



Food Policy for Canada

—
Everyone at the Table



Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada

Agriculture et
Agroalimentaire Canada

Canada

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INTRODUCTION

Food affects the daily lives of all those living in Canada. It provides the energy and nutrients needed to live a healthy life, brings together communities, and creates economic growth and many jobs for Canadians.

Public consultations on the *Food Policy for Canada* took place in 2017. Feedback came from people and organizations with a diverse range of perspectives, including from those who work in the food system, and those who are active on food issues such as food security and food waste. The Government of Canada also engaged in a dialogue with Indigenous Peoples and organizations to better understand opportunities and challenges unique to their communities.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) released a *What We Heard* report in 2018 to outline the priorities of people across the country for the *Food Policy for Canada*. In addition to taking into consideration the priorities of people and organizations who participated in public consultations, the Government of Canada worked collaboratively across many departments and agencies to develop a policy that would reflect a broad range of government priorities.

Budget 2019 announced over \$134 million in initial investments to support the food policy. These investments reflect what was heard during consultations on the food issues that matter most to those living in Canada.

The first-ever *Food Policy for Canada* will help Canada build a healthier and more sustainable food system – one that builds on a robust agenda to support growth for farmers, producers, and food businesses in Canada.

WHY DOES CANADA NEED A FOOD POLICY?

Food systems, including the way food is produced, processed, distributed, consumed, and disposed of, have direct impacts on the lives of Canadians. Food systems are interconnected and are integral to the wellbeing of communities, including northern and Indigenous communities, public health, environmental sustainability, and the strength of the economy.

All orders of government, including many federal departments, have taken actions to address food system issues, for example through:

- Income support programs that reduce poverty, that can also reduce food insecurity;

- Policies to improve food environments and support healthier food choices;
- Initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including in the agriculture and food sector; and
- Investments in innovation to increase the agriculture and food sector's capacity to produce high-quality food.

Despite this wide range of actions being taken, issues still exist in the Canadian food system. For example, around one million Canadian households are not able to access healthy food, almost two in three Canadian adults are overweight or obese, and about one third of food produced in Canada is wasted. These important societal challenges require multi-faceted solutions.

ALIGNING FOOD SYSTEM ACTIONS

The social, health, environmental, and economic components of food systems are interdependent; however, they are often addressed in isolation. To tackle complex food issues, coordinated and coherent approaches are needed.

As decisions about food are made by individuals, organizations, and as a country, broader linkages across food systems need to be considered to ensure effective actions are taken. Collaborating across government and across society to work toward mutually reinforcing goals can increase the collective capacity of all actors in the food system to build a healthier and more sustainable food system that supports communities and the economy.

WHAT IS FOOD POLICY?

Food policy is developed to guide food-related decisions and actions. It is an approach to understanding and addressing the linkages within food systems and a plan for making decisions about food. This approach can help guide public, private, and non-profit sector actions related to improving food-related outcomes and create space for working together across sectors. It can also help individual Canadians understand impacts and opportunities for change within the Canadian food system.

VISION: SETTING A COMMON DIRECTION FOR THE FUTURE OF FOOD

To work together across sectors toward a better food system for all, the Government of Canada is launching the *Food Policy for Canada* with a vision for the future of food in Canada:

All people in Canada are able to access a sufficient amount of safe, nutritious, and culturally diverse food. Canada's food system is resilient and innovative, sustains our environment and supports our economy.

The *Food Policy for Canada* will set a foundation for increased integration and coordination of food-related policies and programs. This will enable greater long-term planning, enhanced coordination by the Government, and improved accountability through regular reporting to Canadians on progress and achievements.

Food policy will bring diverse actors and stakeholders from across the food system together through the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council and will be supported by research and analysis to inform collaborative food system decision-making.

The policy consists of a vision, priority outcomes to achieve the vision, action areas to make progress on outcomes, and principles to help guide work on food system issues. Specific and measurable targets for each of the priority outcomes will also be developed by federal partners with input from the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council.

The *Food Policy for Canada* will be evergreen and adaptive. The policy is being launched as a platform that can be built upon over time as the Government of Canada continues to work collaboratively across all orders of government and with a broad range of organizations. To ensure the *Food Policy for Canada* is well-informed by diverse perspectives, ongoing engagement with the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council and with Canadians will also support further development of the policy.

Together, individuals, organizations, and the Government can work toward a future of food that is resilient, diverse, and abundant.

PRIORITY OUTCOMES: ACHIEVING THE VISION

Defined outcomes are needed to achieve social, health, environmental, and economic progress and measure results when addressing food issues. Six long-term interconnected and mutually-reinforcing outcomes have been identified to support better long-term planning for the Canadian food system. Enhanced coordination of existing, new, and future policies and programs across Government will help make progress toward these outcomes and achieve the food policy's vision.

