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Chair: Mr. Kody Blois



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• (1530)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 20 of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Tuesday, March 1, 2022, the committee is commencing its study of the Main Estimates 2022-23.

I will begin with a few reminders.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021. The proceedings will be made available on the House of Commons website. For your information, the webcast will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee.

Screenshots or taking photos of your screen is not permitted.

[English]

Colleagues, that is again in the spirit of following the rules and regulations of the Board of Internal Economy as they relate to COVID-19 protocol.

It's great to see a committee room full again. It is starting to feel a little bit like normal. As was mentioned, we're going to be studying the main estimates.

We have our guests here today. We have our honourable minister, Marie-Claude Bibeau. Welcome, and thank you for your leadership and all your advocacy.

From the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, we have Sylvie Lapointe, vice-president, policy and programs branch. We also have Philippe Morel, vice-president of operations.

From the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food, we have Paul Samson, who is the associate deputy minister

Welcome, Mr. Samson.

We also have Marie-Claude Guérard, assistant deputy minister, corporate management branch.

Welcome to you both here in the room, and welcome to our guests online, Ms. Lapointe and Mr. Morel.

We're going to start with a statement from our minister for up to seven and a half minutes, and then we'll take it over for questions. The second hour is with officials.

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food): Thank you, Chair. It's good to be back in, as you said, a full room.

We are here to review Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's main estimates for 2022-23, which total over \$3.2 billion. These estimates reflect our government's significant commitment to the success of our farmers and food processors.

Over half of these estimates, more than \$1.8 billion, will support key programs under the Canadian agricultural partnership with provinces and territories, which drives sustainable growth, innovation, and competitiveness of the sector. That includes our business risk management programs, with over \$56 million to help farmers better manage risk through the elimination of the reference margin limit from AgriStability.

For this fiscal year alone, we are also committing over \$589 million to support our dairy, poultry and egg producers and processors as they adjust to the impact of European Union and trans-Pacific trade agreements.

The amount of \$137 million is to support and reward farmers for the adoption of environmental practices, including agricultural climate solutions and the renewed agricultural clean technologies program.

The estimates also include support to help potato growers in P.E.I. manage surplus potatoes due to the border closure. Mr. Chair, thanks to the collaborative efforts of the industry and government, on April 1, the U.S. border was reopened to P.E.I. table potatoes.

In the federal budget, we have committed a new investment of \$28 million through ACOA and CFIA to ensure the long-term sustainability of the potato industry on the island. While these estimates reflect the current financial picture, I want to stress that we can still commit to new spending this year, as the need arises, through supplementary estimates.

● (1535)

[*Translation*]

The situation in Ukraine has worsened since we last met. I saw the Ukrainian Minister of Agriculture at the G7 meeting in Germany last week and reiterated Canada's full support for Ukraine in its efforts to continue producing and exporting.

Since Ukraine is one of the leading global grain producers, the world has turned to other major producers, such as Canada, to take up the slack.

Our agricultural producers are prepared to accept the challenge but at the same time are facing higher input costs.

We are working with our partners and industry leaders to ensure our producers have ongoing access to fertilizer.

To help producers cope with cash flow problems this spring, we have amended the advance payments program so they can receive 100% of their advance, including the first \$100,000 without interest.

We have also extended the AgriStability deadline to help more producers manage the risks to which they are exposed.

Since we last met, we have continued to invest new funding to help Canada's agricultural producers reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and enhance their resilience to climate change.

In budget 2022, we have committed to allocating more than \$1 billion in new funding to help our producers reduce their carbon emissions and continue supplying us with food in a climate change context.

We are tripling our investment in the agricultural clean technology program and expanding the on-farm climate action fund.

We are investing \$100 million in science and research to promote the development of sustainable crops and technologies.

We are also adding \$150 million to cooperate with the provinces and territories in implementing the resilient agricultural landscape program.

Labour access is still a major challenge for the sector.

The 2022 budget reaffirms our commitment to ensuring that temporary foreign workers arrive on time and that they enter and stay in Canada in safe conditions.

We are investing more than \$150 million to reduce red tape so trusted employers can quickly hire workers to meet their short-term labour needs and provide better protection for workers.

We have also announced major improvements to the temporary foreign workers program, or TFWP, to enable food processor employers to hire up to 30% of their workforce through that program.

Although we are striving to meet current challenges, such as the avian flu, we are also keeping an eye to the future.

Together with my fellow provincial and territorial ministers, we continue to work with the industry to develop the next agricultural policy framework for the period from 2023 to 2028.

We had an excellent meeting earlier this month in preparation for our annual meeting, which will be held in Saskatchewan in July.

I am satisfied that, by working together, we can implement our common vision of ensuring that Canada continues to be a global leader in sustainable food production.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am ready to answer questions from members of the committee.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

I would like to take a moment to say that we have some Ukrainian interns in the room. They are here as part of a Canada-Ukraine program. There are 41 Ukrainian interns on Parliament Hill, and I want to thank them for their outstanding work.

We will now go to the period of questions.

Mr. Lehoux, you have the floor for six minutes.

