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Public Opinion Research with Canadians - Qualitative Research on Agricultural Education Research Report

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2

INTRODUCTION 6

DETAILED FINDINGS 8

CONCLUSIONS 19

APPENDIX A: DISCUSSION GUIDE 21

APPENDIX B: SCREENER 26

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Earnscliffe Strategy Group (Earnscliffe) is pleased to present this report to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) summarizing the results of the focus groups with Canadians on agricultural education.

Public opinion research indicates that Canadians have many concerns as well as a lack of knowledge and awareness about the agriculture sector that produces the foods and beverages they consume and how these are regulated. Maintaining public confidence and trust is critical to the success of individual businesses and to the sustainable growth of the sector. Public trust is slow to build, but can be eroded quickly and have devastating effects on farmers, food processors and the agriculture value-chain at home and abroad.

AAFC required public opinion research to inform a new marketing strategy being developed to communicate with Canadians, better communicate the importance of the agricultural sector and the role of AAFC to Canadians and support work being undertaken by the department with regards to the public trust pillar of the Canadian Agricultural Partnership. This project is divided into two phases. The objective of this initial phase was to better understand Canadians' awareness and perceptions of Canada's agricultural sector and food system and how to best communicate factual information to Canadians. Feedback from this first phase of research will help AAFC develop creative materials and/or messages for a new public education and communications strategy, and may also be used to inform policy, service and program development. Testing of these materials and messages will be the focus of the second phase of research to be conducted later this year. The total cost to conduct Phase 1 of the research was \$70,426.02 including HST.

To meet these objectives, Earnscliffe conducted a comprehensive wave of qualitative research. The research included a series of ten focus groups in four cities across Canada: Toronto, ON (March 5, 2018); St. John's, NFLD (March 6, 2018) Montreal, QC (March 7, 2018); and Vancouver, BC (March 8, 2018). Earnscliffe also conducted one online focus group with Official Language Minority Communities (OLMC) by recruiting French-speaking Canadians residing outside Quebec, predominantly from the provinces of New Brunswick, Ontario and Manitoba. Two focus groups were conducted in Toronto, St. John's and Vancouver, and each was approximately two hours in length. In Montreal, Earnscliffe conducted three groups, each approximately one and a half hours in length. Two of the focus groups in Montreal, as well as the online group, were conducted in French. One group in Montreal was conducted in English.

Recruitment for the groups was the same. Participants were over 18 years of age with targets to ensure adequate proportions of youth (18-24), women, and Indigenous peoples in each group.

The research explored participants' impressions of farmers, the food processing sector, food system and food products. Participants were also asked about their perceptions of agriculture in Canada and trusted sources of information about agriculture. Finally, the research helped to explore strategies for an AAFC public education campaign.

For the purposes of this report, it is important to note that qualitative research is a form of scientific, social, policy and public opinion research. Focus group research is not designed to help a group reach a consensus or to make decisions, but rather to elicit the full range of ideas, attitudes, experiences and opinions of a selected sample of participants on a defined topic. Because of the small numbers involved the participants cannot be expected to be

thoroughly representative in a statistical sense of the larger population from which they are drawn and findings cannot reliably be generalized beyond their number.

The key findings from the research are presented below.

- **Awareness of and familiarity with Canada’s agriculture and food products sector was generally very low; particularly among participants in large urban centres.** Those living in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver tended to admit being unaware of Canada’s agricultural sector (generally) given their lack of proximity to people working in agriculture and/or farming.
- Despite this lack of awareness, **participants’ impressions of Canada’s farmers were overwhelmingly favourable.** They tended to describe Canada’s farmers as very hard-working and dedicated.
- **Most had the sense that agriculture scientists were very well educated, based on their assumption that scientists are well-schooled rather than any real or concrete understanding of agriculture scientists.** In fact, many participants in each group indicated they were not familiar with the term, the profession or that Canada had scientists working in the agriculture sector, specifically.
- **There was a similar lack of specificity or awareness of Canada’s food processing sector.** For some, the word ‘processing’ simply referred to the process of turning food into something else. For others, it implied something more involved and typically in the early stages of the plant lifecycle such as genetic modification. Worth noting, reactions to this statement in French (Le secteur de la transformation alimentaire du Canada) were quite different. Most participants felt the term was more closely linked to genetic modification than it was to ‘processing’. Participants in French focus groups used words like modification; hormones; regeneration; transformation; chemicals, uncertainty, and, for some, a lack of confidence to describe their understanding of food processing.
- When asked what they know, believe or have heard about Canadian produced food, farmers, the food processing sector or agriculture scientists, a few common themes emerged:
 - Canada’s agriculture sector tended to be viewed as high quality, regulated, diverse and abundant.
 - Farmers were often described as hard-working and dedicated although there was some confusion as to whether the number of farms in Canada was increasing or decreasing.
 - There was a view that the amount of imported foods in Canadian super markets is growing.
 - There was a perception that the Canadian government was not adequately supporting Canada’s farmers.
 - Participants felt that there was a lot of waste in Canada’s food sector.
 - Many had the sense that Canada was involved in genetic modification (e.g. GMOs); and, pesticides were being used in Canada.

- Much of what participants wonder or would be interested in learning about includes more information about Canada’s agriculture and food sectors generally and the terminology associated with it.
 - Definitions of agriculture scientists, including what they are working on, and the food processing sector.
 - What qualifies as organic? How can you trust that organic is better? What are the standards around organic foods?
 - The use of pesticides, chemicals and GMOs in Canada’s agriculture sector; in addition to the Government of Canada’s standards and regulations with respect to GMOs, chemicals and pesticides.
 - How farmers are treated by the Government of Canada – are they subsidized, compensated fairly, etc.?
 - Are imported foods treated the same as foods grown in Canada; do they follow the same guidelines?
- **AAFC scientists, farmers, the Government of Canada, academics and doctors were most frequently cited as the most credible sources of information**, largely because they tend to be highly educated or work directly in the sector and/or have Canadians’ best interests at heart.
- Many, but not all news outlets, journalists or documentaries were considered to be credible.
- **Less credible sources included elected officials, bloggers, celebrities and celebrity chefs.** For the most part, they were felt to be biased sources that were not necessarily educated about agriculture or experts in the area. However, most participants felt they could trust a federal cabinet minister (i.e., Minister of Agriculture or Minister of Health) arguing that as the Minister they were beholden to Canadians and likely more informed about their mandate; more like a Government of Canada representative than an elected official.
- **Many felt that social media would be the best way for AAFC to reach Canadians.** While some deemed social media to be a less credible source of information, the overwhelming majority of participants agreed that they would trust a Government of Canada social media feed or channel.
- Others mentioned communicating with Canadians via public transportation (i.e., on subway trains, buses, bus shelters, etc.) and more traditional channels, including television advertisements and radio.

