



Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada

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Agroalimentaire Canada



Evaluation of the Cost-Shared Non-Business Risk Management (Non-BRM) Contribution Programming under Growing Forward

Office of Audit and Evaluation

The AAFC Evaluation Committee recommended this evaluation report for approval by the Deputy Minister on July 9, 2013.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under the Growing Forward policy framework, federal and provincial/territorial governments (PTs) jointly funded a diversity of programs in support of Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector. This evaluation specifically examines Growing Forward Cost-Shared Non-Business Risk Management (Non-BRM) programming developed and administered by PTs. This evaluation presents a national picture of the PT-administered cost-shared programs under Growing Forward, as well as Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's (AAFC's) management and oversight (governance) framework for the programming. The evaluation was conducted by AAFC's Office of Audit and Evaluation (OAE) in accordance with the Treasury Board Policy, Directives and Standards on Evaluation (2009).

Background and Profile

Under Growing Forward, AAFC contributed to programming designed and administered by PTs to further the Growing Forward strategic outcomes of:

- A competitive and innovative sector;
- A sector that contributes to society's priorities; and
- A sector that is proactive in managing risks.

Growing Forward programs were targeted to the varying agricultural and agri-food priorities, needs, and characteristics of each of the provinces and territories. Cost-shared programs included programming to support the agri-environment, agri-business development, innovation, food safety, biosecurity, traceability, and trade and market development. Growing Forward included over 100 eligible PT-administered Cost-Shared Non-BRM programs, which were delivered directly by PTs or by third-party delivery agents.

Eligible cost-shared programs were set out in Bilateral Agreements between the federal government and PTs, covering the period from April 2009 to March 2013. Cost-shared funding corresponded with a 60:40 federal: provincial/territorial funding formula. From 2009-2010 to 2011-2012, federal-provincial/territorial (FPT) funding for PT-administered Cost-Shared Non-BRM programs under Growing Forward totalled \$851.4 million. In addition, during the first four years of Growing Forward, \$13.0 million was expended for federal communications activities in support of Growing Forward.

Evaluation Methodology

As set out in the Bilateral Agreements, PTs committed to evaluating their Cost-Shared Non-BRM programs and providing the results to AAFC. The federal evaluation incorporated information from the PT evaluations, as well as performance and financial information reported by PTs. AAFC did not directly evaluate PT-administered programs.

To supplement the information from PTs, AAFC also undertook interviews with 47 key informants, and undertook a review of relevant secondary data sources. The evaluation also included seven video case studies that profiled the impacts of projects funded through the Cost-Shared Non-BRM programs.

Key Findings

Cost-Shared Non-BRM programs were developed to support the long-term competitiveness of the agriculture and agri-food sector. While the federal role was appropriate given joint FPT constitutional responsibility for agriculture, Growing Forward placed significant emphasis on PT flexibility in Cost-Shared Non-BRM programming to reflect the diversity and complexity of the sector. The programming framework aligned with federal priorities, especially in its emphasis on innovation and competitiveness, and with AAFC's strategic outcomes of competitiveness, innovation and environmental sustainability. The level of continued need for support for longstanding program areas should be assessed in the future to ensure funding continues to target areas of greatest priority for federal and provincial/territorial governments.

Key results of the programming noted in the evaluation include:

- The substantial uptake of Growing Forward environmental programming increased the number of Canadian farms having Environmental Farm Plans and implementing Beneficial Management Practices.
- Growing Forward funded a significant number of activities designed to bolster industry implementation of food safety, biosecurity and traceability programs and measures.
- Agri-Business Development programs are perceived to have contributed to an improvement in business management practices in the sector.
- Innovation programs funded a wide range of activities along the innovation continuum, from research to commercialization.

A small number of PT-administered trade and market development programs were also funded under Growing Forward, which complemented federally-administered programs in this area.

The evaluation also found that AAFC's Centre of Program Excellence (now the Service and Program Excellence Directorate) provided an effective role as central support and coordination within AAFC for cost-shared programming. As an online tool, the Agri-Share system improved the efficiency of FPT performance and financial reporting for cost-shared programming.

Several weaknesses were identified:

- Bilateral Management Committees (BMCs), the primary FPT governance body for cost-shared programming, sometimes lacked regular, detailed and consistent information on provincially- and federally-administered Growing Forward programming.
- The eligibility of PT program activities and expenses were outlined at a high level in the Growing Forward agreements, reflecting the diversity of programs and jurisdictions. As a result, considerable effort was expended in obtaining legal and program interpretations on the eligibility of specific program activities and expenses, and communicating this information across jurisdictions, during Growing Forward.
- There were inherent challenges with performance measurement and evaluation in a programming framework as broad and diverse as Growing Forward. A more strategic approach for Growing Forward 2 is needed in order to ensure that the information collected and reported is robust and supports an assessment at the outcome level.
- The current process for the approval of financial claims in the Agri-Share system was considered onerous. Agri-Share users suggested that electronic approvals would improve operational efficiency.
- Numerous communications activities were undertaken by AAFC under Growing Forward, but the extent to which federal communications objectives were achieved is difficult to measure, as performance data were limited.

Recommendations

The evaluation includes five recommendations:

Recommendation #1:

AAFC's Programs Branch should:

- Review the guidance provided to BMC Co-Chairs related to monitoring and reporting to ensure that the established processes support effective and efficient program coordination and oversight of the Bilateral Agreements, including the provisions related to the processing of financial claims and coordination.

Recommendation #2:

AAFC's Programs Branch should work with the provinces and territories to:

- Develop a performance measurement strategy for future cost-shared programming that includes a smaller number of indicators, as well as benchmarks/baselines and definitions of performance indicators. The performance measurement strategy should leverage, to the greatest extent possible, performance data that are being

collected by provinces and territories to meet their own existing accountability and reporting mechanisms.

Recommendation #3:

AAFC's Office of Audit and Evaluation should work with the provinces and territories to:

- Develop an Evaluation Strategy for future cost-shared programming that utilizes a targeted, case study approach to examine the continued need and effectiveness of specific types of longstanding cost-shared programming.

Recommendation #4:

AAFC's Programs Branch should:

- Determine the feasibility of electronic approvals of financial claims for cost-shared programming under Growing Forward 2 and, if feasible, implement this change.

Recommendation #5:

AAFC's Communications and Consultations Branch, with the assistance of the Office of Audit and Evaluation, should:

- Develop performance indicators, and measure performance of communications activities against these performance indicators, as part of communications activities in support of Growing Forward 2.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Under the Growing Forward policy framework, federal and provincial/territorial (PT) governments jointly funded Cost-Shared Non-Business Risk Management (Non-BRM) programming in support of Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector. This evaluation examines Growing Forward Cost-Shared Non-BRM programming developed and administered by PTs. The evaluation was designed to provide a high-level summary and national picture of the performance of this programming, based on evaluations and performance reporting undertaken by PTs for the programs they developed and administered. The evaluation also examines Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's (AAFC's) management and oversight (governance) framework for cost-shared programming developed and delivered by PTs under Growing Forward.

The evaluation was undertaken by AAFC's Office of Audit and Evaluation (OAE) to satisfy the commitment set out in the Growing Forward federal-provincial/territorial (FPT) Bilateral Agreements that AAFC complete a national evaluation of cost-shared programming. The evaluation will also help AAFC to meet the requirement under the Treasury Board Policy on Evaluation that federal departments demonstrate full evaluation coverage of all direct program spending every five years, as well as the *Financial Administration Act* requirement that all ongoing grants and contributions programs be reviewed every five years.

Consistent with shared FPT responsibility for cost-shared programs, AAFC's evaluation was undertaken in consultation with PTs through the FPT Finance and Performance Measurement Working Group.

1.1 DESIGN AND DELIVERY

Under Growing Forward, FPT governments agreed to work towards three strategic outcomes:

- A competitive and innovative sector;
- A sector that contributes to society's priorities; and
- A sector that is proactive in managing risks.

Growing Forward included programs cost-shared or cost-matched between the federal government and PTs on a 60:40 basis, as well as federal-only programming.¹ The framework included new programming, as well as the continuation and modification of some existing Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) programming. A list of eligible PT-administered cost-shared programs under Growing Forward is provided in Appendix C.

