones and expressed concern that Canadian producers may not have access to this technology for another decade.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada allow drone use when a crop protection product is already approved for aerial application while a finalized framework is being completed.**

### **Pest Control Product Approvals**

Pest control products are an important input for agricultural producers, who rely on them to contend with an increasingly diverse and ever-changing array of weeds, insects, and diseases that threaten their crops. The PMRA oversees pest management products in Canada under the [Pest Control Products Act](#) and its regulations. The Agency's responsibilities include assessing new products, evaluating [emergency](#) and [minor use](#) applications from producers and provincial governments for certain products, re-evaluating existing products every 15 years to ensure they meet current standards, and collecting data to identify risks they may pose to humans, animals, and the environment.<sup>4</sup>

[Patrice Léger Bourgoin](#) of the Association des producteurs maraîchers du Québec explained that while authorities in jurisdictions such as the European Union and the

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4 Health Canada, [Pest Management Regulatory Agency](#).



United States conducted these activities within “reasonable” timeframes, similar products face “excessive delays” of as much as a decade to reach Canadian producers. He noted that it can take as long as five years to add a new crop to a pest control product’s usage label, which undermines the ability of Canadian producers to compete with international competitors who operate under more nimble regulators.

[Mr. Bissonnette](#) explained that the Agency is currently not meeting its [performance target](#) that 90% of all submissions be processed within the applicable review timelines for their product category. He reported that the Agency’s current rate is “around 79%.” While he predicted that its performance over the coming year will decline as it works to clear its backlog, he testified that it should be “in a good spot” to reach its target the following year. According to [Mr. Bissonnette](#), however, the PMRA is not the only pesticide regulator to experience such delays. He cited the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which he characterized as “in a worse situation” than the PMRA as he alleged it “only met [its] performance [targets] 20% of the time.” [Ms. Bergeron](#) explained, however, that it is difficult to make a direct comparison between the two agencies:

The United States has seen substantial changes in their regulatory system to comply with a court order, and this has involved significant resources. That is something that the PMRA has not done. However, what we have seen is that while the PMRA has focused on [its Transformation Agenda], its efficiency has declined significantly since the transformation was introduced in 2021, so we know that this has had an impact.

[Phil Tregunno](#) of the Ontario Tender Fruit Growers explained that long registration periods for new minor use products has led producers in his sector to rely on emergency use applications to access products that respond to urgent needs. [Ms. Lessard](#) explained that even this method had “unacceptable” delays of three to six months, leading to the PMRA releasing the results of its review only after a growing season, and the underlying emergency, is over.

[Mr. Ross](#) expressed concern that these administrative delays make the Canadian marketplace, which is already a comparatively small one, an even less attractive destination for international pest control manufacturers to introduce their products. [Darren Anderson](#), the Chief Executive Officer of Vive Crop Protection, explained that his Mississauga, Ontario-based firm developed an innovative nanotechnology that allows producers to apply fertilizers and pesticides simultaneously, allowing them to avoid multiple passes, while using sustained-released chemicals to ensure plants can absorb

both products optimally. While the EPA granted this firm its first regulatory approval in 2016<sup>5</sup>, the PMRA did not grant approval to any of the firm's products until 2023.

[Mr. Anderson](#) explained that the lack of a “predictable and efficient” regulatory process for novel products in Canada makes it less appealing to innovative, venture-backed firms like his, whose investors are looking to generate returns on their investment quickly. [He](#) also noted that the EPA is underfunded and facing growing backlogs and that this situation provides an opening for a more predictable and science-based PMRA to become a launching point for manufacturers looking to introduce their products to the North American market. He encouraged the federal government to take a proactive approach:

We cannot afford another lost decade. Canada has already made strides to advance critical areas like oil and gas with a push to improve pipelines in less than two years. These are billion-dollar nationbuilding initiatives. If those can be approved in two years, shouldn't we be able to build a system where Canadian innovation benefits Canadian farmers in less than half the time?

## Bees

[Connie Phillips](#) of the Alberta Beekeeping Commission described the approaches of the CFIA and PMRA to policy development and regulatory enforcement as consisting of “unreasonable barriers and impediments to progress, innovation, and competitiveness for producers.” She highlighted that, in recent decisions, the CFIA and the PMRA both explained that they are not obliged to consider the economic interests of the industries they regulate. Quoting from a recent CFIA [risk assessment](#) of honey bee imports from the United States, Ms. Phillips cited the Agency's response to a stakeholder comment citing the negative impact their decision to block these imports had on beekeepers:

The CFIA does not have a duty of care to protect the economic interests of stakeholders. The CFIA's regulatory mandate under the *Health of Animals Act* and regulations is to help protect Canadian animal health, which includes the health of the Canadian honey bee population.