Research Firm:

Earnscliffe Strategy Group Inc. (Earnscliffe)
Contract Number: 01B68-181213/001/CY
Contract award date: February 7, 2018

I hereby certify as a Representative of Earnscliffe Strategy Group that the final deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed: 

Date: March 23, 2018

Stephanie Constable
Principal, Earnscliffe

INTRODUCTION

Earnscliffe Strategy Group (Earnscliffe) is pleased to present this report to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) summarizing the results of the focus groups with Canadians on agricultural education.

AAFC required public opinion research to inform a new marketing strategy being developed to communicate with Canadians, better communicate the importance of the agricultural sector and the role of AAFC to Canadians and support work being undertaken by the department with regards to the public trust pillar of the Canadian Agricultural Partnership. The objective of this initial phase was to better understand Canadians' awareness and perceptions of Canada's agricultural sector and food system and how to best communicate factual information to Canadians. Feedback from this phase of research will help AAFC develop creative materials and/or messages for a new public education and communications strategy, and may also be used to inform policy, service and program development.

The specific objectives of the public education and communications campaign that this research sought to inform were to:

- Help Canadians gain a better understanding of some of the agricultural terminology and practices that they have indicated they would like to learn more about;
- Raise awareness of scientific research being done by AAFC;
- Help build trust and awareness in the programs and policies which contribute to an innovative, safe and strong agricultural sector;
- Change Canadians' views when it comes to false perceptions about the sector and issues that relate to it; and,
- Build on the Government of Canada's reputation of being a credible source of impartial and trustworthy information.

To meet these objectives, Earnscliffe conducted a comprehensive wave of qualitative research. The research included a series of ten focus groups in four cities across Canada: Toronto, ON (March 5, 2018); St. John's, NFLD (March 6, 2018) Montreal, QC (March 7, 2018); and Vancouver, BC (March 8, 2018). Earnscliffe also conducted one online focus group with Official Language Minority Communities (OLMC) by recruiting French-speaking Canadians residing outside Quebec, predominantly from the provinces of New Brunswick, Ontario and Manitoba.

Two focus groups were conducted in Toronto, St. John's and Vancouver, and each was approximately two hours in length. In Montreal, Earnscliffe conducted three groups, each approximately one and a half hours in length. Two of the focus groups in Montreal, as well as the online group, were conducted in French. One group in Montreal was conducted in English with OLMC participants. In Toronto, St. John's and Vancouver, sessions began at 5:30 pm and 7:30 pm each evening. In Montreal, sessions were held at 5:00 pm, 6:30 pm and 8:00 pm. The online group ran from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm. Participants received a \$100 honorarium in appreciation of their time.

Recruitment for the groups was the same. Participants were over 18 years of age with a focus on ensuring adequate proportions of youth (18-24), women, and Indigenous peoples in each group.

For the purposes of this report, it is important to note that qualitative research is a form of scientific, social, policy and public opinion research. Focus group research is not designed to help a group reach a consensus or to make

decisions, but rather to elicit the full range of ideas, attitudes, experiences and opinions of a selected sample of participants on a defined topic. Because of the small numbers involved the participants cannot be expected to be thoroughly representative in a statistical sense of the larger population from which they are drawn and findings cannot reliably be generalized beyond their number.

DETAILED FINDINGS

This qualitative report is divided into four sections. The first section presents the findings related to participants' overall impressions of Canada's food system. The second section outlines what Canadians already know, believe or have heard about Canada's food system, and what they would like to know more about. The third section explores trusted sources of information for information related to Canada's food system. The final, fourth section, summarizes participants' proposed communications strategies and ideas related to a public education campaign run by AAFC.

The approach taken to this first phase of research was primarily that of discovery. The focus groups centred around four projective exercises to elicit participants' opinions and impressions.

Also worth noting, the findings across region were generally very consistent and are therefore reported in aggregate form, although, minor differences were noted throughout.

Overall Impressions of Canada's Food System

The focus groups began with an initial discussion in which participants explored their understanding and impressions of Canada's food system. Participants were asked to write down adjectives (or a short description) to complete a series of six statements. Given the allocated time for the focus groups, discussions focussed primarily on three of the statements: Canada's food processing sector is..., Canada's farmers are..., and Canada's agriculture scientists are....

Awareness of and familiarity with Canada's food system was generally low. For two of the six statements – Canada's food processing sector and Canada's agriculture scientists – participants were hard-pressed to complete the sentence. In fact, the most common word used to complete those sentences was "unknown."

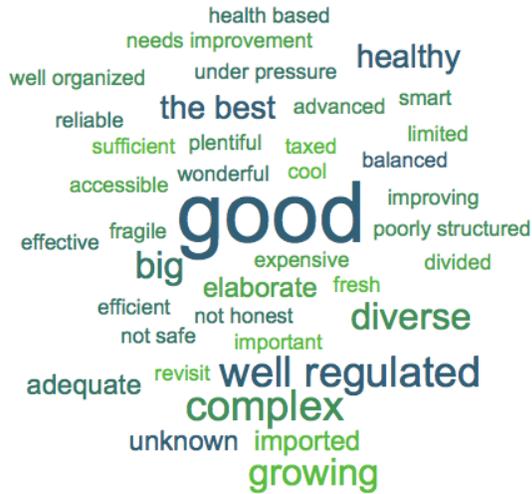
To a certain extent, this was not all that surprising given most of the groups were conducted with residents of larger urban centres. Those living in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver tended to admit being unaware of Canada's agricultural sector (generally) given their lack of proximity to people working in agriculture and/or farming. Many of their assumptions about Canada's food sector were based on the availability of food in their local supermarkets. A few participants in each group indicated that their impressions were informed by acquaintances (family or friends) working in the sector, while others spoke of meeting with farmers at farmers' markets in their respective cities. In St. John's, while familiarity seemed even lower than in other locations, there was nevertheless fairly widespread awareness of one local family farm that operated both a market and an educational/interactive attraction that was cited as a way that many learned about agriculture (farming, more specifically).

However, despite this lack of awareness, participants' impressions of Canada's food system, were generally very favourable. Most participants explained that their assumptions were based on conclusions they draw from the fact that Canada is a developed country and that they were not generally preoccupied with the availability and/or quality of food in Canada.

To illustrate these points, the following two diagrams show the most common words participants used to describe Canada's food system and Canada's food products.

For ease of use, the font size corresponds with the frequency of mentions of each word. Words that appear in a larger font size depict words that were mentioned more often. Words that appear in a smaller font size depict words that were mentioned less often. There is no variance in terms of the colour of the font used.

Canada’s food system is...



Canada’s food products are...



Again, the most common responses to both terms tended to be favourable. Adjectives used most often to describe Canada’s food system included: good; complex, yet well-regulated; healthy; growing; big and, the best. In fact, even words used less often tended to be favourable including: fresh; balanced; advanced; accessible; sufficient; reliable; well-organized; and, health-based. Similarly, words used to describe Canada’s food products also tended to be favourable: good; varied; quality; healthy; safe; innovative; well-managed; available; essential; delicious; and, well-tested.