¹ Cost-sharing included federal funding and PT funding or eligible PT in-kind contributions.
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The design and delivery framework for the cost-shared programming under Growing Forward was set out in a Multilateral Framework Agreement (MFA), Bilateral Agreements, and Terms and Conditions. The MFA outlined the overall national objectives and parameters of the policy framework, while each of the Bilateral Agreements set out the spending plans, details on the designated programs to be funded, performance indicators for each of the designated programs, and administrative guidelines. Terms and Conditions for cost-shared programming included parameters on recipient and expenditure eligibility and other components of program delivery.

Through the Consolidated Contribution Agreements included as Annex A of the Bilateral Agreements, federal funding was provided quarterly to each PT on the basis of claims submitted for eligible costs related to each designated program.

1.2 PROGRAM RESOURCES

The Growing Forward MFA set out a commitment of \$1.3 billion over five years for Cost-Shared Non-BRM programs. Corresponding with the 60:40 FPT funding formula, this total included \$800 million in federal funding and \$533 million in provincial/territorial funding. In-kind contributions by PTs were eligible to be counted against the PT contribution.

Within the \$800 million federal funding envelope, \$110 million was “cost-matched through attribution”. These funds were allocated for specific federally-designed and -administered national programs. As these programs were designed to benefit all PTs, this funding was counted toward the overall federal 60 percent share of eligible spending in each PT. It should be noted that this funding is being evaluated through separate AAFC evaluations of federal-only programming.

In addition to funding for Cost-Shared Non-BRM programming, \$24.0 million in federal funding was allocated for AAFC communication activities in support of Growing Forward for 2009-2010 to 2012-2013. For the first four years of Growing Forward, \$13.0 million had been expended to support federal communications activities.

Table 1 provides an overview of FPT spending for the first three years of Growing Forward. As shown, Environmental Programming comprised the largest share of programming dollars, with over one-third of total FPT spending (34.8%), followed by Agri-Business Development Programs (25.2%), Science, Innovation and Adoption (20.3%), and Food Safety and Biosecurity Risk Management Systems (17.6%). Trade and Market Development made up 2.1% of total FPT spending.

Table 1: Total FPT funding and % of total funding, by Program Activity, 2009-2010, 2010-2011 and 2011-2012

Program Activity	Total FPT Funding (\$ millions)*	Percentage of Total FPT Funding
Environmental Programming – Environmental Knowledge, Technology, Information and Measurement; On-Farm Action	296.6	34.8%
Food Safety and Biosecurity Risk Management Systems	149.4	17.6%
Trade and Market Development	18.1	2.1%
Science, Innovation and Adoption	172.6	20.3%
Agri-Business Development Program	214.6	25.2%
Total	851.4	100.0%**

*Does not include cost-matched through attribution activities, miscellaneous federal activities, and unallocated funds

** Numbers may not add exactly to 100% due to rounding

1.3 GOVERNANCE

The key governance structure for Growing Forward Cost-Shared Non-BRM programming was the Bilateral Management Committees (BMCs) established between each PT and AAFC. The Bilateral Agreements set out the roles and responsibilities of the committees. Each BMC was co-chaired by an AAFC Regional Director (within AAFC's Market and Industry Services Branch (MISB)) and a representative of the PT.²

Financial claims from PTs for Cost-Shared Non-BRM programming were reviewed by AAFC Regional Directors and approved for payment under Section 34 of the *Financial Administration Act* by the Director General of the Centre of Program Excellence (COPE) (now the Service and Program Excellence Directorate (SPED)), or, for amounts above \$5 million, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Programs Branch (formerly Farm Financial Programs Branch).

Established in October 2009, COPE provided a horizontal coordination function within AAFC for Cost-Shared Non-BRM programming. COPE compiled PT

² PT BMC Co-Chairs were most often Assistant Deputy Ministers.
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performance and financial data through its web-based information management system (Agri-Share), coordinated financial claims, and prepared financial reporting for Senior Management Boards. In addition, COPE's Governance Unit supported Regional Directors by consulting with AAFC program areas and legal services to provide advice related to the provisions of the Growing Forward agreements. COPE's Recipient Audit Unit managed recipient audits of cost-shared funding.

Other program areas within AAFC provided advice, as requested, to Regional Directors and COPE regarding the consistency of proposed Cost-Shared Non-BRM activities with AAFC intended policy and program outcomes.

1.4 COMMUNICATIONS

Growing Forward communications activities were to ensure consistent and coherent communications from both the federal government and PTs. Communications activities also aimed to provide producers and processors with timely and targeted information on Growing Forward programs and services, as well as to demonstrate to Canadians the contribution of the agriculture and agri-food sector to the economy, food safety and the health of the environment.

Within AAFC, Regional Communications officers worked with their PT counterparts on program- or region-specific communications activities. In addition, a Growing Forward communications unit within the Strategic and Ministerial Communications Division of Communications and Consultations Branch (CCB) was established to conduct department-wide communications activities related to Growing Forward. An FPT Communications Committee, co-chaired by an AAFC and PT representative, provided a national forum for discussion and planning of Growing Forward communication activities.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 EVALUATION APPROACH

As set out in the Bilateral Agreements, PTs committed to evaluating their Cost-Shared Non-BRM programs by March 31, 2012 and providing the results to AAFC. The federal evaluation was designed as a "meta-evaluation", compiling information gathered from PT evaluations and PT performance data. To supplement this information, and to examine management and oversight within AAFC, OAE also undertook key informant interviews, and reviewed secondary data sources. As such, the evaluation utilized a non-experimental design based on multiple lines of evidence.

2.2 SCOPE

The evaluation covered programming under numerous components of AAFC's Program Activity Architecture (PAA), as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Components of AAFC Program Activity Architecture covered by evaluation		
Program Activity	Sub-Activity	Sub-Sub-Activity
1.1 Environmental Knowledge, Technology, Information and Measurement		
1.2 On-Farm Action	1.2.2 Agr-Environmental Assessment	
	1.2.3 Agri-Environmental Risk Assessment Implementation	
2.2 Food Safety and Biosecurity Risk Management Systems	2.2.1 Biosecurity	2.2.1.1 Biosecurity Standards Implementation
	2.2.3 Food Safety Systems	2.2.3.2 Food Safety Systems Implementation
	2.2.4 Traceability	2.2.4.3 Traceability Enterprise Infrastructure
2.3 Trade and Market Development	2.3.2 Market Growth	2.3.2.2 Market Information and Export Capacity Building
3.1 Science, Innovation and Adoption	3.1.3 Agri-Innovations	3.1.3.5 Regional Innovation
3.2 Agri-Business Development	3.2.2 Business Development	

As per the Treasury Board Directive on the Evaluation Function, the evaluation examined the issues of relevance and performance. To assess relevance, the evaluation examined the need for Cost-Shared Non-BRM programming, the alignment of the framework with departmental strategic outcomes and federal priorities, and the appropriateness of federal roles and responsibilities. To assess performance, the evaluation examined the production of outputs and, to the extent possible, achievement of outcomes based on evaluations undertaken by PTs in accordance with the Bilateral Agreements, and other performance data reported by PTs.

The evaluation also examined the design and delivery of AAFC's management and oversight of the cost-shared programming framework. Specifically, the evaluation examined governance, the parameters set out in the FPT agreements and Terms and Conditions, and monitoring and reporting (including performance measurement and evaluation approaches). This included a qualitative assessment of the efficiency/economy of AAFC's administration of the cost-shared programming framework. Finally, the evaluation examined available information on the

performance of federal communications activities undertaken in support of Growing Forward.

2.3 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The evaluation included several lines of evidence.

- A review of **evaluations undertaken by PTs** of the Cost-Shared Non-BRM programs administered in their jurisdictions was completed to collect information on the outputs produced and, to the extent possible, outcomes achieved.
- **Program administrative and financial data** were analysed to gather information on the performance of the programming and program expenditures. Complete performance data were available for the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 fiscal years, and partial data were available for 2011-2012. Where possible, performance data across different PTs were aggregated to provide a more complete picture of results achieved across Canada.
- Interviews were undertaken with 47 key informants, including AAFC and PT managers and staff.
- A **document review** was completed to gain an understanding of the context and design and delivery of the cost-shared programming, and to gather information related to programs' relevance and performance.
- Seven **video case studies** were developed to profile projects funded through Cost-Shared Non-BRM programming across Canada. The videos document the impacts of the projects on project beneficiaries based on interviews and site visits. Videos profiled participants of:
 - Alberta's Product and Market Development Program;
 - Saskatchewan's Farm and Ranch Water Infrastructure Program;
 - Manitoba's Industry Innovation Fund;
 - Ontario's Food Safety and Traceability Program;
 - Northwest Territories' Small-Scale Foods Program;
 - Nova Scotia's Energy Conservation Program; and
 - Prince Edward Island's Future Farmer Program.