In a written brief submitted to the Committee, Ms. Phillips described the CFIA's risk assessment process for honey bee imports as “inconsistent” and burdensome for Canadian beekeepers, who rely on these imports to replenish their colonies because honey bees are not native to Canada. She noted that access to imports has become increasingly important, as the overwinter mortality rate for honey bees in Canada has doubled over the past twenty years. She explained that the CFIA has banned such imports from the United States since 1987 ostensibly to prevent pest and disease risks, while

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5 Export Development Canada, [Special delivery: Canadian SME uses nanotechnology to help boost crop yields](#).



continuing to allow imports from Australia and New Zealand, which she claims are infested by the Varroa mite, “which is arguably the most significant threat to the industry.” In her view, this situation forces Canadian beekeepers to pay higher prices for imports, while doing little to reduce disease or parasite risk in the Canadian honey bee population.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada complete a standardized risk assessment for all potential sources of bees under an updated Canadian Food Inspection Agency mandate which includes an economic competitive lens and considers food security and the cost of food, without compromising health or safety.**

### **Digitization**

Representatives of the [CFIA](#) and the [PMRA](#) highlighted their agencies’ plans to improve service delivery through online portals. [Mr. Ross](#) called for the CFIA to expand its use of electronic phytosanitary certificates (ePhyto). These digital certificates allow producers of plant products, such as grains and pulses, to certify that their product has been inspected and conforms to an export destination country’s standards without the use of paper certificates sent via private courier. This option lowers production costs and makes Canadian exports more attractive to international buyers who can obtain customs data more quickly and conveniently. [Salah Zoghalmi](#) of the Producteurs de grains de Québec explained that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) allows U.S. producers to exchange ePhyto certificates with more than 100 countries, while, to date, the CFIA has only established an exchange with the U.S. and has tentatively announced work on establishing one with Mexico. [Brian Innes](#) of Soy Canada expressed his view that the CFIA’s lack of action on this file was not because of any regulatory limitation, but rather a “limit of...a willingness to take action” on the Agency’s part.

#### **Recommendation 6**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada consider updating practices at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency, among others, by integrating electronic certificates in order to reduce paperwork and delays.**

### **Inspection Processes**

The CFIA is responsible for inspecting food production establishments, including primary production facilities such as greenhouses and food processing facilities, to ensure they

comply with relevant regulations. Witnesses spoke about the regulatory burden these inspection processes can pose and made recommendations for making them simpler for producers to comply with, while continuing to ensure the food value chain operates safely.

[Mr. Donald](#) and [Chris Duyvelshoff](#) of the Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada explained that they found some CFIA food safety audits to be redundant, creating a burden for producers. Mr. Duyvelshoff called for the CFIA to recognize industrial standards, such as the fresh fruit and vegetable sector's [CanadaGAP](#) initiative, to streamline these requirements and lessen the burden on producers' time.

[Janice Tranberg](#) of the National Cattle Feeders' Association highlighted a redundancy faced by ranchers exporting cattle from the U.S. to Canada. Cattle making this journey must be inspected by a USDA-accredited veterinarian prior to departure, placed into a sealed truck, inspected again by a CFIA veterinarian at the border, and inspected again within 72 hours of their arrival in Canada. Ms. Tranberg explained that re-inspecting cattle who have already been cleared and sealed by a USDA veterinarian causes unnecessary delays and long waits for cattle transporters, particularly as CFIA veterinarians at the border are also responsible for companion animal inspections.

Witnesses also expressed frustration with what they see as inconsistent interpretations of standards by individual inspectors. [Jorge Correa](#) of the Canadian Meat Council testified that individual inspectors sometimes apply regulations inconsistently in different regions, placing a burden on some meat processors. A written brief from the [Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers](#) recounts similar experiences, noting that inspectors vary in their corrective actions and explaining that there is no formal complaint process if a producer disagrees with an inspector's conclusions. [Mr. Duyvelshoff](#) recommended that inspector protocols and training be standardized nationally to ensure "fair, risk-based, and predictable" enforcement across the country.

[Mr. Donald](#) also highlighted the importance of the CFIA and other agencies defending science-based decisions in international trade. He shared the experience of PEI potato farmers who, following a 2021 CFIA decision, have been prohibited from exporting seed potatoes to the United States:

Despite science being on our side and risk controls in place, trade was halted, causing millions in losses and lasting damage to our seed trade. The situation exposed a critical flaw. Scientific risk assessments mean little if not backed by strong political leadership. We need our leaders to defend science-based trade decisions and push for resolution when agencies alone can't.



### Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada make every effort to ensure compliance with Canadian standards, in particular by allocating more resources at the border and at inspection sites.

### Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada review the requirements related to licensing under the *Safe Food for Canadians Act* in order to improve efficiency and transparency while avoiding redundancy.

### Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada modernize food safety and inspection protocols by standardizing inspection criteria, recognizing third-party certifications, establishing a resolution process, and promoting accountability by implementing oversight measures to ensure corrective actions are reasonable, proportionate, and aligned with recognized best practices.