While, neither of these statements were discussed in the groups, the adjectives used that tended to depict an uncertainty in Canada’s food system, included: fragile; taxed; under pressure; needs improvement; poorly structured; not safe; not honest; and, divided. Less positive associations with Canada’s food products included: expensive and not natural.

“Higher grade, higher standards. Probably the best in the world.” ~ St. John’s

“I think that some of (Canada’s) standards are higher, like some of the ingredients that have to go into some of our products need to be of higher quality than U.S. standards.” ~ Toronto

Canada's farms are...



Canada's farmers are



Participants had the sense that Canada’s farms, while important, good, large and abundant, were dwindling, in danger, insufficient, and being monopolized. This we will see later in the report, participants blamed on a sense that Canadian farmers are not adequately supported in Canada, that family farms are being bought up by larger operations, that they are having to adapt to changing demands and practices in the sector, and adapt to new and unique climactic conditions.

*“They’re becoming extinct. The smaller farms aren’t able to keep up with the assembly line-type farms.”
~ St. John’s*

“In need of support, especially small farmers who can’t keep up with the expensive technological advances.” ~ Vancouver

Having said that, it was important to note that participants’ views of both tended to be very favourable. Canadian farmers were described as hard-working, knowledgeable, important, and dedicated. These impressions were generally informed by their sense that farmers work very long hours to maximize crop yields and that they must do so under unique challenges, the most important being Canadian climate.

“Hard-working, fine, people who seem to understand what they’re doing.” ~ St. John’s

“They play an important role in the development of Canadian food.” ~ Toronto

“Hard-working, they’re always on their feet and don’t get much credit for it.” ~ Montreal

As illustrated below, the most common views (beyond the unknown) tended to revolve around a sector that is good; modern; large; well-managed; growing; efficient; important; clean; competitive; and, developed. Also mentioned frequently was the adjective “worrisome”, which speaks to the concern around GMOs.

Canada’s food processing sector is...



Worth noting, reactions to this statement in French (Le secteur de la transformation alimentaire du Canada) were quite different. Most participants felt the term was more closely linked to genetic modification than it was to ‘processing’. Participants used words like modification; hormones; regeneration; transformation; chemicals, uncertainty, and, for some, a lack of confidence.

“The second step after production where the product turns into something else, like the way to be ready for the shelves in the supermarkets, or like making tomato paste out of the tomato.” ~ Vancouver

“Possibly mechanical, as in machines or people breaking down bits and pieces of food or even the simple process of making salads, so I wasn’t sure how to take the question.” ~ St. John’s

“Important, a key factor. It has to get done some way or another. How would it get distributed if it wasn’t processed?” ~ Toronto

“It’s full of additives and preservatives, you can’t really trust it. I definitely stay away from processed meat.” ~ St. John’s

“Concerning, because of how much food is processed these days. Even a lot of fruits and vegetables are processed these days, and pesticides and stuff, so you have to be aware.” ~ Montreal

Perceptions of Agriculture in Canada

Participants were subsequently divided into two groups. Each group was tasked with developing a list of things they know, believe, or have heard about Canada’s food system; as well as, things they wonder about Canada’s food system.

When asked what they know, believe or have heard about Canadian produced food, farmers, the food processing sector or agriculture scientists, participants were of the view that:

KNOW, BELIEVE, HEARD
Common Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Canada’s agriculture sector and food system tended to be viewed as high quality, regulated, diverse and abundant. As mentioned earlier, participants were of the view that Canada’s food system was better than that that of many other countries. Interestingly, some participants spoke of Canada’s FDA (comparison to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration) and a sense that it was more stringent than the American system. Participants also mentioned having heard of food recalls, which suggested inspections and regulations were in place. ▪ Farmers were often described as hard-working and dedicated although there was some confusion as to whether the number of farms in Canada was increasing or decreasing. Some had the sense that smaller farms were being acquired by larger mass production operations and that these operations were much more technologically-advanced. ▪ This also lead to a view that there was a lot more imported foods in Canadian supermarkets because Canadian operations were not able to meet demand. ▪ There was a perception that the Canadian government was not adequately supporting Canada’s farmers. Some had the sense that Canadian farmers were underpaid and that many were having trouble keeping up with the cost of equipment, especially to farm large farms. Others felt that Canadian farms were limited in their production levels by quotas. ▪ Participants felt that there was a lot of waste in Canada’s food sector. When asked, participants explained that this was mostly informed by what they see around them (i.e., amount of food going bad in grocery stores); but a few participants also mentioned having the sense that there are rules that preclude farmers from selling excess product (once quotas are achieved). ▪ Many also had the sense that Canada was involved in genetic modification (e.g. GMOs); and, pesticides were being used in Canada. Some argued that most of Canada’s food is genetically modified because of the challenges we face with regards to geography and weather.
Other Mentions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Canada has a large beef industry. ▪ That there are many education programs for agriculture. ▪ Some questioned the ingredients lists on food labels; deemed to be not credible. ▪ Regulations in Canada are also applied to processed foods. ▪ Some parts of Canada, particularly some communities in the North, do not have access to fresh food and food products. ▪ Scientists are working to improve ways to grow food. ▪ Price/cost of food is rising and eating healthy is cost-prohibitive.

Not surprising given their lack of awareness (as reported earlier), much of what participants wonder or would be interested in learning about includes more information about the terminology and confirmation of what they know, believe or have heard about the sector/system. Participants’ queries (as recorded on their exercise sheets) can be summarized as follows:

I WONDER...	
Common Themes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ About Canada’s agriculture science and scientists... Who are they? What are they working on? What their responsibilities are? What their job description is? What they are concerned about? What technology they are working on to be more sustainable? Who do they work for (who pays for their work)? Are scientists regulated? What would they tell us to eat or not to eat? Where their work is taking place? What is the proportion of agriculture scientists working in a lab versus in the field? ▪ About Canadian regulations in the agricultural sector... What is the Government of Canada’s process, regulations and standards? How do our standards compare to other countries? Whether regulations are being adhered to? Who conducts inspections? What is the inspection process? How do they discover food recalls? ▪ About the use of GMOs, pesticides, chemicals... What is our position on the use of pesticides, chemicals and GMOs? What chemicals are being used? How much of our food is genetically modified? Why GMOs are not labelled on food products? What are the long-term consequences associated with GMOs? Where are GMOs implanted? Do genetically modified foods taste different? How do GMOs affect the size of food products? ▪ About Canadian farmers and farms... How farmers are treated by the Government of Canada – whether they are subsidized, compensated fairly, etc.? How many farms are local and family-run vs. corporate? What do they do during the winter? Where are they located? How are farmers compensated in the event of bad crops? ▪ About organic foods... What qualifies as organic? Can food really be organic? Is organic better? Can we trust labels on food products that claim to be organic? Why is organic food more expensive? ▪ About food production in Canada... How much food is grown in Canada? What food(s) are grown here? How much food is exported? Where our food comes from? How much food is imported? Are imported foods treated the same? ▪ About Canada’s food processing sector... What does it mean? Are we processing food here in Canada? Which foods? What regulations are in place for processed foods? 	
Other Mentions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ About animals... Are there quotas in Canada’s agriculture sector – particularly around milk and fish? How are animals treated? ▪ About meat produced in Canada... Are Canadian producers growing meat? What is the Canadian position on the safety of mechanically reclaimed meat? Why does Alberta beef taste better? ▪ About food labelling... Can we trust the information on the label (referencing organic)? Are ingredients real? Are nutrition facts accurate? 	