More information on the interviews and video case studies is included in Appendix D – Evaluation Participants.

2.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE EVALUATION

Limitation	Mitigation Strategy	Impact on Evaluation
Limited data on outcomes in performance data and PT evaluations	To the extent possible, other relevant sources of data have been integrated into the report, including the Business Development Program Client Impact Survey and the Farm Financial Survey.	Many of the results reported in the report are outputs not outcomes.
Limited ability to aggregate performance information from multiple jurisdictions	Where a synthesis of data was not possible, the evaluation sought to at least demonstrate the range of programs and activities funded. The video case studies also demonstrate the range of impacts given the diversity of regional needs and programs funded.	The reader should not consider the results of programming presented in this report to be exhaustive.

3.0 EVALUATION FINDINGS

3.1 RELEVANCE

Cost-Shared Non-BRM programs were developed to support the long-term competitiveness of the agriculture and agri-food sector. While the federal role was appropriate given joint FPT constitutional responsibility for agriculture, Growing Forward placed significant emphasis on PT flexibility in Cost-Shared Non-BRM programming to reflect the diversity and complexity of the sector.

The agricultural and agri-food sector is an important component of Canada's national and provincial economies. In 2010, the agricultural and agri-food system comprised 8.1% of total Canadian Gross Domestic Product, and employed over two million people.¹ The sector is complex, including primary agricultural production and food and manufacturing across a variety of commodities, products and regions. Agricultural and agri-food businesses are affected by a variety of economic and ecological factors, and have increasingly been driven by innovation in recent years.

Given this complexity, government programs have been designed to support sector sustainability and competitiveness. Prior to the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF), however, government support was generally focused on reacting to short-

term problems or disasters after they had occurred. The APF was launched in 2003 to reduce reliance on ad hoc programming and to help position producers and processors for long-term sustainability and competitiveness.

As agriculture is a shared responsibility of the federal and provincial governments under the *Constitution Act*, government support has been provided by both the federal and provincial/territorial governments. A shared FPT policy framework afforded the opportunity to develop common policy objectives, and ensured federal and PT programs did not duplicate or work at cross-purposes.

Growing Forward was developed to build on the APF, while placing greater emphasis on programming to support competitiveness and innovation to build sector resilience. Through stakeholder consultations in advance of Growing Forward, it became clear that the APF did not sufficiently take into account the differing needs and priorities of the various regions of the country. In recognition of this, Growing Forward included a larger PT role in program design and delivery compared to what had existed during APF.

Growing Forward Cost-Shared Non-BRM programming was designed to address sector needs in broad priority areas.

Growing Forward was developed following consultations with over 3,000 industry stakeholders from across the value chain. Consultations showed that there was broad support for non-BRM programs to address specific issues and challenges faced by the sector. Recognizing the need for PT flexibility, the rationales for cost-shared programming were articulated at a high level. The following section discusses the relevance of the different types of cost-shared Non-BRM programming administered by PTs under Growing Forward.

Environmental Programming

Minimizing the impact of agricultural activities on the environment was selected by the Canadian public as one of its top three priorities (for government) in a 2011 AAFC survey.² Cost-shared environmental programming funded the development of agri-environmental risk assessments / Environmental Farm Plans (EFPs) to identify ways in which agricultural and agri-food businesses could improve their environmental performance. Environmental risk assessments / EFPs were intended to help enterprises in the agriculture and agri-food industry to incorporate environmental considerations into everyday business decisions, rather than addressing environmental considerations in a reactive way.

In some provinces, having an EFP was a prerequisite for other government support or programming. In addition, some buyers have, as a condition of business, required their suppliers to implement EFPs. According to Statistics Canada's Farm Financial Survey (2008), one-third (33%) of Canadian farms had implemented EFPs due to buyer requirements.

Cost-shared programming under Growing Forward also provided support to producers to implement Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs) to improve the environmental performance of their operations. Stakeholder consultations prior to Growing Forward emphasized the important role for government in encouraging the adoption of BMPs.

While considerable effort has been made over the past ten years in encouraging the development of EFPs and the adoption of BMPs, the level of continued need for government support in this area is not clear. Many of the EFP and BMP programs across Canada are longstanding, and received significant support under both APF and Growing Forward. Some provincial evaluations noted that the level of continued need for government support for this programming in their jurisdictions was being reviewed. An assessment of the remaining gaps in this area, as well as of the relative value and effectiveness of different types of BMPs, would be useful so that future programming can be effectively targeted to identified needs.

Relevance of Food Safety Programming

Food safety systems can help to expand access to foreign markets, reduce the risk of health incidents, and minimise the impact of food safety incidents when they occur. As food production becomes more globalized, food chains become longer and food safety risks heighten. Buyers' expectations of food safety have increased in recent years, with some buyers requiring their suppliers to meet specific standards for food safety in addition to those that suppliers must meet under mandatory industry/government requirements.

Government support under Growing Forward was designed to increase industry participation in food safety systems. Participation rates in food safety systems such as ISO 22000 or Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) have varied considerably by commodity, and were low overall, prior to Growing Forward. According to the Farm Financial Survey, only 45% of producers participated in HACCP-based on-farm food safety programs in 2008.

In both 2009 and 2011, surveyed Canadians most often stated that food safety should be a top government priority when asked to rank agricultural priorities according to high, medium, low or no priority.³ Stakeholder consultations in advance of Growing Forward identified the need for governments to assist industry with the costs of implementing food safety systems and activities.⁴ This was echoed by stakeholders in consultations for Growing Forward 2, who identified the costs related to food safety as a challenge to business competitiveness.⁵

Relevance of Biosecurity and Traceability Programming

Biosecurity was a new area of programming under Growing Forward. Biosecurity includes management practices and measures undertaken to mitigate the risks of

contracting and spreading animal and plant diseases and pests, both on-farm and post-farm.

Biosecurity programming under Growing Forward was originally intended to support the implementation of national biosecurity standards. The development of national biosecurity standards began following the 2004 Avian Influenza outbreak, in order to address the need for national preventative measures and practices to manage large-scale disease outbreaks. At the start of Growing Forward, the only approved national biosecurity standard was the National Avian On-Farm Biosecurity Standard. As other national biosecurity standards were in development, and as biosecurity was a relatively new concept for many in the sector, Growing Forward biosecurity programming administered by PTs focused on increasing producer awareness of biosecurity, with some support for complying with new standards.

Traceability is the ability to follow an item or group of items—be it an animal, plant, food product or ingredient—from one point in the supply chain to another. Traceability programming was intended to support emergency and management functions related to food recalls and animal health incidents. According to stakeholders, government support for biosecurity and traceability was intended to spark industry adoption of new practices and infrastructure that would not necessarily provide a return on investment at the individual farm or processor level. Government support was expected to drive wider industry adoption of these newer areas of food assurance.

Consultations in advance of Growing Forward 2 noted the importance of both government and the private sector in supporting initiatives like food assurance systems that contribute to the public good. Consultations also identified traceability as an effective means of differentiating Canada's products in domestic and international markets.⁶

Relevance of Trade and Market Development Programs

Canada is an important player in the international trade of agriculture and agri-food products. With export sales of \$35.5 billion in 2010, Canada accounted for over 3.3% of the total value of world agriculture and agri-food exports. However, emerging economies have afforded new opportunities and challenges for Canada's sector. While Canadian exports to non-US markets continue to grow, China overtook Canada as the world's fourth largest agricultural exporter in 2010.⁷

The Growing Forward MFA stated that cost-shared programming would include market information programming in order to increase sector capacity and market access for agricultural and agri-food products. PT programs in this area were intended to complement federally-administered cost-shared trade and market development programs.

Consultations with industry and other stakeholders in advance of Growing Forward 2 highlighted the continued importance of government investments in market and trade development. Consultations emphasized that needs and priorities vary considerably by region, commodity, export market, and size of business.

