

The Right Honourable Mark Carney, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

RE: Let's Grow Canada: Staking a Claim for Agriculture in the Government Mandate

Dear Prime Minister Carney,

As leaders in Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector, we welcome your government's focus on strengthening the economy—including efforts to tackle productivity challenges, ease regulatory pressures, eliminate internal trade barriers, expand market access, and move forward with critically needed nation-building projects. We are excited by the potential opportunities this creates to advance Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector and help it improve its position and impact in global and domestic markets.

However, this enthusiasm is tempered by ongoing concern that agriculture has too often been overlooked in national policy and investment decisions. Canada's agricultural R&D spending fell from \$0.86 billion in 2013 to \$0.68 billion in 2022—ranking us last among the top seven OECD countries. Without a clear shift in approach, Canada risks falling permanently behind in a sector critical to domestic and export growth, food security, and economic resilience.

As a vital industry with strong roots in both rural and urban communities, we contribute almost \$150 billion annually to Canada's GDP and employ 2.3 million people—more than the automotive, forestry, steel and aluminum, and oil and gas sectors combined. We are the largest manufacturing sector in the country and a key driver of domestic economic growth.

For too long, our agriculture and agri-food sector has held significant untapped potential as a strategic economic driver for Canada. We have the land, freshwater and marine resources, people, safety and regulatory credibility to be a global leader in sustainable food and agriculture production. Yet while governments in other nations are making bold investments in agri-tech, domestic food processing, production, and export readiness, Canada has been slow to respond, losing opportunities in the process. We are seeing this play out as Canada's global market share in agriculture has fallen by 12% since 2000, while competitors like Brazil and Australia have gained ground in fast-growing markets. At the same time, our average annual productivity growth has slowed from 2.2% in the early 2000s and is projected to drop to 1% by 2030.

The time is now for agriculture to become a cornerstone of Canada's future—strategically positioned to boost economic growth, drive innovation, support sustainability and productivity objectives and improve the standard of living of all Canadians. To change course, agriculture must be made a national priority—backed by meaningful investment and coordinated federal leadership. A renewed commitment to the sector can drive progress across multiple national objectives. Economically, Canada's agriculture and agri-food industry has averaged over \$4

billion in annual GDP growth over the past 10 years.¹ With the right investment in domestic production, value-added processing, productivity and exports, the sector has the potential to more than double that and drive upwards of an additional \$100 billion in GDP growth over the next 10 years, totalling up to \$250 billion by 2035.

We urge your government to treat agriculture and agri-food as a strategically important sector and implement the following:

1. **Create a focused plan for economic growth in the agriculture sector and to support food security**—by making agriculture and agri-food, including indigenous agriculture, a national priority with clear targets for production growth, investment in innovation, value-added processing, exports and a stable labour supply.
2. **Ensure regulations support a growth agenda**—by aligning the mandate of key government regulators with Canada’s food security and agricultural competitiveness goals, and by reducing regulatory burden and making Canada a top destination for investment and innovation.
3. **Prioritize transportation and trade infrastructure that support agriculture**—including rail, port and cold chain infrastructure as well as rural infrastructure needed to reach national corridors, while at the same time ensuring the reliability of service needed to maintain Canada’s reputation as a reliable supplier of agriculture products.
4. **Modernize risk management tools** to ensure they are inclusive and responsive to current climate and market conditions as well as to ensure adequate mitigation measures are in place to support the sector in the face of ongoing trade and climate disruptions.

The countries that feed the world will increasingly shape it—and Canada, with the capacity to feed both itself and others sustainably, has every reason, and every asset, to be among them. Without bold and immediate action from the federal government, the potential of the agriculture and agri-food sector will continue to be constrained, and we will miss this crucial opportunity.

We urge you to make agriculture a defining priority of your government’s economic and nation-building agenda. We are ready to work with you to achieve that vision.

Sincerely,

The undersigned national agriculture organizations.

¹ https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2018/aac-aafc/A38-1-1-2017-eng.pdf

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Canadian
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Growers' Association

ACPS

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des producteurs de semences



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