Sources of Information

To gauge the credibility of different types of people and institutions, participants were asked to complete a photo sort in which they identified sources they currently or would rely on for information about Canada’s agriculture sector and those they would never rely on for such information.

The following table outlines the results of that exercise:

Person/Institution	Do/Would Rely On (credible)	Do Not/Would Not Rely On (not credible)	Neutral (no opinion)
Doctors	65	8	11
Government of Canada	64	10	10
Documentaries	62	14	8
AAFC Scientists (working in field)	62	1	21
Farmers	59	7	18
AAFC Scientists (working in lab)	51	7	26
News	51	14	19
Academics	49	12	23
Authors	29	34	21
Journalists	28	35	21
Grocery stores	25	42	17
Bloggers	21	58	5
Celebrity chefs	19	44	21
Social media	18	52	14
Celebrities	2	80	2
Elected officials	0	69	15

Those that tended to be cited most often as credible sources, included AAFC scientists, farmers, the Government of Canada, academics and doctors. Participants suggested that these sources were viewed credibly because they tend to be highly educated or work directly in the sector and/or have Canadians’ best interests at heart. Indeed, as we will see later, most participants suggested that the ideal spokesperson for an AAFC or Government of Canada awareness-building campaign would be scientists, farmers or the Government of Canada. They explained that they would most like to hear from those working directly in the sector.

[About farmers] “It’s nice to have the feedback from someone that’s actually involved in that field, that’s more trustworthy I find.” ~ St. John’s

[About academics] “They are the ones studying these things, they know what they’re talking about, I read it and I believe it.” ~ Toronto

[About scientists and farmers] “The scientists are the ones in the lab doing the testing to determine if the farmers are up to standards, while the farmers are the ones growing and cropping the produce.” ~ St. John’s

[About doctors] “They have knowledge about what kinds of foods are good for your system.” ~ Montreal

[About government] “They’re the lawmakers, we have got to trust in somebody. They’re naturally supposed to be trustworthy and have our best interests at heart.” ~ St. John’s

[About Government] “What they present is factual. I don’t believe the government would alter information.” ~ Toronto

With respect to AAFC scientists, participants were shown two different images of AAFC scientists: one working in a laboratory and one working in the field. As is evident in the data, participants deemed AAFC scientists credible regardless of their work setting, although slightly more participants deemed the field setting more credible. Upon further probing, participants explained that they would like to hear from both types of scientists; they were deemed to be performing complimentary and equally important roles. Participants liked knowing that Canada’s agriculture scientists were studying our agricultural products in their natural environments (while they are being grown), and conducting analysis and tests on specimens in the laboratory.

“They’re two different components but equally important. They both work hard but from two different angles.” ~ Vancouver

Where media sources were concerned, most tended to view documentaries, news, and journalists as credible with the caveat that not all organizations or individuals working in these categories were necessarily felt to be credible. Indeed, documentaries rated as high as AAFC Scientists in terms of participants’ reliance on them for information. Participants spoke about the fact they often watch documentaries and like that format for information; and, like news and journalists, they tend to rely on these sources to inform them of an issue or topic, but that they often consult the internet for additional information before forming an opinion. As illustrated in the verbatims below, participants felt that in many instances these sources, particularly documentaries, have their own views that they communicate and that the information is not always unbiased.

[About journalists] “They’re supposed to be unbiased, but everything is biased, everything you read or watch is the opinion of someone else.” ~ St. John’s

[About documentaries] “They can really challenge my own thoughts or ideas I already had and what happens is if the information is good I will usually spend several hours online researching the topic.” ~ Vancouver

[About documentaries] “For people making documentaries, there’s nothing making them need to tell the truth or show everything, so I think they might be skewed based on the point of view of the director or the point they’re trying to make.” ~ Vancouver

Sources that tended to be described as less credible included elected officials, bloggers, celebrities and celebrity chefs. For the most part, they were felt to be biased sources that were not necessarily educated about agriculture or experts in the area. However, where elected officials were concerned, when asked, most participants felt that they could trust a federal cabinet minister (i.e., Minister of AAFC or Minister of Health) arguing that as the Minister they were beholden to Canadians and likely more informed about their mandate; more like a Government of Canada representative than an elected official.

[About elected officials] “I don’t know them. Where did their campaign votes come from?” ~ St. John’s

[About elected officials] “Their sole purpose is for power.” ~ Montreal

[About elected officials] “I do believe Ministers are more credible. They represent the Government. I think they become knowledgeable about their file and need to be accountable.” ~ Vancouver

Where social media was concerned, reactions were mixed. While it was among the most commonly used sources of information, and as we will see later, recommended as a communications vehicle for the Government, participants were skeptical about its credibility for information about agriculture or Canada’s food system. Participants argued that most of the information on social media, tends to be opinion-based. When asked, however, the overwhelming majority would rely on a Government of Canada social media channel or feed for information. Properly branded, Government of Canada information via social media would be seen to be credible.

“It’s great for a heads up, but you can’t really verify where they get their stories. A lot of the time it’s just their opinion on something; it’s not really facts.” ~ St. John’s

“My view is different if it’s the Government of Canada social media page or feed. I would rely on their information over social media.” ~ Toronto

Public Education Campaign

The final exercise involved a projective technique in which participants were asked to role play imagining they were the head of communications for AAFC (Government of Canada), and were asked to develop a public awareness/education campaign to help raise awareness about Canadian agriculture and the food products available to Canadians. They were asked to outline what points they would make, as well as the delivery channels and spokespeople they would use to communicate their message.

From a communications perspective, the information outlined earlier about what people are curious about the agricultural sector and Canada’s food system offers a lot of insight into what people would like to know or would find interesting to learn about. Indeed, much of what was suggested as part of this exercise is in line with those queries. Framed as a communications campaign, participants suggested focussing on:

- **The lifecycle of Canada’s food system; presenting how food gets from farm to plate.** This would include where food is grown, how it is grown, whether and how it is processed (if applicable), transportation, sale, to its availability in supermarkets and stores and then onto plates.
- **Telling AAFC’s story.** Participants suggested communicating what the Department does and its mission. They felt it would be particularly interesting to explain what AAFC does to ensure food products in Canada are safe and of good quality. They suggested vignettes highlighting/profiling different foods produced in Canada.
- **A day in the life of a Canadian farmer or agriculture scientist.** Participants suggested that it could be effective to have those working in the agriculture sector tell their stories. They felt the testimonial approach would be engaging, interesting, authentic, and more credible. This was also felt to be an effective way to communicate about more controversial topics such as GMOs, hormones and pesticides. Having those who study and work with these products would also provide clarity and credibility to the topic.