Relevance of Agri-Business Development Programs

Agri-Business Development programs were expected to promote the use of sound business practices by producers and agri-businesses in order to support profitability. A rationale for government support for Agri-Business Development programs is that producers' skills and knowledge are more focused on production than business management. In addition, consultations undertaken for the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food highlighted the particular challenges faced by young farmers in business management, including succession planning and farm transfer.⁸ Separate consultations in advance of Growing Forward 2 similarly highlighted young farmers, new entrants and succession planning as key priorities for business skills development.

As with support for EFPs and BMPs, Agri-Business Development programming was a component of both APF and Growing Forward. Given the significant amount of resources expended on this programming over that period, the level and types of ongoing need related to Agri-Business Development Programs should continue to be reviewed to ensure that funding supports areas of greatest priority for federal, provincial and territorial governments. In one PT evaluation, for example, it was noted that future programming in that province should be further targeted to newer farmers and to building the skills that would allow farmers to undertake future business planning independent of consultants.

Relevance of Science, Innovation and Adoption

Innovation is key to the agriculture and agri-food sector's productivity growth and long-term prosperity. Innovation introduces new products and processes which, when adopted, can improve how capital, labour, and other inputs are combined, resulting in more efficient production or higher returns through new products.⁹ According to recent studies, however, Canada is underperforming in terms of innovation.¹⁰ While the private sector has a key role to play in supporting innovation, particularly at the commercialization phase, governments can foster innovation by investing in activities that have a public benefit, or share risks on projects where the risk is considered too great for industry to take on alone.

Science, Innovation and Adoption programming under Growing Forward supported the agriculture and agri-food sector along the entire innovation continuum: from innovation priority setting and conceptualization, to research and the creation of innovation, to the adoption and commercialization of innovative products and processes. Growing Forward 2 consultations emphasized the continued importance of government support for innovation, including for "pathfinder" services to facilitate

the commercialization of innovative ideas, simplifying regulations, and providing market information. Innovation was identified as an important driver in achieving Growing Forward 2 outcomes, with specific needs identified related to fostering engagement between government and the private sector in developing research agendas as well as increasing sector capacity to explore and experiment with new products, technologies, processes and practices.¹¹

Growing Forward's programming framework generally aligned with AAFC's Program Activity Architecture.

Growing Forward's policy framework, as outlined in the MFA and Bilateral Agreements, included three Growing Forward strategic outcomes, as well as seven thematic areas that grouped cost-shared programs by type. This framework was unique to Growing Forward, and was not designed to mirror AAFC's own policy framework. However, it aligned with AAFC's PAA.

The Growing Forward thematic area "Help the sector meet consumer demands for health and wellness" is the one area of the Growing Forward policy framework that was not well-aligned with AAFC's departmental strategic outcomes. As described in the MFA, this thematic area was designed to support the sector in meeting consumer demand for healthy food and to position the sector to meet the goals of a healthy population. However, the need to address consumer demand was already intrinsic to the thematic area of "enabling competitive enterprises and sectors", while the link to Canadians' health was more aligned with the mandate of Health Canada than AAFC. However, only one program—Nova Scotia's Water Management program—was actually funded under the health and wellness thematic area, and this program was an environmental program focused on water infrastructure. In fact, the health and wellness thematic area under Growing Forward proved not to be a relevant component of the programming framework. In recognition of this fact, it does not appear in the Growing Forward 2 framework.

Growing Forward Cost-Shared Non-BRM programming aligned with federal priorities, especially in its emphasis on innovation and competitiveness.

Growing Forward Cost-Shared Non-BRM programming aligned with the federal priorities of competitiveness and innovation. The Growing Forward strategic outcome of supporting a competitive and innovative sector aligned directly with the federal priorities of job creation and innovation articulated in the federal government's 2011 Budget Plan.¹² The focus on innovation in Growing Forward programming also aligned with objectives outlined in the Government of Canada's Science and Technology Strategy (2006).

3.2 MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT

Bilateral Management Committee Co-Chairs did not consistently receive detailed and regular information on Growing Forward programming, which limited their ability to undertake effective coordination and oversight.

While shared FPT accountability for cost-shared programming necessitated an effective governance structure, the level and type of ongoing communication between federal and PT BMC Co-Chairs and their staff varied by province/territory. In some areas, detailed information on planned and current programming, and any associated issues or concerns, was widely and regularly shared between Co-Chairs and their staff through regular formal and informal discussions and meetings. In others, federal Co-Chairs regularly received formal information on programming only through financial claims and performance measurement data. The information provided in financial claims was limited to total program expenses and total administrative expenses, with no supporting detail or explanation, while performance data were reported in the fiscal year following the program activities. In some cases, federal Co-Chairs could also gather limited information on programming through working groups or through communications materials submitted to the Regional Offices by the PTs.

Some PTs expressed dissatisfaction with the frequency and amount of information they received on Growing Forward cost-shared programs administered by AAFC (i.e., federally-attributed programs). Although AAFC developed and distributed short reports on the performance of cost-shared programs for 2009-2010 and 2010-2011, PTs did not have access to more regular information on these programs, such as through the Agri-Share system.

These limitations in information challenged some BMC Co-Chairs' and their offices' ability to be well-informed about cost-shared programming in their area. More regular, formal, consistent and detailed information on current and planned programming activities would allow for more effective and efficient governance of the Bilateral Agreements, including recommending approval of financial claims and ensuring overall coordination, as well as allow governments to effectively address industry concerns and questions as they arise.

To maintain sufficient flexibility to respond to diverse programs and jurisdictions, eligibility criteria for program activities and expenses were broadly defined in Growing Forward agreements. Administrative and program costs did not appear to be consistently defined across jurisdictions.

Given the diversity of programs across multiple jurisdictions, the eligibility of different types of program activities and expenses were broadly defined in the Growing Forward MFA and Bilateral Agreements. Nearly one-half of the entries in COPE's Issues Management Report (which documented FPT questions and issues for cost-shared programming) concerned the eligibility of program activities and

expenses. For example, questions were raised about the eligibility of aquaculture, agro-forestry and regional promotion/marketing activities. There were also questions raised by Regional Directors and PTs related to the eligibility of specific types of expenses, including travel, severance, and honoraria, among others. Answers to these questions were provided to BMCs by COPE as they were gathered, in consultation with program areas. Considerable effort was expended in obtaining legal and program views on eligibility during Growing Forward, and communicating this information to all jurisdictions, which should be leveraged to support the administrative efficiency of Growing Forward 2.

PT financial claims provided to AAFC for reimbursement included only total program costs and total administration costs. Financial claims did not provide supporting detail on what was included in the different cost categories, which appear to have been defined differently in different jurisdictions. As a result, the proportion of administrative costs to program costs varied widely in financial claims.

Growing Forward presented an inherent challenge to performance measurement and evaluation given multiple programs and jurisdictions. Within this context, there is a need to improve monitoring and reporting.

There is an inherent tension between providing the flexibility required to meet diverse regional needs while satisfying the accountability requirements for the expenditures of public funds. In some jurisdictions, such as health, authority is provided through legislation, which establishes a direct transfer of federal funds to PTs together with established accountability and reporting requirements. In the case of agriculture where support is provided to PTs through contribution agreements, each jurisdiction is accountable under its own accountability framework, with the federal government also responsible for aggregating and reporting on the overall results achieved at the national level.

The performance measurement regime instituted under Growing Forward had a number of limitations. For example, performance indicators were largely based on outputs and not on program outcomes. Performance indicators were not generally consistent across jurisdictions, and were sometimes poorly defined. The lack of defined baselines or benchmarks made it difficult to interpret the data within a performance context.

For Growing Forward 2, there is a need to improve performance measurement and reporting for cost-shared programming. Performance measurement should focus, to the extent possible, on a smaller number of clear, consistent output and outcome indicators, with a greater emphasis on leveraging existing PT performance data being used to report within their own accountability frameworks.

Officials from PTs and AAFC indicated that the FPT Finance and Performance Measurement Working Group had provided an effective venue for FPT collaboration, knowledge-sharing and communication related to performance

measurement. At the time of the evaluation, work was underway on FPT performance measurement planning for Growing Forward 2.