## Cattle Compensation

Mr. Laycraft explained that while cattle values have increased considerably over the past year, it took the federal government almost 10 months to amend the *Compensation for Destroyed Animals and Things Regulations* to reflect their current market value, which had not been updated since 2015.<sup>6</sup> These regulations establish amounts and conditions for compensating producers whose animals were destroyed by the CFIA because they posed a disease risk. Mr. Laycraft recommended the federal government consider alternative statutory instruments to administer producer compensation to ensure it is delivered in a more timely manner and to provide producers whose animals are being held in quarantine with greater certainty.

As part of this study, the Committee heard from two cattle ranchers, Diane Sawley of Anchor P Cattle Company in Alberta and Erin Sawley of East Point Cattle Corporation in Saskatchewan, who detailed their experiences with the CFIA following cases of bovine tuberculosis (TB) that triggered the Agency to euthanize cattle in their herds.

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6 *Regulations Amending the Compensation for Destroyed Animals and Things Regulations: SOR/2025-136*, 6 June 2025, in *Canada Gazette*, Part II, 18 June 2025.

[Diane Sawley](#) explained that on 11 July 2025 the CFIA notified her of a possible case of TB in her combined herd of 550 cattle which were spread out over five different locations during the summer grazing period. The CFIA initially agreed to test in the fall, but then reversed its decision and required the entire herd and those it had comingled with to be quarantined for four months. After Anchor P Cattle Company expended significant resources to gather and test their herd, the CFIA depopulated eleven cattle. Diane Sawley highlighted that CFIA policy and procedure during this incident were “inconsistent.” [She](#) elaborated that inspectors were unable to provide a framework for how testing and quarantine would proceed:

We were told on several occasions that every case is done on a case-by-case basis, so there is no consistency. There's no framework as to how this is going to operate. We had two commingled herds, which means other producers had cattle mixed with ours. One of them was on the Waldron Grazing Co-op, which is the largest grazing co-op in Canada. It's on open grasslands. It could have affected 74 different operations if we had determined we had TB, and they could not give us proper protocol for biosecurity. They would always tell us that it's done on a case-by-case basis and that until something happens, they can't determine what that will be.

[Erin Sawley](#) explained that, on 18 February 2025, the CFIA ordered all 2,075 cattle in her herd to be destroyed, setting back her business by years. The cattle were destroyed on 31 March 2025, with her operation responsible for their feeding and maintenance in the interim period, as the CFIA does not compensate producers for these expenses. [She](#) explained that, at the time of her testimony months later, she was uncertain of how much the CFIA will provide her in compensation as the Agency has transferred her claim to an outside evaluation company. [She](#) also highlighted inconsistency and a lack of clear communication in the CFIA's approach to her operation:

I think a lot of decisions were made on the fly, so to speak. We would ask certain questions of our case officer, and we might not receive an answer for a week because it had to go from the case officer to a specific planning group and then back to us. It lengthened the process, and we weren't sure which planning group was going to make that decision, so we sometimes got conflicting information from different groups making different decisions.

[Erin Sawley](#) recommended that the federal government adopt a similar model to the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation's [Predation Compensation](#) insurance program. This program determines compensation for beef calves destroyed by wild predators based on market sales data for the week before, the week of, and the week after the loss and compensates producers for the highest of these three values, while guaranteeing them a set minimum amount. [She](#) also called for the federal government to offer more support to producers who cooperate fully through such processes:



As we said, we want to do the right thing, but when non-compliance offers a similar or even better outcome to the process, then the process is destined to fail. When the federal government leans this heavily on individual producers to take one for the team while risking their operations, families and livelihoods, with little to no reassurances that they will be supported through the process, it undermines everything the process sets out to achieve.

### **Recommendation 10**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada ensure greater transparency and more reasonable timelines for Canadian Food Inspection Agency on-site activities with agricultural producers during crises, such as animal disease outbreaks. In particular, more needs to be done to ensure that farmers can better anticipate what compensation they can expect to receive, within a reasonable time frame for entrepreneurs.**

### **Recommendation 11**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada update the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's compensation policy to include all additional costs when the destruction of animals is ordered and adopt an evergreen model like the wildlife predation compensation program delivered by the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation.**

## **SOLUTIONS**

### **International Regulatory Alignment**

In their progress reports, the CFIA and the PMRA both mention plans to increase their cooperation with foreign regulators to reduce timelines and costs associated with some of their activities. The CFIA, for example, pledges to create a new pathway for animal feed products already granted regulatory approval in trusted foreign jurisdictions such as the European Union and the United States to reduce paperwork for applicants, speed up the approval process, and provide Canadians with more animal feed options. In its [report](#), the PMRA explains that it has undertaken pilot joint reviews of new pest control products with Australia, Spain, and the United States and is considering expanding this initiative, with work on joint reviews to possibly begin in fiscal year 2026–2027.