Coming at the topic of agriculture by raising awareness about the importance of eating healthy. Some suggested talking about agriculture in terms of the product: quality food. Those that made this suggestion thought it would be helpful to accentuate the importance of supporting our local farmers and the benefits of eating fresh, whole foods.

In terms of preferred communications channels and spokespersons, consistent with what was reported earlier, participants suggested:

- **Transmitting information via social media by the Government of Canada.** Given the recruitment skew towards younger participants, it was not surprising that most indicated being active social media users. And, while some deemed social media to be a less credible source of information, the overwhelming majority of participants agreed that they would trust a Government of Canada social media feed or channel. Furthermore, given participants preference for documentaries and information in video format, this they felt lent itself well to that medium. Videos available on a government YouTube channel, or via Facebook, were often suggested given the ease of use (i.e., many are subtitled making playback easy whenever and wherever).
- **Others mentioned communicating with Canadians via public transportation** (i.e., on subway trains, buses, bus shelters, etc.) **and more traditional channels, including television advertisements** (particularly during the news) **and radio.** Participants recommended television advertisements (or earned media) during the nightly news and said they often listen to the radio (country music stations were mentioned often) when traveling to and from work.
- **A few participants, usually one or two in every group, suggested a public education campaign with students in schools to help further educate Canadians on the sector.** They argued that youth can be effective educators; persuading parents and others around them of what they learn in school.
- **When asked, usually one or two participants per group expressed an interest in receiving information about Canada’s agriculture sector via a monthly email news bulletin.** However, the majority felt that this was an outdated and not terribly effective mode of communication arguing that their inboxes tended to be overwhelmed and that they would more than likely overlook the email.
- Where spokespersons were concerned, the findings were generally consistent with what was reported previously. **Participants suggested having the Government of Canada, agriculture scientists, farmers, and, medical professionals** (including doctors and/or nutritionists) **speak on behalf of their campaigns.**
- Some also suggested having the Minister of AAFC, or Health Canada, or even the Prime Minister play the role of spokesperson for their campaigns.
- **Contradictory to what was reported earlier, some participants suggested that celebrities speak on behalf of their campaigns.** Two specific individuals that were suggested included David Suzuki and Leonardo DiCaprio who were both seen as credible activists. Others suggested professional athletes and Olympians given their dedication to eating healthy.

CONCLUSIONS

The research demonstrates that while awareness of and familiarity with Canada’s agricultural sector is low, participants’ impressions of Canadian farmers is very positive. Those living in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver tended to admit being unaware of Canada’s agricultural sector (generally) given their lack of proximity to people working in agriculture and/or farming. Some indicated that their impressions were informed by acquaintances (family or friends) working in the sector, while others spoke of meeting with farmers at farmers’ markets in their respective cities. Despite their lack of familiarity, participants described Canadian farmers as very hard-working and dedicated, generally informed by their sense that farmers work very long hours to maximize crop yields given Canada’s unique climate challenges.

Opinion on agriculture scientists was less certain – many had not heard the term before and did not know Canada had scientists working in the sector. Participants seemed to think they were well educated, but this was based on an assumption that all scientists are well-schooled. There was a similar lack of understanding and awareness when it came to the term Canada’s food processing sector. For some, the word ‘processing’ simply referred to the process of turning food into something else (i.e., making canned tomato paste out of tomatoes). For others, the word ‘processing’ implied something more involved and not necessarily at the production phase (or back end) such as genetic modification.

Overall, participants reported knowing or believing a few common things about the sector. Canada’s agricultural sector was viewed as high quality, regulated, diverse and abundant. Farmers were often described as hard-working and dedicated although there was some confusion as to whether the number of farms in Canada was increasing or decreasing. There was also a view that there is a lot more imported food in Canadian super markets and that the Canadian government is not adequately supporting Canada’s farmers. Participants felt that there was a lot of waste in Canada’s food sector, and many had the sense that Canada was involved in genetic modification(e.g. GMOs) and that pesticides were being used in Canada.

Much of what participants wonder or would be interested in learning about includes more information about the terminology and Canada’s agriculture and food sectors generally. Participants wanted definitions of agriculture scientists (as well as what they are working on) and Canada’s food processing sector. They were eager for more information related to organic foods and whether they are healthier. There seems to be a lot of uncertainty around organic foods particularly around how they are grown, labelled, regulated, priced and the health benefits of organic versus other foods. Participants also wanted to know more about how farmers are treated by the Government of Canada, particularly around subsidies and compensation. Finally, participants were curious about the use of pesticides, chemicals and GMOs in Canada’s agriculture sector in addition to the Government of Canada’s standards and regulations and tolerance with respect to GMOs, chemicals and pesticides.

Participants viewed AAFC scientists, farmers, the Government of Canada, academics and doctors as credible sources of information about agriculture. Participants suggested that these sources were viewed credibly because they tend to be highly educated or work directly in the sector and/or have Canadians’ best interests at heart. They suggested that that the ideal spokesperson for an AAFC or Government of Canada awareness-building campaign would be scientists, farmers or the Government of Canada, and that they would most like to hear from those working directly in the sector.

Most tended to view news, journalists and documentaries as credible, though that assessment was not universal across all organizations or individuals working in media and film. Participants suggested that they tend to rely on these sources to inform them of an issue or topic, but that they often consult the internet for additional information before forming an opinion.

Sources that tended to be described as less credible included elected officials, bloggers, celebrities and celebrity chefs. For the most part, they were felt to be biased sources that were not necessarily educated about agriculture or experts in the area. That being said, most felt they could trust the Minister of AAFC, arguing that as the Minister they were beholden to Canadians and likely more informed about their mandate.

Many felt the best method to communicate with Canadians about the agricultural sector was through social media, unsurprising given that the recruitment skewed towards a younger cohort that reported they were active on social media sites. While some deemed social media to be a less credible source of information, the overwhelming majority of participants agreed that they would trust a Government of Canada social media feed or channel more than posts from friends on these platforms. Others mentioned communicating with Canadians via public transportation (i.e., on subway trains, buses, bus shelters, etc.) and more traditional channels including television advertisements and radio. Finally, some participants urged the Government to consider an outreach program with students in schools to help further educate Canadians on the sector.

Only a few participants expressed interest in receiving a newsletter about AAFC and agriculture in Canada. For the most part, participants felt it was an outdated and ineffective method of communication, arguing that most peoples' inboxes are already flooded with information.