Evaluation Framework for Growing Forward

The evaluation framework set out for Growing Forward also presented challenges for the reporting of national results achieved. According to the Bilateral Agreements, PTs were required to evaluate the programs they delivered, and AAFC committed to completing a national evaluation that compiled findings from PT evaluations (i.e., a “meta-evaluation”). However, PT evaluations varied widely in scope, approach and level of detail, reflecting the diversity of cost-shared programming and available PT capacity. This, coupled with the limitations of the performance data previously discussed, inhibited the ability to present a national picture of outcomes achieved. Furthermore, this did not allow for in-depth analysis of particular types of programming across multiple provinces and territories.

For Growing Forward 2, national achievements should be reported based on an evaluation strategy that builds on the Growing Forward 2 performance measurement strategy. The Growing Forward 2 evaluation strategy should leverage existing FPT data, to the extent possible. Furthermore, the evaluation should use a case study approach that examines a few specific types of programming of particular interest. For example, the evaluation could examine the relevance and performance of specific types of longstanding programs—such as business development programs—in order to ensure future funding is targeted to programming that effectively meets FPT needs and priorities.

3.3 PERFORMANCE – EFFICIENCY

The creation of the Centre of Program Excellence, and the new Agri-Share information management system, were viewed as positive ways to support efficient program management.

The evaluation noted two areas in which the delivery and management of Growing Forward Cost-Shared Non-BRM programming had been designed with a view to maximizing cost-efficiency. First, the central coordination and support role played by COPE in Growing Forward Cost-Shared Non-BRM programming was considered valuable by BMC Co-Chairs and AAFC program areas. COPE was able to obtain advice from other areas of the department, including from Legal Services and program areas, and communicate this consistently to Regional Directors, and through the FPT Finance and Performance Measurement Working Group.

COPE's role in coordination was demonstrated in the Issues Management Report and in the topics covered in BMC meetings. During the initial implementation of Growing Forward, the majority of the issues and questions raised by BMCs related to the interpretation of the wording of the Bilateral Agreements, eligibility criteria for programs and expenses, spending parameters and changes to spending plans.

COPE's Governance Unit was able to obtain and communicate information to respond to these initial issues and questions across all regions early in Growing Forward, which reduced the time and effort required to obtain information.

In addition, both federal and PT users of Agri-Share were, overall, positive about the Agri-Share system and its roll-out. Agri-Share is a web-based application developed to allow both federal and PT users to input financial and performance measurement information online for reporting purposes. The application was felt to have made reporting simpler and more efficient by allowing PTs to input directly into a single, centralized, online form. PTs appreciated Agri-Share for its overall ease of use, although it was noted that Agri-Share did not allow for electronic signatures for approvals of financial claims, which would be more efficient. The current approval process requires documents be printed, manually signed, and then scanned and uploaded to Agri-Share.

3.4 PERFORMANCE – EFFECTIVENESS

The substantial uptake of Growing Forward environmental programming increased the number of Canadian farms having Environmental Farm Plans and implementing Beneficial Management Practices.

Environmental Programs

Based on PT performance data for 2009-2010, 2010-2011 and 2011-2012, over 35,900 producers completed new or updated agri-environmental risk assessments / EFPs as a result of Growing Forward programming.

Over 26,700 producers/processors initiated or completed BMPs through Growing Forward programming during the same period. BMPs were targeted to a broad range of environmental issues, including soil conservation, water quality, wildlife habitat conservation, energy, adaptation to climate change, manure/agricultural waste management, and others. New equipment purchased with assistance from these programs was designed to improve fuel storage, pest management, the use of herbicides in weeding, and to reduce erosion as a result of seeding.

PT evaluations included examples of positive results of this programming. In Quebec, a survey of recipients of agri-environmental consulting services through the province's Prime Vert program indicated a strong level of satisfaction with the services received, and a high level of recognition of the relevance and quality of the agri-environmental assessments and action plans developed. The Quebec evaluation found that most program participants had put in place the recommended actions of their action plans two years following program participation. Yukon's Agriculture in the Environment program led to the reclamation of 300 acres of unused farm land, the majority of which became productive hay land. This reduced the amount of hay that needed to be shipped to the territory.

Two additional examples of funded environmental programs included:

- Nova Scotia's Energy Conservation Program (ECP): The ECP aimed to protect the environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions through research and the adoption of energy conservation and alternate energy systems. Particular emphasis was placed on the adoption of technologies to reduce farm energy requirements and to make use of waste produced through the production process. Through this program, a farm energy specialist worked collaboratively with the Farm Energy Research Chair at Dalhousie University, trained and coordinated energy assessors, promoted awareness of energy conservation and renewable energy production, and facilitated the adoption of new technologies. The program also provided financial support for research and investigative pilot projects. *A video profiling an ECP project can be accessed [here](#).*
- Saskatchewan's Farm and Ranch Water Infrastructure Program (FRWIP): The FRWIP was highly popular with farmers in the province. Participants obtained assistance for improvements to wells, deep buried pipelines, shallow buried pasture pipelines, dugouts, and load out stations. *A video featuring one producer's experience as a participant in the FRWIP can be accessed [here](#).*

Growing Forward funded significant outreach and food safety activities to bolster industry awareness and implementation of food safety systems.

Food Safety

Outreach activities to increase knowledge and awareness of food safety systems and their benefits were a major component of Growing Forward food safety programming. For the first three years of Growing Forward, over 15,600 producers participated in on-farm food safety outreach activities and over 4,600 enterprises participated in post-farm food safety outreach activities. Outreach activities included training and awareness initiatives such as workshops, symposia, conferences, a web portal for food safety information, a travelling "roadshow", and print advertising.

In addition to outreach, funding was also provided to directly support implementation of food safety activities and systems. From 2009 to 2012, over 9,500 producers and over 950 food-processing enterprises implemented food safety activities through cost-shared programming under Growing Forward. Depending on the PT program, funding was provided to support the development and implementation of new practices/procedures, the purchase of new equipment and/or upgrades of premises, technical advice, and first certification audits.

One example of a funded food safety program was the Ontario Food Safety and Traceability Initiative (FSTI). Through the FSTI, producers and processors participated in a reported 3,502 food safety activities, workshops and/or events. Funding was found to have contributed to increased awareness of traceability, improved confidence in recall procedures and the ability to execute a product recall,

and improved food safety/traceability practices. *A video profiling one FSTI project can be found here.*

Biosecurity and traceability programs under Growing Forward appear to have increased awareness and supported initial activities in these areas.

Biosecurity

Growing Forward funded initiatives to encourage the early adoption of biosecurity practices through education and awareness activities, and the development and implementation of on-farm biosecurity practices. Education and awareness activities included the development of communication materials like manuals, brochures, CDs and web materials, as well as events such as workshops, one-on-one consultations, roadshows, and others.

Specific examples of funded biosecurity initiatives included: veterinarian-delivered on-farm biosecurity assessments and assistance in implementing biosecurity programs in Manitoba; a BC event for national and international experts and administrators to discuss potential alternatives to mass livestock slaughter in the event of a significant infectious disease outbreak; and information sessions to promote voluntary adoption in the poultry sector of the National Avian On-Farm Biosecurity Standard.

Based on PT performance data, over 6,000 producers or related service providers participated in biosecurity activities during the first three years of Growing Forward. In addition, over 11,900 producers/service providers implemented biosecurity initiatives.

Some barriers to the implementation of biosecurity initiatives were identified in PT evaluations, including limited awareness among producers of biosecurity measures and activities, and the need to identify appropriate biosecurity standards, systems and technologies during Growing Forward. Overall, biosecurity was a new area of programming and, despite the early results during Growing Forward, ongoing measures are required to continue to increase industry awareness and take-up.

Traceability Enterprise Infrastructure

The Traceability Enterprise Infrastructure initiative under Growing Forward was designed to provide funding to individual businesses to assist in the purchase and installation of traceability infrastructure and the training of staff to implement traceability systems for plants, animals and products.

According to performance data for 2009-2012, cost-shared traceability programs resulted in over 26,700 on-farm and post-farm businesses participating in traceability activities. Similarly, over 8,500 on-farm and post-farm businesses implemented traceability initiatives.

Infrastructure funded through traceability programs included animal handling systems, and equipment and data systems necessary to record, store and report data. Nova Scotia also funded pilot projects that were designed to promote and support the implementation of traceability systems within the sector.

Some PTs noted that awareness and understanding of traceability was still growing in their areas. In response, pilot projects were funded in some provinces to promote and educate the industry about traceability. For example, New Brunswick funded a pilot project to assess traceability technology in the province, and to expose dairy and beef producers to livestock traceability opportunities and tools that were expected to be phased in nationally.