[Mr. Northey](#) called joint reviews with international partners an important tool, but underscored that the PMRA had discussed increasing them since at least 2008 with few tangible outcomes. He noted that the tentative nature of the PMRA's announced pilot initiatives does little to help Canadian agricultural producers in the short-term.

[Mr. Duyvelshoff](#) and [Mr. Ross](#) encouraged the PMRA to be more ambitious and to recognize reviews from peer regulators in other OECD countries, while requesting Canadian-specific data as needed. [Jean-Emmanuel Poitras](#) of Food and Beverage Canada encouraged the CFIA to take a similar approach to reduce its registration timelines for low-risk food products that are already approved in other jurisdictions, noting that the Agency takes a minimum of 410 days to review a novel food, including those already being sold and consumed in other countries.

[Mr. Tregunno](#) highlighted that producers looking to grow and sell new crop varieties that Canada typically imports, such as nectarines, face long timelines and cumbersome administrative processes:

An example of some of the problems we have had with CFIA is a small item like nectarines. In 2020, we requested an update on the labelling and grading requirements on nectarines; we still have not seen it yet, even though all the stakeholders have been giving input on it. We have been assured that it is happening in the very short term...Right now, if you want to get a new variety into this country to compete with [producers in the United States], it has to be sent to the CFIA for three years ... Once it is cleaned—if it is clean after three years—it is sent to a nursery, and it takes another two years to get enough product, at least, to supply our growers. Then, our growers have to grow it for four years.

[Mr. Graydon](#) recommended that Canadian authorities allow manufacturers producing for export to derogate from Canadian standards that are not in force in the country importing the item. He demonstrated this agile approach with the example of the CFIA allowing manufacturers to produce non-fortified wheat flour for export to the European Union. While the *Food and Drug Regulations* [prohibit](#) this product from being sold in Canada, European authorities allow it. This approach allows manufacturers to keep operating costs low while also being able to reach new markets more effectively. He recommended that federal authorities adopt this approach in other areas, such as permitting the export of beverages with plastic, rather than paper, straws to the United States.

## **Recommendation 12**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada review the structures of the Pest Management Regulatory Agency and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to mandate that these agencies take into account economic considerations, food security, and the cost of food in their regulatory decisions, while maintaining the highest standards of health and safety. Notably, the Government should assess whether it would be appropriate for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to report directly to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.**



### **Recommendation 13**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada consider convening the Canadian Food Inspection Agency’s Ministerial Advisory Board and ask it to provide urgent advice on how the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and other agriculture-related regulatory agencies, including the Pest Management Regulatory Agency and the Canadian Grain Commission, could be restructured to improve efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness in the agriculture regulatory system.**

### **Recommendation 14**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada direct the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency to establish or enhance partnerships with trusted, science-based jurisdictions with which we already have trade relations in order to share expertise, knowledge, data, reviews, and the burden of registration studies, while ensuring that the country’s decision-making sovereignty is preserved—as well as the health and safety of citizens, agricultural producers and the environment—by making decisions that reflect our reality.**

### **Recommendation 15**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada amend the relevant provisions of the *Feeds Act*, the *Seeds Act*, the *Pest Control Products Act*, and any other law, regulation, practice, or directive necessary to allow the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency the authority to grant provisional approval to agricultural products that two or more trusted jurisdictions have already approved, while exercising due diligence and ensuring no new risks are identified prior to their registering the product on a final basis.**

### **Recommendation 16**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada use studies from trusted risk-based national jurisdictions while streamlining emergency use registrations, re-evaluations and special reviews.**

### **Recommendation 17**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada implement policy changes and introduce regulatory amendments to Canada’s Enhanced Feed Ban to harmonize Specified Risk Material regulations with the United States.**

## Navigating Regulatory Systems

Witnesses offered suggestions for helping those in the agriculture and agri-food sector to better navigate Canada’s regulatory environment. These included a redress officer who could receive and adjudicate complaints from industry about the CFIA’s operations, an ombudsman who would be able to report and make recommendations on federal actions throughout the supply chain, and regulatory “sandboxes,” or temporary waivers to allow innovators to test novel technologies or processes that do not have a clear regulatory pathway.

### Redress Officer

In 2012, the CFIA created a Complaints and Appeals Office (CAO), sometimes referred to as a “redress office,” with a mandate to provide agriculture and agri-food industry stakeholders who interact with the CFIA an “accessible and transparent” way to register complaints and file appeals related to the Agency’s services, administrative actions, and regulatory decisions.<sup>7</sup>

Merril Bawden of the CFIA explained that the Agency abolished the CAO in 2022, having concluded that it was redundant as it did not have the power to overrule inspectors or directly address stakeholder concerns. Today, an individual with a complaint about an inspection has the right to discuss these matters with the inspector or official, his or her manager, the Senior Director for that region—an individual who works at arms-length from frontline inspectors and can overrule inspection decisions—and through successive levels of the Agency’s management to the President of the CFIA. Individuals who have exhausted this internal complaint process may also initiate legal proceedings.