APPENDIX A: DISCUSSION GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

⌚=10 MIN

T=10 MIN

Moderator introduces herself/himself and her/his role: role of moderator is to ask questions, make sure everyone has a chance to express themselves, keep track of the time, be objective/no special interest

- Moderator works for Earnscliffe Strategy Group, an independent marketing research firm
- Role of participants: speak openly and frankly when expressing opinions, remember that there are no wrong answers and no need to agree with each other
- Results are confidential and reported all together/individuals are not identified/participation is voluntary
- The length of the session (2 hours/1.5 hours in Montreal)
- The presence of any observers, their role and purpose, and the means of observation (one-way mirror, teleconference/webstreaming; colleagues viewing in the back room and listening in remotely)
- The presence and purpose of any recording being made of the session (audio and video taping of the discussion)
- Turn off cell phones for the duration of the discussion
- As mentioned when we invited you to participate in this discussion group, we are conducting focus groups on behalf of the Government of Canada. We are holding discussion groups to hear people’s views on issues related to agriculture and food products in Canada.

Moderator will go around the table and ask participants to introduce themselves.

- **Introduction of participants:** To get started, please give your first name, who lives in your household (i.e., whether you live with someone including children (number and ages of children), and the role you play in grocery shopping and meal preparation in your household.

BASIC IMPRESSIONS

⌚=30 MIN

T=40 MIN

The groups today/tonight are being conducted on behalf of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada. The focus of our discussion will be on agriculture and food products in Canada.

To begin, I’d like to spend some time understanding your impressions of Canada’s food system, Canada’s food processing sector, Canada’s food products, farmers, farms and agriculture scientists. Before we have a discussion, I have a simple handout I would like you to fill out. Basically, I’m looking for the description or adjectives you would use to complete each of the following sentences:

- Canada’s food system is _____
- Canada’s food processing sector is: _____
- Canada’s food products are _____
- Canada’s farmers are _____
- Canadian farms are _____
- Canada’s agriculture scientists are _____

[MODERATOR TO PROVIDE HANDOUT. EXERCISE TO BE COMPLETED SILENTLY.]

- Let’s focus on what you put down for Canada’s agriculture scientists...

- When you saw Canada’s agriculture scientists and what did you understand that to mean?
 - What did you put down to complete the sentence? Why do you say that?
 - When you consider your impression of Canada’s agriculture scientists, what are the things that have formed or informed your impression?
 - *PROBE: Any differences on government agriculture scientists versus other scientists (e.g. academic scientists, public/private partnerships sponsored research scientists, industry sponsored scientists) and why?*
 - Has your impression changed over time or did you always feel the same way?
 - How has your impression changed and what made it change?
- Now let’s talk about what you put down for Canada’s farmers...
 - What did you put down to complete the sentence? Why do you say that?
 - When you consider your impression of Canada’s farmers, what are the things that have formed or informed your impression?
 - Has your impression changed over time or did you always feel the same way? If it has changed, how has your impression changed and what made it change?
- Let’s focus on what you put down for Canada’s food processing sector...
 - What do you understand Canada’s food processing sector to mean? What do you think it includes?
 - What did you put down to complete the sentence? Why do you say that?
 - When you consider your impression of Canada’s food processing sector, what are the things that have formed or informed your impression?
 - Has your impression evolved over time or did you always feel the same way?
 - How has your impression changed and what made it change?

PERCEPTIONS OF AGRICULTURE IN CANADA

⌚=30 MIN

T=70 MIN

For the next exercise, I’m going to divide you into teams of 2 or 3 (depending on numbers) and give each team a large sheet to work on. On this sheet, I want you to make two lists:

- Column A: **“Know, believe, heard”** – I would like you to list anything you *know, believe or have heard* about Canadian produced food, farmers, the food processing sector or agriculture scientists in Canada. There are no right or wrong answers, include anything that comes to mind whether it’s positive, negative or neutral.
- Column B: **“I wonder...”** – I would like you to list anything you *wonder* about Canadian produced food, farmers, the food processing sector, or agriculture scientists in Canada, there are no right or wrong answers, include anything that comes to mind whether it’s positive, negative or neutral.

[MODERATOR TO SELECT TEAMS. EACH TEAM CHOOSES A “SECRETARY” WHO WILL WRITE DOWN THE ANSWERS. PROVIDE SHEET.]

I’ll give you five minutes to do this, so you’ll need to start right away and I will ask that you don’t talk too loudly so each group can work independently.

[WHEN COMPLETE, TAPE LISTS TO WALL.]

- Let’s have the person who was not the secretary tell us about the first column only – what your team knows, believes or has heard about Canadian produced food, farmers, the food processing sector, and agriculture scientists in Canada. Tell us about each aspect and how it is you came to know, believe or hear that
 - Is that a good thing/bad thing?
 - Is this an aspect that has evolved for you over time? If so, how has your knowledge or belief changed and what made it change?

- Now, let’s have the secretary tell us about what your team wonders about Canadian produced food, farmers, the food processing sector, and agriculture scientists in Canada.
 - Tell us about each aspect and how it is you came to wonder about that
 - Is that a good thing/bad thing?
 - What specifically would you like to know more about?
 - Is this a view that has evolved for you over time? If so, how has your view changed and what made it change?

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

⌚=30 MIN

T=100 MIN

Now, I’d like to find out about all the various ways you may gather information or learn about Canada’s agricultural products or farmers. I’ve got a handout here with a bunch of images of different sources of information – some relate to news media, some to different types of experts, some to different types of programs or documentaries, and so on. These are meant to be examples of a TYPE of information source and not necessarily the EXACT information source. For example, if there is an image that isn’t exactly a source you rely on, but reminds you of one you use, that’s good enough. You’ll be able to explain that for me when we have the discussion.

I’d like you to review all of the images and:

- Put a circle around ones that you already rely on from time to time for this kind of information; and
- Put an “X” through any that you would never rely on for that kind of information

List:

- AAFC Scientist (in lab coat)
- Bloggers
- Farmers
- Authors
- Elected Officials
- Social media
- News
- AAFC Scientist (in field)
- Celebrities
- Journalists
- Celebrity Chefs
- Doctors
- Grocery stores

- Documentaries
- Academics
- Government of Canada

[MODERATOR TO PROVIDE HANDOUT. EXERCISE TO BE COMPLETED SILENTLY.]

- First, let's talk about the ones you circled.
 - Tell me how this relates to a source of information you currently rely on?
 - Why do you value the information you get that way?
 - Is this a source of information you trust? Why or why not?
 - Are there any times when this is a source you are more likely to rely upon or less likely to rely upon? Why do you say that?
- Now, let's talk about the ones you put an "X" though.
 - Why do you not value information you would get that way?
 - Is this a source of information you trust? Why or why not?
 - Are there any times when this is a source you are more likely to rely upon or less likely to rely upon? Why do you say that?