1. **Vibrant communities:** Improved community capacity and resilience to food-related challenges.

Innovative community-led and community-based initiatives contribute to vibrant and resilient communities that support individuals and households facing immediate and long term food-related challenges by providing culturally diverse solutions in an inclusive manner.

2. **Increased connections within food systems:** Increased governance spaces and partnerships that connect multiple sectors and actors across the food system.

Increased collaboration on food-related issues across sectors of government, society, fields of work, and academic disciplines is a central component of food policy. Increased connections across the Canadian food system will strengthen our ability to make progress together on food-related issues and adapt to emerging needs.

3. **Improved food-related health outcomes:** Improved health status of Canadians related to food consumption and reduced burden of diet-related disease, particularly among groups at higher risk of food insecurity.

The food that Canadians eat is a key determinant of their health and wellbeing. Everyone involved in the food system can work together to make it easier for people living in Canada to have sufficient access to safe and nutritious food, maintain a healthy diet that is culturally diverse, and reduce the burden of diet-related disease.

4. **Strong Indigenous food systems:** To be co-developed in partnership with Indigenous communities and organizations.

The *Food Policy for Canada* will help advance the Government of Canada's commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, build new relationships based on respect and partnership, and support strong and prosperous First Nations, Inuit and Métis food systems – as defined by communities themselves.

5. **Sustainable food practices:** Improvements in the state of the Canadian environment through the use of practices along the food value chain that reduce environmental impact and that improve the climate resilience of the Canadian food system.

It is essential to maintain the health of our natural resources so that we can continue to provide food for future generations. Greater efforts to develop and maintain sustainable food practices will help make better use of natural resources, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and create efficiencies and financial savings across the food system.

6. **Inclusive economic growth:** Improved access to opportunities in the agriculture and food sector for all Canadians within a diversified, economically viable, and sustainable food system.

There is tremendous potential for economic growth within Canada's food system given the growing global demand for high-quality food that is nutritious and sustainably-produced. Canada is well-positioned to supply this demand while maintaining an increasingly diversified and inclusive food and agriculture sector.

FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS: SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION

Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council

The *Food Policy for Canada* will be supported by the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council. The Council will bring together diverse perspectives to support the implementation of the policy. The membership of the Council will include individuals with experience and knowledge of food system issues, with backgrounds in the food and agriculture industry, members of academia and civil society, as well as members of Indigenous organizations and communities.

The Council will incorporate diverse perspectives in its advice to contribute to building consensus on the nature of food challenges and solutions to address them, building greater trust among key food system stakeholders, and supporting the ability to collaborate across sectors. The Council will also help identify data gaps and opportunities.

Reporting on Results

To support the *Food Policy for Canada*, a cross-government reporting framework will measure and track progress towards priority long-term outcomes, holding the government accountable for results and ensuring transparent reporting to Canadians. It will also support decision-making that is based on evidence of effective approaches to tackling food system issues.

ACTION AREAS: TAKING ACTION TO ADDRESS KEY GAPS (2019-2024)

Four significant areas within food systems have been identified as key areas that require action in the short and medium term to support long-term outcomes. While initial actions reflect the most pressing needs and priorities for 2019-2024, future actions taken by the Government of Canada will consider emerging needs over time. The Government will take into consideration advice provided by the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council to identify future action areas.

1. Help Canadian Communities Access Healthy Food

Community-based initiatives will invest in projects that increase access to food, with the potential to provide social, health, environmental, and economic benefits in support of vibrant communities across Canada. The Government of Canada will also engage with provinces, territories, and key stakeholder groups to work toward the creation of a National School Food Program.

2. Make Canadian Food the Top Choice at Home and Abroad

Making Canadian food the top choice will include efforts to diversify exports, support food processors, and enhance the potential of Canadian agriculture and food products to stand out as safe and healthy in domestic and international markets.

3. Support Food Security in Northern and Indigenous Communities

Actions will advance efforts towards Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples by strengthening First Nations, Inuit, and Métis food systems, recognizing the importance of food to Indigenous culture and well-being, and, in so doing, supporting Indigenous food self-determination.

4. Reduce Food Waste

Actions to reduce food waste will support a shift toward more sustainable food practices. They will consist of a more systematic approach to reducing food waste in Canada by transforming operations for the processing, retail, and food service sectors, and reducing food waste within the federal government.

PRINCIPLES: GUIDING THE APPROACH

Overarching policy principles provide direction and guidance for action on food-related issues. Food system actors are encouraged to consider these principles in their work. These principles will guide the Government of Canada when designing and evaluating options for policies and programs with a direct impact on food issues.