As previously mentioned, Richard Lee of the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers described “inconsistent oversight practices” by CFIA inspectors in his sector and voiced support for a more formal complaint resolution process within the Agency. Mr. Lee explained that the Agency requires a producer who disagrees with the result of an inspection to resolve the situation with the inspector or the inspector’s manager and offers no formal recourse beyond this. The CFIA’s website sets out this “incremental approach” to filing complaints, explaining that, as a final resort, stakeholders can submit a complaint through an online portal to which they can “usually” expect a response within 2 to 3 business days. A recent study from the Canadian Federation of Independent

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7 Canadian Food Inspection Agency, “The CFIA’s New Complaints and Appeals Office is Operational,” *News Release*, 2 April 2012.



Business, however, reports that businesses can wait up to 20 business days for the CFIA to respond to questions about regulatory or policy interpretation.

[Mr. Poitras](#) voiced a similar concern, explaining that federal inspectors interpret guidelines inconsistently and recommended a formal mechanism to allow businesses with operations in different regions to alert the CFIA to these practices.

During this study, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business released a [report](#) on how CFIA operations affect small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). The study finds that SMEs struggle to understand and comply with CFIA regulations, especially on food safety. The report recommends using plain language to make these regulations easier to understand and providing clearer examples of compliance. Nearly a quarter of the SMEs surveyed reported what they considered to be inconsistent rulings by CFIA inspectors, with some sharing examples of contradictory decisions between different inspectors and even from the same inspector across separate visits. Some business owners explained that they did not appeal inspection decisions because of uncertainty over the impartiality of the CFIA's internal review process.

### **Recommendation 18**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada create a platform for businesses to report inconsistencies in the level of thoroughness and/or abuse involving inspections by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, allocating the resources necessary to implement it and ensure its effectiveness.**

### **Ombudsman**

As the OECD explains in a [recent report](#) on the subject, an ombudsman interacts with citizens and acts as a guardian of their rights and a mediator within public administration. There are at least fifteen [federal ombudsman positions](#) in Canada, each with a different mandate depending on the organization. Each of them, however, acts as an independent overseer of their entity. Among other activities, most of them release public reports or other communications that make recommendations for improving service delivery within an organization based on complaints or comments they receive from stakeholders or other members of the public.

[Tyler McCann](#) of the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute recommended that the federal government appoint a “regulatory ombudsman who can solicit feedback from stakeholders, report publicly on challenges and make recommendations for further reform and modernization.” Mr. McCann explained that while the Agri-Food Sectoral Engagement Table is co-chaired by an official from AAFC and is dependent on the federal government

for funding and guidance, the ombudsman position would be independent of the federal government and be able to control its own work and make recommendations. He emphasized that while the issues surrounding regulatory burden in the sector are well known, actions to address them have been lacking:

The issue now is that the agile regulatory table is based within Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Government officials sit on the table while departments are responsible for setting the agenda. If concrete actions are to be taken, the agile regulatory table must be given more tools to demonstrate leadership, set its own priorities, and make recommendations. Government officials must be held accountable if they fail to implement recommendations to ensure future decisions and actions are clearly understood...The issue is not that the challenges related to the regulatory burden in Canada are not known, but rather, the lack of action.

[Mr. McCann](#) further recommended that the position have a mandate to oversee all agencies that affect the agriculture and agri-food sector, including the CFIA and PMRA, but also sector-specific ones such as the Canadian Grain Commission.

The Committee heard from two ombudsmen on how this role could function between the agriculture and agri-food sector and the federal government. [Tom Barber](#), the President of the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman, and [Nadine Mailloux](#), the Ombudsman of the City of Montreal, emphasized that the role must be independent, impartial and treat information it receives confidentially. Mr. Barber noted that ombudsmen typically serve as the last recourse for individuals dissatisfied with an organization and that 80% of complaints made to an ombudsman are typically redirected to internal complaint mechanisms. Ms. Mailloux explained that she addresses complaints primarily through non-binding recommendations in public reports, which are largely adopted due to the moral authority her office holds.

### **Recommendation 19**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada establish an independent mechanism or body to provide impartial oversight of the agricultural and agri-food regulatory system. This mechanism or body would be mandated to investigate complaints and systemic issues – including fairness, transparency, timeliness, and consistency – ensure compliance with established processes, and issue recommendations to improve the overall functioning of the system.**

### **Experimentation Clauses**

A “[regulatory sandbox](#)” (also referred to as an exemption clause or an experimentation clause) allows entities, including researchers and firms, to operate novel technologies or innovative methods in real-world conditions through some type of exemption or waiver



from the normal regulatory process. This exemption seeks to accommodate innovative approaches and technologies that may not be fully compliant with existing legal and regulatory frameworks.