WHAT AAFC/GOVERNEMENT CAN DO – EXPLORATORY DISCUSSION

⌚=10 MIN

T=110 MIN

Finally, I want you to put yourself in the place of the people at Agriculture Canada or the Government of Canada. Let's imagine it's your responsibility to help raise awareness about Canadian agriculture and the food products available to you.

- What are the ways you would try to communicate with Canadians?
 - *PROBE for channels (i.e., media, social media, TV programming, etc.)*
 - *PROBE for spokespeople (e.g. scientists, farmers)*
- With the exercise we just went through, were there any of those sources that you think would be a particularly appropriate or even an interesting way for Agriculture Canada or the Government of Canada to communicate with you?

WRAP-UP

⌚=10 MIN

T=120 MIN

MODERATOR TO CHECK IN THE BACK ROOM AND PROBE ON ANY ADDITIONAL AREAS OF INTEREST.

- This concludes what we needed to cover tonight. We really appreciate you taking the time to come down here to share your views. Your input is very important.
- Reminder to those in the first and second groups about reserving comments so as not to influence those waiting at reception for the next group.

APPENDIX B: SCREENER

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

- Recruit 10 participants per group
- Participants must be at least 18 years of age
- For the online focus group, participants must be French-speakers living outside Quebec (i.e., New Brunswick, Ontario or Manitoba)
- Minimum quotas set for gender (S2) and age (S3) – need adequate representation of female Canadians and Canadians 18-24 years of age
- Aim to recruit at least 2 Indigenous persons in each group especially Toronto and Vancouver (S7)
- Good mix of other demographics

TORONTO Monday, March 5, 2018	Honorarium: \$100
Group 1	5:30 pm
Group 2	7:30 pm
ST. JOHN’S Tuesday, March 6, 2018	Honorarium: \$100
Group 1	5:30 pm
Group 2	7:30 pm
ONLINE Tuesday, March 6, 2018	Honorarium: \$100
Group 1 FRENCH	6:30 pm
MONTREAL Wednesday, March 7, 2018	Honorarium: \$85
Group 1 FRENCH	5:00 pm
Group 2 FRENCH	6:30 pm
Group 3 ENGLISH	8:00 pm
VANCOUVER Thursday, March 8, 2018	Honorarium: \$100
Group 1	5:30 pm
Group 2	7:30 pm

Respondent’s name:	Interviewer:
Respondent’s phone number: (home)	Date:
Respondent’s phone number: (work)	Validated:
Respondent’s fax number:	Quality Central:
Respondent’s email:	On list:
Sample source: panel random client referral	On quotas:

Hello/Bonjour, my name is _____ and I’m calling on behalf of Earncliffe, a national public opinion research firm. We are organizing a series of discussion groups on issues of importance to Canadians, on behalf of the Government of Canada, specifically for the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. The purpose of the study and the small group discussion is to hear people’s views on issues related to the domestic agriculture and agri-food system. We are looking for people who would be willing to participate in a discussion group that will last up to two hours. These people must be 18 years of age or older. Up to 10 participants will be taking part and for their time, participants will receive an honorarium of [INSERT AMOUNT]. May I continue?

Yes CONTINUE
 No THANK AND TERMINATE

Would you prefer that I continue in English or French? Préférez-vous continuer en français ou en anglais? **[IF FRENCH, CONTINUE IN FRENCH OR ARRANGE A CALL BACK WITH FRENCH INTERVIEWER: Nous vous rappellerons pour mener cette entrevue de recherche en français. Merci. Au revoir].**

Participation is voluntary. We are interested in hearing your opinions; no attempt will be made to sell you anything or change your point of view. The format is a ‘round table’ discussion led by a research professional. All opinions expressed will remain anonymous and views will be grouped together to ensure no particular individual can be identified. But before we invite you to attend, we need to ask you a few questions to ensure that we get a good mix and variety of people. May I ask you a few questions?

Yes CONTINUE
 No THANK AND TERMINATE

READ TO ALL: “This call may be monitored or audio taped for quality control and evaluation purposes. ADDITIONAL CLARIFICATION IF NEEDED:

- To ensure that I (the interviewer) am reading the questions correctly and collecting your answers accurately;
- To assess my (the interviewer) work for performance evaluation;
- To ensure that the questionnaire is accurate/correct (i.e. evaluation of CATI programming and methodology – we’re asking the right questions to meet our clients’ research requirements – kind of like pre-testing)
- If the call is audio taped, it is only for the purposes of playback to the interviewer for a performance evaluation immediately after the interview is conducted or it can be used by the Project Manager/client to evaluate the questionnaire if they are unavailable at the time of the interview – all audio tapes are destroyed after the evaluation.

S1. Do you or any member of your household work for...

	Yes	No
A marketing research firm	1	2
A magazine or newspaper, online or print	1	2
A radio or television station	1	2
A public relations company	1	2
An advertising agency or graphic design firm	1	2
An online media company or as a blog writer	1	2
The government, whether federal, provincial or municipal	1	2
The healthcare sector (READ if necessary: such as physicians, nutritionists, dietitians, etc.)	1	2
The agriculture and farming sector	1	2
Food manufacturing/food industry	1	2

IF “YES” TO ANY OF THE ABOVE, THANK AND TERMINATE.

S2. DO NOT ASK – NOTE GENDER

Male	1	
Female	2	<i>ENSURE A MINIMUM OF 6/10</i>

S3. Could you please tell me which of the following age categories you fall in to? Are you...

18-24 years	1	<i>ENSURE MINIMUM OF 4/10</i>
25-29 years	2	
30-34 years	3	
35-44 years	4	
45-54 years	5	
55-64 years	6	
65+ years	7	<i>THANK AND TERMINATE</i>
DK (Don't Know) /NR (No Response)	9	<i>THANK AND TERMINATE</i>

S4. What is your current employment status?

Working full-time	1	<i>ENSURE GOOD MIX OF EMPLOYMENT STATUS</i>
Working part-time	2	
Self-employed	3	
Retired	4	
Unemployed	5	
Student	6	
Homemaker	7	
Other (please specify)	8	
DK/NR	9	<i>THANK AND TERMINATE</i>

S5. Which of the following categories best describes your total household income? That is, the total income of all persons in your household combined, before taxes [READ LIST]?

Under \$20,000	1	<i>ENSURE GOOD MIX OF INCOME</i>
\$20,000 to under \$40,000	2	
\$40,000 to under \$60,000	3	
\$60,000 to under \$80,000	4	
\$80,000 to under \$100,000	5	
\$100,000 to under \$150,000	6	
\$150,000 or more	7	
DK/NR	9	<i>THANK AND TERMINATE</i>

S6. What is the last level of education that you have completed?