Trade and market development programs were not a significant component of provincially-administered cost-shared programming. Overall, this programming appears to have had relatively modest benefits.

Trade and Market Development

The five trade and market development programs funded during the first three years of Growing Forward included a small number of very different projects, as described in PT evaluations. This provincially-administered programming complemented the substantial cost-shared trade and market development programming administered by the federal government under Growing Forward.

In BC, targeted market research was provided to industry associations and other groups. In addition, approximately 200 companies attended export seminars on China, Taiwan, Singapore and Mexico. In Nova Scotia, a Strategic Infrastructure Investment Fund provided funding for infrastructure projects to position the industry to capture new market opportunities. According to Nova Scotia's evaluation, the program assisted small businesses to be innovative and led to rural farmers increasing their productive capacity. Nunavut undertook a study to evaluate the feasibility of establishing a sustainable commercial berry and plant harvesting and value-added processing industry, and initiated a muskox meat marketing strategy, among other activities. Newfoundland and Labrador's Agriculture Opportunities Program – Market Development was implemented to expand access for agriculture and value-added products in key markets, and increase industry capacity to expand market access.

Alberta's Product and Market Development Program was implemented to stimulate new investment in the value-added food and agri-product processing sector for the adaptation of existing products, the commercialization of new products and the expansion of businesses to new markets. Program results for the first two years of Growing Forward showed the development of 149 new products, 99 of which were successfully introduced to market as a final product or sold as ingredients for

further manufacturing. *To see a video about one company's experience in the Product and Market Development Program, click here.*

Science, Innovation and Adoption programs have funded a wide range of activities along the innovation continuum.

Science, Innovation and Adoption Programs

In the short term, innovation programming was expected to increase knowledge sharing, partnerships and collaboration on innovation opportunities. Specifically, innovation fora were intended to increase dialogue to promote change in attitudes and behaviours, while innovation symposia were designed to match entrepreneurs with investors. Based on PT evaluations and performance data, innovation fora, workshops and seminars have provided opportunities for increased knowledge sharing and collaboration. From 2009-2012, there were 36 fora and symposia, with over 4,400 participating clients.

As a result of Growing Forward programming, innovation commercialization services were accessed by over 490 clients, over 1,900 new technologies (products, processes and practices) were assessed at the farm level and in agri-business, and over 6,200 producers participated in technology transfer events.

In addition, between 2009 and 2012, 670 applied agri-science research and development (R&D) projects were funded, involving approximately 216 research personnel, graduate students and post-doctoral fellows. Industry-directed applied R&D projects resulted in approximately 413 new innovation opportunities in the first three years of Growing Forward.

In the longer term, Science, Innovation and Adoption programming was expected to increase the adoption and commercialization of innovative products and processes in the agricultural sector. Based on available information, at least 142 products were commercialized as a result of the cost-shared programming.

Two examples of specific innovation programs included:

- The Manitoba Industry Innovation Fund including the Agri-Food Research & Development Initiative (ARDI): The Industry Innovation Fund supported projects in agri-food production and processing in Manitoba. According to program performance data, 220 R&D projects were conducted, 189 new innovation opportunities were developed, and 1,180 technologies were assessed by farmers, farm organizations, and agri-businesses. Provincial officials noted that the ARDI component of the Innovation Fund effectively supported the growth of food businesses, and has become a model program in Manitoba. *A video profiling one ARDI project can be seen here.*

- Northwest Territories' Small Scale Foods program: The Northwest Territories set out to increase food production in the territory through the Small Scale Foods program. The program funded more than 40 gardening workshops and seminars in order to enhance access to agricultural information and resources. In addition, existing community gardens were maintained in 14 communities, and 13 new community gardens were established. Growing Forward staff indicated that community gardens have fostered community pride and provided an alternative food supply, increasing the selection of fresh produce in communities. *A video profiling one community garden supported by the Small Scale Foods program can be accessed here.*

Agri-Business Development programs have been popular with producers and are perceived to have contributed to an improvement in business management practices in the sector.

Agri-Business Development Programs

A significant number of producers and processors (86,400) participated in Growing Forward Agri-Business Development programming from 2009-2010 to 2011-2012. Over 2,200 demonstrations, consultations, seminars and workshops were also held during that period.

Agri-Business Development programs were perceived by participants as useful. AAFC, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, conducted a survey of its Agri-Business Development program clients to assess the impact of these programs. Based on this survey, 84% of Agri-Business Development clients said they have used what they learned in the program. Clients indicated they were adopting a wide range of beneficial business management practices as a result of participation in these programs. Clients most commonly indicated that they were implementing business strategies / action plans, production cost tracking and detailed financial record-keeping systems. Overall, 82% of participants indicated that the program had helped them make progress toward achieving their business goals.

Similarly positive findings were noted in an evaluation of Agri-Business Development consulting services funded through Growing Forward in Quebec. Overall, the evaluation concluded that producers were satisfied with the services received, and that the programs were helping to improve knowledge of business management and had improved the economic performance of participants' businesses. *A video profiling one family's experience with Quebec's Agri-Business development program can be accessed here.*

Prince Edward Island's (PEI's) Department of Agriculture and Forestry established the Future Farmer Program (FFP) to help encourage new entrants to the sector and to improve the probability of new entrants' success. Growing Forward cost-shared funding was used to support the training and business plan development

components of the program. At the time of the evaluation, there had been 405 program clients under Growing Forward. According to the PEI evaluation, most participants indicated that the FFP had improved their business management knowledge and skills. A number of other benefits for clients were noted, including encouraging farm succession planning and business planning, helping to promote further education and training, and fostering opportunities for networking. A *video profiling one participant in the Future Farmer Program can be accessed here*.

Numerous communication activities were undertaken toward the achievement of Growing Forward communication objectives, with further work still to be undertaken.

Communications Activities

AAFC's Communications and Consultations Branch identified federal communications objectives for Growing Forward, which included:

- Providing producers and processors with timely and targeted information on Growing Forward programs and services;
- Ensuring AAFC employees' awareness of Growing Forward programs and services;
- Contributing to consistent and coherent communications among FPT governments on Growing Forward;
- Ensuring effective FPT collaboration in the use and application of the Growing Forward visual identity; and
- Demonstrating to Canadians the important contribution of farming to the economy, food safety and the health of the environment.¹³

AAFC undertook a series of communications activities in support of these objectives. These included: a national Growing Forward advertising campaign, consisting of print, radio, and online advertisements; news releases, exhibits (corporate, rural and regional), media advisories, program application call letters and public notices; support for Ministerial and departmental events and announcements (including speech writing and media relations activities); posting Growing Forward content on AAFC's website; and regional communications (including coordination with PTs to align activities). In addition, public opinion research was undertaken as part of AAFC's Growing Forward communications activities.

Provinces and territories, working in consultation with AAFC Regional Communications Officers, undertook communications activities to promote the cost-shared programs administered in their jurisdictions. A "tool-kit" of Growing Forward communications products, including a Common Look User Guide and Graphics Standards Guide, was created jointly with PTs to facilitate effective and consistent Growing Forward branding and messaging nationally and across all regions.

The available information from PT evaluations and interviews on the achievement of communications objectives indicated the following:

- A communications clause in the MFA was an instrumental tool for ensuring FPT collaboration on Growing Forward communications. The clause helped to ensure that all parties delivered consistent messaging to their audiences on all press releases and program announcements.
- The development of common tools and templates that were shared across all parties also helped to support consistency in FPT communications for Growing Forward. This included the application of Growing Forward graphic standards.
- The FPT Communications Committee helped to foster increased collaboration with PTs, and the majority of participants viewed the forum as a positive venue for information-sharing and problem-solving. AAFC officials also noted that strengthened third-party relationships related to communication were demonstrated through collaboration on success stories, AAFC review and input on news releases, among other activities.
- AAFC's role in funding cost-shared programming may not always have been recognized by producers/processors. Some stakeholders indicated that having programming delivered by a provincial government or, in many cases, a third-party delivery agent, reduced AAFC's visibility in the programming and, consequently, Canadians' awareness of the role of the Government of Canada.
- Focus Groups with agricultural producers in 2010 revealed that about nine in ten participants had heard of Growing Forward. About a quarter of participants had not only heard of Growing Forward, but had also read or heard information about it on the Internet, at a meeting of producers or by having thumbed through a package they had received in the mail. The remainder had heard about Growing Forward, but did not possess specific information about it.