As the OECD explains in a [policy note](#) on the subject, this approach does not constitute a permanent exemption from regulation; jurisdictions tend to grant limited waivers to projects on a case-by-case basis with defined time, sectoral, or geographic limits while supervising their implementation. Regulatory agencies monitor these initiatives to ensure consumer protection and safety and to make observations to inform future regulatory design.

[Daniel McCann](#) explained that one of the challenges his firm faces in registering his product in Canada is that he is not able to conduct tests to compile the required data as his novel method for pest control dispersal by drone is not legally permitted. To address this “chicken-and-egg” problem, Mr. McCann proposed that the PMRA and other regulators create “sandboxes” to allow limited, controlled testing of innovative methods. In Mr. McCann’s view, this would allow researchers to obtain the necessary information while minimizing risks to health and safety.

## Regulatory Concierge

[Daniel McCann](#) also explained that innovative technologies can require approvals from more than one regulator. In his case, for example, drones that apply pest control products would likely require approval from both the PMRA and Transport Canada. To simplify this process for firms looking to register novel products or technologies, Mr. McCann recommended the federal government create a “regulatory concierge” service to help them navigate the Canadian regulatory process.

### Recommendation 20

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada improve pre-market consultations to increase transparency and predictability within the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency and establish a “concierge” who can help navigate the regulatory system.**

## Improving Regulatory Timelines and Performance

As previously mentioned, several witnesses expressed the view that timelines for new product registrations and other regulatory decisions at the CFIA and the PMRA have grown too long. [Leta LaRush](#) of BASF Agricultural Solutions Canada, for example, described

the pace and outcomes of PMRA's reviews as "inadequate" and characterized them as placing Canadian producers at a competitive disadvantage internationally. Witnesses encouraged these agencies to redirect resources away from extraneous activities towards making regulatory approval decisions more timely, efficient, and transparent.

[Ms. Bergeron](#) encouraged the PMRA to make the risk assessment process more collaborative and transparent by adopting the EPA's model of consulting with stakeholders on an initial risk assessment, rather than releasing it as the final step in the process. In Ms. Bergeron's view this would avoid what she called "black boxes" or a lack of transparency, information, or discussion with the registrant and the agricultural sector on the impact a risk assessment might have on their operations.

[Mr. Ross](#), [Mr. Kolz](#), [Mr. Zoghiami](#), [Mr. Anderson](#), and the [Canadian Canola Growers Association](#) each called on the PMRA to phase out its [Transformation Agenda](#). Among other things, this initiative seeks to make its decisions on pest control products more accessible to the public by increasing the role individuals can play in its consultations. In 2021, the federal government announced that it would provide the PMRA with \$42 million over three years to achieve the Transformation Agenda's objectives. [Mr. Ross](#) recommended that these resources be focused instead on the PMRA's core work, notably improving its performance times and strengthening its scientific activities. In a [brief](#), Mr. Anderson called the PMRA's submission process "manual and outdated" and recommended that it establish a secure online portal to allow applicants to track their cases, receive status updates, and communicate with officials throughout the process. He also encouraged the federal government require the PMRA meet 100% of its performance targets to help make Canada a more attractive first launch market for innovative products.

## Recommendation 21

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada take the following actions with respect to the Pest Management Regulatory Agency:**

- **Consider sunsetting its Transformation Agenda, including the Science Advisory Committee on Pest Control Products, and allocate more resources to the Agency's core activities and improve its service standards, notably by providing more timely responses to requests from agricultural producers for emergency pesticide registrations;**
- **Establish an expedited conditional registration system similar to the Environmental Protection Agency's "Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS)" category for low-risk products;**



- **Limit new data requirements to efficacy data for plant use when a product already holds a Drug Identification Number for human or animal use;**
- **Extend the default validation period to three years for Emergency Use Registration and streamline renewals through digital templates such as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency’s import permit renewal model;**
- **Establish a web portal to allow agricultural producers to track their registration applications to improve the decision-making process and to make it more transparent; and**
- **Mandate the Agency to meet 100% of its performance targets and ensure that these targets are in line with those of regulators in other trusted, science-based jurisdictions.**

#### **Recommendation 22**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada establish a *Regulatory Performance Framework* to ensure agriculture and agri-food regulators deliver timely, transparent, and risk-based decisions, while continuously improving the efficiency of the regulatory system. The framework would set clear service standards and public reporting requirements; require regular review of existing regulations to assess their costs and benefits; and remove outdated or duplicative rules that hinder productivity; and apply a “one-for-one” regulatory offset so that any new regulatory burden is balanced by reductions elsewhere, without compromising health, safety, or environmental protection.**

### **FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

The Committee also received 24 written briefs from stakeholders identifying measures the federal government could take to provide regulatory relief to producers and firms in their sectors. While it did not have the opportunity to receive additional evidence on these matters, the Committee intends to study some of them, particularly those related to Business Risk Management programs, in the near future. This section presents some of these recommendations.