Some high school only	1	<i>ENSURE GOOD MIX OF EDUCATION</i>
Completed high school	2	
Some college/university	3	
Completed college/university	4	
Post-graduate studies	5	
DK/NR	9	THANK AND TERMINATE

S7. Do you consider yourself to be Indigenous Canadian (First Nations, Métis or Inuit)?

Yes	1
No	2

AIM FOR AT LEAST TWO INDIGENOUS CANADIANS IN EACH GROUP – PARTICULARLY IN TORONTO AND VANCOUVER.

S8. Have you participated in a discussion or focus group before? A discussion group brings together a few people in order to know their opinion about a given subject.

Yes	1	(MAX 1/3 PER GROUP, ASK S9, S10, S11)
No	2	SKIP TO S12
DK/NR	9	THANK AND TERMINATE

S9. When was the last time you attended a discussion or focus group?

If within the last 6 months	1	THANK AND TERMINATE
If not within the last 6 months	2	CONTINUE
DK/NR	9	THANK AND TERMINATE

S10. How many of these sessions have you attended in the last five years?

If 4 or less	1	CONTINUE
If 5 or more	2	THANK AND TERMINATE
DK/NR	9	THANK AND TERMINATE

S11. And what was/were the main topic(s) of discussion in those groups?

IF RELATED TO AGRICULTURE, FARMING, OR FOOD, THANK AND TERMINATE.

INVITATION

S12. Participants in discussion groups are asked to voice their opinions and thoughts. How comfortable are you in voicing your opinions in front of others? Are you... (READ LIST)

Very comfortable	1	MINIMUM 4 PER GROUP
Fairly comfortable	2	CONTINUE
Comfortable	3	CONTINUE
Not very comfortable	4	THANK AND TERMINATE
Very comfortable	5	THANK AND TERMINATE
DK/NR	9	THANK AND TERMINATE

S13. Sometimes participants are asked to read text and/or review images during the discussion. Is there any reason why you could not participate?

Yes	1	THANK AND TERMINATE
No	2	CONTINUE
DK/NR	9	THANK AND TERMINATE

S14. Based on your responses, it looks like you have the profile we are looking for. I would like to invite you to participate in a small group discussion, called a focus group, we are conducting at [TIME], on [DATE].

As you may know, focus groups are used to gather information on a particular subject matter; in this case, the discussion will touch on food safety. The discussion will consist of 8 to 10 people and will be very informal. It will last up to two hours, refreshments will be served and you will receive [INSERT AMOUNT] as a thank you for your time. Would you be willing to attend?

Yes	1	RECRUIT
No	2	THANK AND TERMINATE
DK/NR	9	THANK AND TERMINATE

PRIVACY QUESTIONS

Now I have a few questions that relate to privacy, your personal information and the research process. We will need your consent on a few issues that enable us to conduct our research. As I run through these questions, please feel free to ask me any questions you would like clarified.

P1) First, we will be providing the hosting facility and session moderator with a list of respondents’ names and profiles (screener responses) so that they can sign you into the group. This information will not be shared with the Government of Canada department organizing this research. Do we have your permission to do this? I assure you it will be kept strictly confidential.

Yes	1	GO TO P2
No	2	READ RESPONDENT INFO BELOW

We need to provide the facility hosting the session and the moderator with the names and background of the people attending the focus group because only the individuals invited are allowed in the session and the facility and moderator must have this information for verification purposes. Please be assured that this information will be kept strictly confidential. GO TO P1A

P1a) Now that I've explained this, do I have your permission to provide your name and profile to the facility?

Yes	1	GO TO P2
No	2	THANK & TERMINATE

P2) An audio and/or video tape of the group session will be produced for research purposes. The tapes will be used only by the research professional to assist in preparing a report on the research findings and will be destroyed once the report is completed.

Do you agree to be audio and/or video taped for research purposes only?

Yes	1	THANK & GO TO P3
No	2	READ RESPONDENT INFO BELOW

It is necessary for the research process for us to audio/video tape the session as the researcher needs this material to complete the report.

P2a) Now that I've explained this, do I have your permission for audio/video taping?

Yes	1	THANK & GO TO P3
No	2	THANK AND TERMINATE

P3) Each month we submit the names of individuals that have participated in our focus groups to the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association Qualitative Central system (www.mria-arim.ca). Qualitative Central serves as a centralized database to review participation in qualitative research and focus groups. You will not be contacted for any reason whatsoever as a result of being on this list.

Do we have your permission to submit your name and phone number to MRIA's Qualitative Central system?

Yes	1	THANK & GO TO INVITATION
No	2	GO TO P3A

P3a) To participate in this focus group we must have your permission to add your name to the Qualitative Central system as it is the only way for us to ensure the integrity of the research process and track participation in qualitative research. The system is maintained by the industry body, the Professional Marketing Research Society, and is solely used to track your participation in qualitative research (such as focus groups). You will not be contacted for any reason whatsoever as a result of being on this list.

Now that I've explained this do I have your permission to add your name to our qualitative central list?

Yes	1	THANK & GO TO INVITATION
No	2	THANK & TERMINATE

AS REQUIRED, ADDITIONAL INFO FOR THE INTERVIEWER:

Please be assured that this information is kept confidential and is strictly accessed and used by professional market research firms to review participation and prevent “professional respondents” from attending sessions. Research firms participating in MRIA’s Qualitative Central require your consent to be eligible to participate in the focus group - the system helps ensure the integrity of the research process.

AS REQUIRED, NOTE ABOUT MRIA:

The Marketing Research and Intelligence Association is a non-profit organization for marketing research professionals engaged in marketing, advertising, social, and political research. The Society's mission is to be the leader in promoting excellence in the practice of marketing and social research and in the value of market information.

Invitation:

Wonderful, you qualify to participate in one of our discussion sessions. As I mentioned earlier, the group discussion will take place the evening of **[Day, Month, Date] @ [Time]** for up to 2 hours.

Do you have a pen handy so that I can give you the address where the group will be held? It will be held at: **[PROVIDE FACILITY NAME AND ADDRESS]**.

We ask that you arrive fifteen minutes early to be sure you find parking, locate the facility and have time to check-in with the hosts. The hosts may be checking respondents’ identification prior to the group, so please be sure to bring some personal identification with you (for example, a driver’s license). If you require glasses for reading make sure you bring them with you as well.

As we are only inviting a small number of people, your participation is very important to us. If for some reason you are unable to attend, please call us so that we may get someone to replace you. You can reach us at **[INSERT PHONE NUMBER]** at our office. Please ask for **[NAME]**. Someone will call you in the days leading up to the discussion to remind you.

So that we can call you to remind you about the discussion group or contact you should there be any changes, can you please confirm your name and contact information for me?

First name

Last Name

email

Daytime phone number

Evening phone number

If the respondent refuses to give his/her first or last name or phone number please assure them that this information will be kept strictly confidential in accordance with the privacy law and that it is used strictly to contact them to confirm their attendance and to inform them of any changes to the discussion group. If they still refuse THANK & TERMINATE.