CCB collected information on Growing Forward communications outputs and website statistics. However, performance measures were not developed, and outcome data were not collected on the impact of communications activities. As a result, the full extent to which federal communications objectives/outcomes were achieved is not known.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

Relevance

- Cost-Shared Non-BRM programs were developed to support the long-term competitiveness of the agriculture and agri-food sector. While the federal role was appropriate given joint FPT constitutional responsibility for agriculture, Growing Forward placed significant emphasis on PT flexibility in Cost-Shared Non-BRM programming to reflect the diversity and complexity of the sector.
- Growing Forward Cost-Shared Non-BRM programming was designed to address sector needs in broad priority areas.
- Growing Forward's programming framework generally aligned with AAFC's Program Activity Architecture.
- Growing Forward Cost-Shared Non-BRM programming aligned with federal priorities, especially in its emphasis on innovation and competitiveness.

Management and Oversight

- Bilateral Management Committee Co-Chairs did not consistently receive detailed and regular information on Growing Forward programming, which limited their ability to undertake effective coordination and oversight.
- To maintain sufficient flexibility to respond to diverse programs and jurisdictions, eligibility criteria for program activities and expenses were broadly defined in Growing Forward agreements. The considerable effort expended in obtaining legal and program interpretations on eligibility, and communicating this information across jurisdictions, during Growing Forward should be leveraged to improve the administrative efficiency of Growing Forward 2.
- Growing Forward presented an inherent challenge to performance measurement and evaluation given multiple programs and jurisdictions. Within this context, there is a need to improve monitoring and reporting. There was a limited ability to present a national picture of outcomes achieved or to undertake in-depth analysis of particular types of programming across multiple provinces and territories.

Efficiency and Economy

- The creation of the Centre of Program Excellence, and the new Agri-Share information management system, were viewed as positive ways to support efficient program management.

Effectiveness

- The substantial uptake of Growing Forward environmental programming increased the number of Canadian farms having Environmental Farm Plans and implementing Beneficial Management Practices.
- Growing Forward funded significant outreach and food safety activities to bolster industry awareness and implementation of food safety systems.
- Biosecurity and traceability programs under Growing Forward appear to have increased awareness and supported initial activities in these areas.
- Trade and market development programs were not a significant component of provincially-administered cost-shared programming. Overall, this programming appears to have had relatively modest benefits.
- Science, Innovation and Adoption programs have funded a wide range of activities along the innovation continuum and led to the commercialization of innovations.
- Agri-Business Development programs have been popular with producers and are perceived to have contributed to an improvement in business management practices in the sector.
- Numerous communication activities were undertaken toward the achievement of Growing Forward communication objectives, with further work still to be undertaken. The full extent to which federal communications objectives were achieved is not known.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation includes the following five recommendations:

Recommendation #1:

AAFC's Programs Branch should:

- Review the guidance provided to BMC Co-Chairs related to monitoring and reporting to ensure that the established processes support effective and efficient coordination and oversight of the Bilateral Agreements, including the provisions related to the processing of financial claims and coordination.

Recommendation #2:

AAFC's Programs Branch should work with the provinces and territories to:

- Develop a performance measurement strategy for future cost-shared programming that includes a smaller number of indicators, as well as

benchmarks/baselines and definitions of performance indicators. The performance measurement strategy should leverage, to the greatest extent possible, performance data that are being collected by provinces and territories to meet their own existing accountability and reporting mechanisms.

Recommendation #3:

AAFC's Office of Audit and Evaluation should work with the provinces and territories to:

- Develop an Evaluation Strategy for future cost-shared programming that utilizes a targeted, case study approach to examine the continued need and effectiveness of specific types of longstanding cost-shared programming.

Recommendation #4:

AAFC's Programs Branch should:

- Determine the feasibility of electronic approvals of financial claims for cost-shared programming under Growing Forward 2 and, if feasible, implement this change.

Recommendation #5:

AAFC's Communications and Consultations Branch, with the assistance of the Office of Audit and Evaluation, should:

- Develop performance indicators, and measure performance of communications activities against these performance indicators, as part of communications activities in support of Growing Forward 2.

APPENDIX A: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN

RECOMMENDATION	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN (MRAP)	TARGET DATE	RESPONSIBLE POSITION(S)
1. AAFC's Programs Branch should review the guidance provided to BMC co-chairs related to monitoring and reporting to ensure that the established processes support effective and efficient coordination and oversight of the Bilateral Agreements, including the provisions related to the processing of financial claims and coordination.	<p>Agreed. SPED continues to provide advice and guidance to provinces/territories (PTs) to assist in managing the GF2 Bilateral Agreements and will continue to share its Issues Management Report internally with departmental officials (MISB Regional Offices), to assist in managing bilateral issues within their respective jurisdictions. This Report outlines the issues raised by PTs and includes federal analysis, legal interpretations, and subsequent responses back to the PT in question.</p> <p>Action Plan: In consultation with MISB Regional Directors and the FPT Finance and Performance Working Group, SPED will develop an evergreen compendium of guidelines that provide further clarity on issues relevant to all PTs such as eligible program expenses and activities, definitions for program vs. administrative costs, key financial dates and processes, etc. The guidelines will be available via an electronic forum accessible by all PTs (either AgriForum or Agri-Share). This will ensure that timely and consistent advice is provided across PTs.</p>	April 30, 2014	DG, SPED, Programs Branch
2. AAFC's Programs Branch should work with provinces and territories to develop a	Agreed. For the Cost-Shared Program under Growing Forward 2, federal-provincial-territorial (FPT) governments	September 27, 2013	DG, SPED, Programs Branch

RECOMMENDATION	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN (MRAP)	TARGET DATE	RESPONSIBLE POSITION(S)
<p>performance measurement strategy for future cost-shared programming that includes a smaller number of indicators, as well as benchmarks/baselines and definitions of performance indicators. The performance measurement strategy should leverage, to the greatest extent possible, performance data that are being collected by provinces and territories to meet their own existing accountability and reporting mechanisms.</p>	<p>have agreed to strengthen performance indicators to better report on progress towards outcomes, reducing and standardizing indicators where possible, and setting baselines and targets.</p> <p>Action Plan: SPED will continue to work with FPT governments and the MISB Regional Directors to complete the development of the national Performance Measurement Strategy (PMS) with a national lexicon. Together, these will improve the manner in which AAFC can measure the national outcomes of the GF2 Cost-Shared Program using appropriate performance data collected by PTs.</p>		
<p>3. AAFC's Office of Audit and Evaluation should work with provinces and territories to develop an Evaluation Strategy for future cost-shared programming that utilizes a targeted, case study approach to examine the continued need and effectiveness of specific types of longstanding cost-shared programming.</p>	<p>Agreed. The Office of Audit and Evaluation will work with provinces and territories through the FPT Finance and Performance Measurement Working Group to develop an Evaluation Strategy for GF2 cost-shared programming. The evaluation strategy will include case studies of specific types of longstanding programs, like environmental and business development programs, to ensure they continue to meet federal/provincial-territorial needs and priorities.</p> <p>The evaluation strategy will recognize that the evaluation of programs of a province or territory may be carried out by that province or territory, at their discretion.</p>	<p>September 30, 2014</p>	<p>DG, Office of Audit and Evaluation</p>

RECOMMENDATION	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN (MRAP)	TARGET DATE	RESPONSIBLE POSITION(S)
<p>4. AAFC's Programs Branch should determine the feasibility of electronic approvals of financial claims for cost-shared programming under Growing Forward 2 and, if feasible, implement this change.</p>	<p>Agreed. SPED has confirmed that the financial system (Agri-Share) has the technical capacity to support electronic signature functionality.</p> <p>Action Plan: SPED will conduct a cost benefit analysis and research all relevant regulations, policies and procedures, in collaboration with ISB and CMB, to determine feasibility of implementation. If compliance and cost feasibility are favourable, implementation of electronic signatures could occur during the 13/14 fiscal year.</p>	<p>March 31, 2014</p>	<p>DG, SPED, Programs Branch</p>
<p>5. AAFC's Communications and Consultations Branch, with the assistance of the Office of Audit and Evaluation, should develop performance indicators, and measure performance of communications activities against these performance indicators, as part of communications activities in support of Growing Forward 2.</p>	<p>Agreed. Communications and Consultations Branch is currently working with the Office of Audit and Evaluation to develop a performance management strategy, as well as specific indicators for Growing Forward 2 communications. The indicators will be shared with the FPT Communications Committee.</p>	<p>September 30, 2013</p>	<p>DG, Strategic Planning, Advice and Coordination, CCB</p>