Inclusion and Diversity

All people living in Canada are able to be part of an ongoing dialogue on food issues. Decisions are made after gathering and considering diverse interests and perspectives.

- **Culture:** Culturally diverse approaches to food and nutrition are important in recognizing our distinct cultural preferences and norms.
- **Gender:** Consideration is given to promoting and measuring progress on gender equality.
- **Community:** The role of food in bringing people together in all communities across Canada is acknowledged and supported, as is the active involvement of community-based organizations in developing and putting in place food strategies and initiatives. Given the diversity within Canada, decision-makers recognize the importance of support for community-based and community-led initiatives, and local capacity building.

Reconciliation

First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities in Canada have distinct food systems that have been nurtured and developed over many generations. Reconciliation begins by acknowledging how historic Government policies have disrupted these food systems, and ensuring that decision-making going forward:

- Adopts a **distinctions-based approach** to ensure that the unique rights, interests and circumstances of the First Nations, the Metis Nation and Inuit are acknowledged, affirmed, and implemented.
- Supports **Indigenous food self-determination**, meaning the ability of Indigenous peoples to define their own food systems.
- Takes a **holistic approach** that acknowledges that food is more than a product. For Indigenous peoples, it is the medicine that ensures their wellbeing; it is a way of sustaining culture and community; and, it is a way of reconnecting to the land.

- **Looks (seven) generations ahead** to assess the impact of current actions on future generations, and support intergenerational knowledge transfer.
- Promotes traditional **two-eyed seeing** to ensure that Indigenous knowledge and practices are considered alongside other forms of knowledge and evidence.

Collaboration

Improved integration across food-related policies and programs, as well as across the Canadian food system.

Collaborative approaches among governments, organizations and stakeholders, Indigenous communities, and individual Canadians are enabled. Dialogue among all orders of government is promoted while respecting jurisdiction. The Government of Canada works with the agriculture and food sector, organizations and stakeholders, and Canadians on a basis of mutual trust and transparency.

- Food policy goals are pursued in a way that recognizes the links among the social, health, environmental, and economic aspects of food issues, and across the elements of the food system (harvest, production, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal).
- Increased policy and program alignment is prioritized across food-related initiatives so that these are coordinated, coherent, and complementary to each other.

Innovation

A food system that encourages a broad approach to innovation and is adaptable as priorities shift.

- Adaptability is part of policy, program, and regulatory design. The policy process reflects a people-driven food system that is resilient and adaptive.
- Social and technological innovation that promotes progress on food policy outcomes is supported.
- Food policy outcomes and action areas evolve as consensus shifts on priorities and issues emerge over time.

Sustainability

A food system that supports social, cultural, environmental, and economic sustainability.

Decision-making supports sustainability, taking a broad perspective that integrates these considerations:

- Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- Supporting inclusive economic growth, that creates opportunities, raises standards of living, and promotes equality for all.
- Preserving cultural heritage including traditional knowledge and promoting cultural diversity and creativity.
- Fostering protection and conservation of the environment, including support for the adoption of practices and technologies that contribute to clean air and water, soil health, biodiversity, sustainable use of resources (e.g. greenhouse gas emissions, energy, farm inputs, and water) and climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Encouraging socially sustainable communities that strengthen connections among individuals through the acceptance and promotion of diversity, the protection of basic rights, and the availability of opportunities that support equitable outcomes.

Evidence and Accountability

Food-related policies and programs are evidence-based, transparent, accountable, and results oriented.

- Transparency guides implementation including through the sharing of data and reporting.
- The best available data, knowledge, and research are used to inform decision-making, including traditional forms of knowledge.
- Concrete actions are implemented with measurable targets and indicators.
- Indicators used to track progress are based on credible data.

TARGETS

Specific and measurable targets for each of the long-term outcomes will be developed with input from the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council. Evidence to measure progress toward the long-term outcomes and supporting targets will be addressed with assistance from the Council.

For example, sub-targets that could be further explored, with input from the Council, include reduction in the number of food insecure households in Canada, reduction of food losses along the food supply chain, and reduction of food waste within federal government facilities and operations.

Targets will also align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, such as:

- **SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), Target 2.1:** By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.
- **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), Target 3.4:** By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.
- **SDG 12 (Responsible Production and Consumption), Target 12.3:** By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses.
- **SDG 13 (Climate Action), Target 13.3:** Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

EXISTING COMMITMENTS

Federal actions towards achieving the *Food Policy for Canada* outcomes and supporting targets will also help meet existing Government of Canada commitments, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals mentioned above and goals set by the Agri-Food Economic Strategy Table.