● (1540)

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, Minister.

I want to thank you and the people accompanying you for being with us today.

Minister, you promised to begin negotiations on the Canada—United States—Mexico Agreement, or CUSMA, before the end of the year. As summer approaches, there are only four months left in which to do it. All industry players tell us that nothing has been done to date.

What's your timeframe, Minister?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: It's clearly stated in budget 2022 that we'll be providing all the information on compensation for poultry, dairy and egg producers and processors in the fall 2022 economic and fiscal update.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: That will go slightly beyond the first year.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: By a few days, no more.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: We know that the United States has challenged certain CUSMA measures. Each of the countries is claiming victory. It's always troubling to hear those kinds of remarks.

In addition, just last week, New Zealand said it intended to challenge import duties on dairy products.

What's your position on those challenges? How will Canada react?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: I assure you that we're taking this very seriously and that our position on defending our supply managed sectors remains firm. I recently had two conversations with Secretary Vilsack, the first by telephone and the second when we met at the G7 in Germany.

Minister Ng also published our response to the demands that an expert panel made regarding the questions the Americans had asked. We are still satisfied that the amendments we've made are entirely consistent with CUSMA and the panel's demands.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: In the same vein, a question was asked earlier about the baby formula shortage. That issue was in the headlines last week. Despite the concessions that were made under the last agreement, we now find ourselves in a situation where young Canadian families are short of baby formula.

You said earlier that you were closely monitoring the situation. What are we actually doing to meet the needs of young families?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: We've discussed the baby formula shortage in the United States at length. The situation in Canada isn't the same for various reasons. Our supply comes from a number of sources and various suppliers. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Health Canada are monitoring the situation very closely and exercising greater flexibility so we can import baby formula from other countries as needed to meet demand. Canadian needs in this regard are far less than those in the United States.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Some media outlets in the Montreal area reported last week on concerns about the shortage.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: That's often the case when people learn that these types of problems have occurred in other countries and quickly become concerned. Impulse buying can also occur and exacerbate a shortage situation, but we're in good shape here in Canada. We have many suppliers and are flexible about imports from countries we trust.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Thank you, Minister.

On another matter, I'd like to discuss the equally important labour shortage issue. You discussed it earlier in connection with the possibility that employers may hire more temporary foreign workers, especially in the processing sector. This is also a problem in the production sector, but the labour shortage is a glaring problem in the processing sector. Just yesterday, we learned that the

Olymel company had been forced to reduce the number of hogs slaughtered from 37,000 to 25,000 a week at just one of its plants.

We know there are agreements between Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and two other departments, Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion Canada and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

Is there a clear plan here? I haven't heard of any new workers going to work in those plants since the announcements were made in January.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Yes, Minister Qualtrough did announce a number of measures specifically for food processing plants. The idea is to increase the percentage of foreign workers at a single plant by 10% to 30%. There's also talk of increasing the length...

● (1545)

Mr. Richard Lehoux: We're announcing increases, Minister, but no one's coming in to work. That's not the problem. We hear you say you've relaxed certain practices, but that hasn't brought any more workers to our plants.

What's preventing that, Minister?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: We've really taken significant steps at the federal level to address the ground rules. We've allocated more resources to expedite file processing, which was previously done for producers and processors. The budget mentions additional resources that will help us move ahead with the trusted employers model. That measure will add flexibility and predictability for those employers, which are exemplary in the way they welcome their workers. The situation is really improving.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: I'm eager to see the actual result on the ground, Minister.

With regard to the 35% tariff on Russian fertilizer, we know that producers are starting to receive invoices. I could send you some that very clearly state the additional cost per metric tonne that tariff entails.

You answered my questions yesterday. The Prime Minister told me that support programs were in place. Minister, let's admit that these programs are financial support measures, loans that, once again, add to our farmers' debt.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Lehoux, but your time is up. Others may raise that question later.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Thank you, Minister.

The Chair: Mr. Turnbull, you now have the floor for six minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Minister and officials, thank you for being here today. It's always great to see you. Thanks for making time in your busy schedule to answer the committee's questions.

It's clear to me that Canadians are increasingly concerned about climate change. It's alarming, I think, what we've seen, which is an increase in extreme weather due to climate change. It has really devastated many of our farms and farm families in recent years. Whether it's floods in B.C. or droughts in the Prairies, there's no doubt that these events will continue and are likely to increase in number and severity.

Earlier this year, the Government of Canada announced its plan to reach its 2030 GHG emissions reduction targets. Significant money was dedicated to that in budget 2022. Can the minister explain how the agriculture sector will benefit from this new plan and how it will meaningfully participate in the fight against climate change?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Thank you.

You are so right. Our farmers are at the forefront. They are the first ones to be impacted by climate change. They are really committed to doing even better. We recognize that it has always been the priority for them to protect the environment. Actually, I was glad to see, in the last Statistics Canada survey, that two-thirds of our farmers have already started to adopt more sustainable practices.