### **Recommendation 23**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada reduce the red tape associated with the Temporary Foreign Worker Program in the agriculture and agri-food sector and maintain the Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program.**

### **Recommendation 24**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada review Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Advance Payments Program to simplify the process, improve efficiency, accelerate the release of funds, and enhance transparency, and that it consider making the increased program limit permanent.**

### **Recommendation 25**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada align its Labour Market Impact and worker permit approval process.**

### **Recommendation 26**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada publish agriculture and agri-food related import and export sale statistics, at the Canadian level, including a section dedicated to the organic sector, to establish a common policy framework for public and private investment in research, programming, digital skills, outcome-based measurement and reporting.**

## **CONCLUSION**

In its 2017 [report](#) the Advisory Council on Economic Growth identified agriculture and agri-food as one of four economic sectors in Canada with significant unmet potential for expansion. The Report also noted obstacles producers and firms in this sector faced in doing business and attracting investment, including what it called “a challenging regulatory environment.” Eight years after its publication, regulatory burdens this report identified remain in place and the sector's full economic potential remains unmet. Particularly as Canada faces an era of economic uncertainty and international barriers to trade, this situation is unacceptable and easily remedied.

As several witnesses throughout this study noted, regulatory reform is a no-cost initiative that is entirely within the federal government's purview. While witnesses identified many different burdens faced by individual sectors and the entire food value chain, they also came prepared with innovative solutions to address them. Federal departments and



agencies, while continuing to respect the health and safety of consumers and producers, should adopt a food security and economic competitiveness lens in their decision making processes to ensure that regulations, procedures, and product approvals do not place an unnecessary burden on this sector, which is not only important for economic growth, but essential to the country's livelihood.

The CFIA and the PMRA should look beyond the type of piecemeal reforms to individual regulations or sector-specific processes they identified in their Red Tape Reduction progress reports and instead consider wider-ranging changes to the way they operate. These agencies should seize this moment as an opportunity to make doing business in Canada less expensive and more efficient and to change their culture away from complacency and complexity towards innovation and empowering enterprise.

## APPENDIX A: LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee’s [webpage for this study](#).

| Organizations and Individuals   | Date       | Meeting |
|---|------------|---------|
| <b>Association des producteurs maraîchers du Québec</b><br>Patrice Léger Bourgoïn, General Manager<br>Catherine Lessard, Associate Executive Director   | 2025/09/25 | 4       |
| <b>Canadian Cattle Association</b><br>Dennis Laycraft, Executive Vice-President   | 2025/09/25 | 4       |
| <b>Canadian Food Inspection Agency</b><br>Robert Ianiro, Vice-President, Policy and Programs  | 2025/09/25 | 4       |
| <b>Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food</b><br>Steven Jurgutis, Director General,<br>Policy, Planning and Integration Directorate  | 2025/09/25 | 4       |
| <b>Department of Health</b><br>Frédéric Bissonnette, Senior Director General,<br>Pest Management Regulatory Agency<br>Matt Jones, Assistant Deputy Minister,<br>Pest Management Regulatory Agency | 2025/09/25 | 4       |
| <b>Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada</b><br>Chris Duyvelshoff, Chair, Crop Protection   | 2025/09/25 | 4       |
| <b>Canada Grains Council</b><br>Mac Ross, Vice-President, Trade Policy and Crop Protection  | 2025/10/02 | 5       |
| <b>Canadian Meat Council</b><br>Claire Citeau, Vice-President, International Trade<br>Jorge Correa, Vice-President, Market Access and Technical<br>Affairs  | 2025/10/02 | 5       |

| <b>Organizations and Individuals</b>  | <b>Date</b> | <b>Meeting</b> |
|---|-------------|----------------|
| <b>CropLife Canada</b><br>Émilie Bergeron, Vice-President,<br>Chemistry<br>Gregory Kolz, Vice-President,<br>Government Affairs  | 2025/10/02  | 5              |
| <b>Food and Beverage Canada</b><br>Kristina Farrell, Chief Executive Officer<br>Jean-Emmanuel Poitras, Director of Policy and Regulatory<br>Affairs                       | 2025/10/02  | 5              |
| <b>Food, Health &amp; Consumer Products of Canada</b><br>Michael Graydon, Chief Executive Officer   | 2025/10/02  | 5              |
| <b>Union des producteurs agricoles</b><br>Katia Colton-Gagnon, Coordinator<br>Paul Doyon, Senior Vice-President General   | 2025/10/02  | 5              |
| <b>Canadian Federation of Agriculture</b><br>Maria Alkayed, Manager, Environmental sustainability and<br>regulatory affairs<br>Stéphanie Levasseur, Second Vice-President | 2025/10/06  | 6              |
| <b>National Cattle Feeders' Association</b><br>Cathy Jo Noble, Vice-President<br>Janice Tranberg, President and Chief Executive Officer                                   | 2025/10/06  | 6              |
| <b>Producteurs de grains du Québec</b><br>Salah Zoghalmi, Director of Agronomic Affairs   | 2025/10/06  | 6              |
| <b>Pulse Canada</b><br>Greg Northey, Vice-President,<br>Corporate Affairs   | 2025/10/06  | 6              |
| <b>Seeds Canada</b><br>Brent Collins, President   | 2025/10/06  | 6              |
| <b>Soy Canada</b><br>Brian Innes, Executive Director  | 2025/10/06  | 6              |
| <b>Anchor P Cattle Company</b><br>Diane Sawley, Ranch Manager   | 2025/10/09  | 7              |