APPENDIX B: EVALUATION ISSUES AND ASSOCIATED LINES OF EVIDENCE

Evaluation Issue	Lines of Evidence				
	Review of Evaluations Undertaken by PTs	Program Administrative and Financial Data	Interviews	Document Review	Video Case Studies
Relevance					
Q1. Continued Need for the Program	X		X	X	
Q2. Alignment with Government Priorities				X	
Q3. Alignment with Federal Roles and Responsibilities				X	
Performance – Effectiveness					
Q4. Achievement of Expected Outcomes	X	X	X	X	X
Performance – Efficiency and Economy					
Q5. Demonstration of Efficiency and Economy			X	X	
Design and Delivery					
Q6. Management and Oversight		X	X	X	

APPENDIX C: LIST OF ELIGIBLE PT-ADMINISTERED COST-SHARED PROGRAMS UNDER GROWING FORWARD

British Columbia

Agri-Innovation Fora
Innovation Commercialization Centres
Technology Commercialization Competition
Advancing Biobased Opportunities
Agri-Food Business Development
Market Information and Export Capacity Development
Food Safety Systems
Sustainable Agriculture Management Program
Climate Action Team
Invasive Plant Management Program
Agriculture Risk Inventory - Smart Risk
Developing National Biosecurity & Traceability Systems

Saskatchewan

Agriculture Innovation and Commercialization
Agriculture Development Fund
Institutional Support
Agri-Agriculture Research Management
Farm and Value-added Business Development Programming
Extension Services
Youth Initiatives
Food Safety/Biosecurity/Traceability programming
Environmental Farm Planning/Group Planning and BMPs
Farm and Ranch Water Infrastructure Program
Environmental Review and Technological Transfer Program
Saskatchewan Agri-Environment Assessment Program

Alberta

Business Development
Automation and Lean Manufacturing
Livestock Welfare
Product and Market Development
Food Safety Systems Implementation
Supporting On-Farm Sustainable Agriculture Practices
National Biosecurity Systems
National Traceability Systems

Manitoba

Strategic Innovation Fund
Industry Innovation Fund
Business Development
Sector Development: Northern Agriculture Initiative
Manitoba Food Safety Risk Management Suite
Environmental Action
Environmental Information

Quebec

Programme d'appui pour un secteur agroalimentaire innovateur
Programme de soutien à l'innovation en agroalimentaire
Centres de commercialisation de l'innovation
Programme d'appui aux initiatives des tables filières québécoises
Programme d'appui au développement des entreprises agricoles
Programme-cadre d'appui aux services-conseils aux entreprises agricoles
Appui à la mise en oeuvre des systèmes de salubrité alimentaires à la ferme
Appui à la mise en oeuvre des systèmes de salubrité alimentaire dans le secteur de la transformation alimentaire
Prime-Vert (volets cofinancés) et mesures hors Prime-vert
Appui à la mise en œuvre de systèmes de biosécurité à la ferme
Programme d'appui à l'implantation de la traçabilité
Programme de traçabilité

Nova Scotia

Innovation & Commercialization of New Opportunities
Technology Development Program
Supporting the Innovation Capacity of Farmers
Graduate Research Training Initiative
Business Development Initiative
Strategic Infrastructure Investment Fund
Environmental Farm Plan & Energy Assessment Program
Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs)
Energy Conservation
Water Management
Food Safety, Biosecurity, Traceability

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Ontario

Innovation Forum
Innovation Symposiums
Science Clusters
Agri-Tech Commercialization
Competitive Research
Farm Innovation
Business Development
Food Safety & Traceability
Environment and Climate Change
Biosecurity

Newfoundland and Labrador

Agriculture Innovation Program
Agriculture Opportunities Program
Agriculture Land Development Program
New Farm Investment Program
Agriculture Sustainability
Mitigating Agricultural Risks

New Brunswick

Enabling Agricultural Research and Innovation
Business Development
Livestock Genetic Enhancements
Organic Industry development
Agri-Land Development
Export Market Development
Food Safety Systems Implementation
Supporting On-Farm Sustainable Ag Practices: Risk Assessment
Supporting On-Farm Sustainable Ag Practices: On-Farm
Environmental Management Planning
Energy and Alternate Renewable Energy Sources
Agro-Environmental Clubs
Biosecurity, Traceability

Yukon

Northern Agriculture Innovation
Human Resource Development
Enhancing Agricultural Opportunities
Food Safety from Field to Fork
Environmental and Food Safe Farm Plans
Agriculture in the Environment

Northwest Territories

Small-Scale Foods Program
Northern Agri-Foods Program
Commercial Harvest Program
Traditional Harvest Program
Intersetlement Trade Program
Food Safety Program
Agriculture in the Environment
Bison Management Strategy

Prince Edward Island

Agriculture Innovation Program
Agriculture Research Fund
Business Development
Future Farmer Program
4-H Program
Organic Industry Development Program
Food Safety, Biosecurity ,Traceability
Supporting On-Farm Sustainable Agricultural Practices
Alternative Land Use

Nunavut

Value-Added Program
Nunavut and Circumpolar Research Program
Human Resource Development Program
Community Greenhouse Development Program
Commercial Harvest Program
Traditional Community Harvest Project
Market Development Program
Food Safety Program
Herd Management Program

APPENDIX D: EVALUATION PARTICIPANTS

Participant Type	Number of Participants	
	Key Informant Interviews	Video Case Study Interviews
AAFC Regional Directors and regional staff	12	
AAFC Program / communications staff / management	14	
Provincial/Territorial government managers/staff	21	
Program Funding Beneficiaries		9
Total	47	9

The table above illustrates the number of evaluation participants interviewed by AAFC for the Evaluation of the Cost-Shared Non-BRM Contribution Programming under Growing Forward.

Interviewees for the evaluation were selected to include officials familiar with program delivery and management in all relevant areas within AAFC (BMC Co-Chairs, AAFC Program areas, COPE/SPED, Communications and Consultations Branch), as well as officials involved in administration/management of cost-shared programming in the provinces and territories. PT key informants were identified in consultation with members of the FPT Finance and Performance Measurement Working Group, and included both BMC Co-Chairs and PT staff/supervisors. All provinces/territories participated in interviews.

In total 47 people were interviewed as part of key informant interviews, to collect information on management and oversight, and major achievements of the cost-shared programming.

In addition, video case studies included interviews with nine program beneficiaries to provide information on the results achieved through various cost-shared programs. Seven video case study projects were selected in consultation with PTs to include a project from all the major program areas: environmental programming; food safety/biosecurity/traceability; trade and market development; science, innovation and adoption; and agri-business development. Projects were also selected to include representation from all geographic regions of the country (Atlantic, Central, Western Canada, the North).

The number of participants indicated above does not include the considerable number of evaluation participants interviewed or consulted for the provincial/territorial evaluations, which helped to inform the federal evaluation.

APPENDIX E: ENDNOTES

¹ Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. 2012. An Overview of the Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food System 2012.

² Environics Research Group. 2011. Strategic Issues Survey Wave 3.

³ Environics Research Group. 2011. Strategic Issues Survey Wave 3. p. 25.

⁴ Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Next Generation of Agriculture and Agri-food Policy. A Report from Round One Consultations on The Next Generation of Agriculture and Agri-Food Policy. p.15.

⁵ Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Agriculture 2020 – As it Was Heard Report. p.12.

⁶ Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Agriculture 2020 – As it Was Heard Report.

⁷ Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. 2012. An Overview of the Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food System 2012.

⁸ Government of Canada. The Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. 2010. Young Farmers – The Future of Agriculture.

⁹ Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. 2012. An Overview of the Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food System 2012. p.35.

¹⁰ The Council of Canadian Academies. Innovation and Business Strategy: Why Canada Falls Short. June 2009.

¹¹ Government of Canada. Charting the Way Forward to 2020 – Discussion Paper. 2011.

¹² Government of Canada. The Next Phase of Canada's Economic Action Plan: A Low-Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth. June 6, 2011.

¹³ Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Communications Plan. Communications and Consultations Branch.