| <b>Organizations and Individuals</b>  | <b>Date</b> | <b>Meeting</b> |
|---|-------------|----------------|
| <b>East Point Cattle Corporation</b><br>Erin Sawley, Co-owner   | 2025/10/09  | 7              |
| <b>Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers</b><br>Richard Lee, Executive Director  | 2025/10/09  | 7              |
| <b>Ontario Tender Fruit Growers</b><br>Phil Tregunno, Chair   | 2025/10/09  | 7              |
| <b>Prince Edward Island Potato Board</b><br>Greg Donald, General Manager  | 2025/10/09  | 7              |
| <b>Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute</b><br>Tyler McCann, Managing Director   | 2025/10/23  | 9              |
| <b>Precision AI Inc.</b><br>Daniel McCann, Chief Executive Officer  | 2025/10/23  | 9              |
| <b>Vive Crop Protection</b><br>Darren Anderson, Chief Executive Officer   | 2025/10/23  | 9              |
| <b>Agri-Food Analytics Lab</b><br>Dr. Sylvain Charlebois, Senior Director and Professor,<br>Dalhousie University  | 2025/11/03  | 12             |
| <b>Agri-Food Innovation Council</b><br>Serge Buy, Chief Executive Officer   | 2025/11/03  | 12             |
| <b>Alberta Beekeepers Commission</b><br>Connie Phillips, Executive Director   | 2025/11/03  | 12             |
| <b>As an individual</b><br>Evan Fraser, Director,<br>Arrell Food Institute, University of Guelph  | 2025/11/03  | 12             |
| <b>Canadian Federation of Independent Business</b><br>Jasmin Guénette, Vice-President,<br>National Affairs<br>Juliette Nicolaÿ, Bilingual Policy Analyst,<br>National Affairs | 2025/11/03  | 12             |
| <b>Canadian Produce Marketing Association</b><br>Ron Lemaire, President   | 2025/11/03  | 12             |

| <b>Organizations and Individuals</b>  | <b>Date</b> | <b>Meeting</b> |
|---|-------------|----------------|
| <b>As an individual</b><br>Eric Cheff   | 2025/11/06  | 13             |
| <b>BASF Agricultural Solutions Canada Inc.</b><br>Leta LaRush, Vice-President   | 2025/11/06  | 13             |
| <b>Canadian Food Inspection Agency</b><br>Merril Bawden, Corporate Secretary<br>Pamela MacDonald, Executive Director,<br>Inspection Support | 2025/11/06  | 13             |
| <b>Forum of Canadian Ombudsman</b><br>Tom Barber, President   | 2025/11/06  | 13             |
| <b>Ombudsman of Montreal</b><br>Nadine Mailloux, Ombudsman  | 2025/11/06  | 13             |

## **APPENDIX B: LIST OF BRIEFS**

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The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the committee's [webpage for this study](#).

**Agri-Food Innovation Council**  
**Alberta Irrigation Districts Association**  
**Arrell Food Institute**  
**BASF Agricultural Solutions Canada Inc.**  
**Bayer Canada Inc.**  
**Canada Grains Council**  
**Canada Organic Trade Association**  
**Canadian Beverage Association**  
**Canadian Canola Growers Association**  
**Canadian Food Innovation Network**  
**CropLife Canada**  
**East Point Cattle Corporation**  
**Ecojustice**  
**Environmental Defence Canada**  
**Fertilizer Canada**  
**Food and Beverage Canada**  
**Friends of the Earth Canada**  
**Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada**  
**Keystone Agricultural Producers**  
**National Farmers Union**  
**Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers**  
**Safe Food Matters**  
**Second Harvest Canada**

**Seeds Canada**

**Syngenta Canada Inc.**

**University of the Fraser Valley Food and Agriculture Institute**

**Victimes des pesticides du Québec**

**Vive Crop Protection**

# REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

A copy of the relevant Minutes of Proceedings ([Meetings Nos. 4 to 7, 9, 12 to 14, and 16 to 18](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Coteau  
Chair