We got more budget to expand our on-farm climate action plan, which is the one that provides direct financial incentives to farms that will adopt good practices, such as cover cropping, rotational grazing or better management of the fertilizer. We have also tripled the clean technology program, which was extremely well received for the first round. We can see that producers are eager to afford and to buy these new technologies. We are also investing in research and innovation to accelerate the development and commercialization of these technologies.

You've probably seen another program that will be coming, hopefully in collaboration with the provinces through the partnership agreement, which is the sustainable landscape program, a new program to increase the sequestration of carbon. We are really committed to supporting our farmers in adopting better practices and having access to new technologies that are energy-efficient.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Chair, I'll give the rest of my time to Ms. Valdez.

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Thank you.

Minister, I appreciate your being here with your officials to answer all of our questions.

As you mentioned in your opening remarks, Ukraine is a major producer of grains that feed many other countries. The food shortages that will follow after Ukraine's unjustified invasion will be a problem. You met with the G7 agriculture ministers to discuss those challenges. I wondered if you could share with us those challenges and if you discussed any ways that you can address them.

• (1550)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Thank you.

Yes, last week we were in Stuttgart, Germany, for the G7. Actually, the agriculture minister of Ukraine was with us for a full day. It was an opportunity for us to better understand the situation. They are still hopeful and confident about being able to produce in one part of the country, but obviously there are huge challenges. The port of Odessa is not accessible at this time, so they are looking for alternative routes to be able to export.

With the other G7 countries, here in Canada we are looking at how we can support them in terms of getting the grain from last season out and sold to countries who need it desperately. It's a very important issue. He also talked about the fact that agricultural infrastructure has been targeted and destroyed. Grain is being stolen and sold. The challenges are huge.

Canada is a country with a lot of experience in the area of grain production and exports, and we share some of the biggest companies—they're established in Canada and in Ukraine—so we already know the network. We are trying different strategies to support them.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Rechie Valdez: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: You still have about a minute left, Mrs. Valdez.

Mrs. Rechie Valdez: I just wanted to see if there was anything from your opening remarks.... This is an opportunity for you to speak to or answer any other questions that you might not have had the opportunity to answer earlier.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: There are so many things that come to my mind now.

Ukraine is a big producer of food. Countries are looking at us to step up and try to produce more next year, or actually this year, because unfortunately, with the drought we had last year, we don't have many surpluses, but we're really trying to step up for this season. According to the information we are getting from the industry, we expect, if the weather is on our side, to be able to produce about 7% more wheat. This is a demonstration that our Canadian farmers are stepping up to support food security in the world.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister and Ms. Valdez.

Mr. Perron, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the minister and officials from the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food for being with us today.

I'm going to continue the discussion on Ukraine. We've discussed the 35% tariff on Russia many times in this committee. Everyone agrees on the sanctions targeting Russia. However, the producers that placed orders and paid for them in the fall are being forced to suffer the consequences of the tariff.

Where are you in your analysis of this issue so these people can be exempted or compensated?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: You have to take action when you want to help an allied country that's in the throes of an entirely unjustified war, as is currently the case. We felt the best way to do that was to impose harsh sanctions on Russia. We therefore charged a tariff on all Russian goods. We nevertheless allowed fertilizers and fertilizer products to enter the country because we knew how much our producers needed them to maintain high production levels and meet demand, which will be greater this year.

We're also considering other strategies regarding our supply chain and research and innovation to ensure we don't find ourselves in the same situation in future and to become far less dependent on Russia. The customs tariff applies to all fertilizers imported into Canada.

However, we also want to acknowledge that our producers are facing a significant increase in input costs this year, particularly as a result of this tariff. We've made changes to the advance payments program, and we're also considering other options...

Mr. Yves Perron: I apologize for interrupting, but I have very little time.

You didn't really give me an answer concerning the orders that were placed before the sanctions were imposed.

Where do we stand there?

• (1555)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: The tariffs apply.

Mr. Yves Perron: So you've stopped working on it.

Is that correct?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: We're looking at other options to support our producers, but not in the form of...

Mr. Yves Perron: I see.

I think something has to be done.

Everyone's talking about grain exports. I contacted some other producers, serious people, who say they're troubled by the sharp increase in grain exports. The market's definitely attractive as a result of prices and other factors, but they're afraid there may be a shortage in Canada.

Have you come up with a plan to manage that?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: No, there's no plan. Canada can't intervene or start controlling trade movements. Furthermore, at the G7 last week, we thought that, if we wanted to contribute to food security around the world, we had to set an example and that we definitely shouldn't start closing our borders. That could snowball and have a much more harmful impact on food security.

Mr. Yves Perron: I've spoken to other producers who use grain to feed their animals. They're afraid there might be a shortage by the end of the year. I imagine the government has thought of that. I just want to reassure them by asking the question.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: I understood your question differently.

The grain industry generally is a private and independent sector where people communicate very well. We've seen how resilient our supply chain is. People talk to each other, get organized and are aware of the situation. We know there will be a higher demand for grain. So we see producers organizing to produce more wheat this year. I'm satisfied they'll be up to the task. We're also very transparent. We give them as much information as possible, which helps everyone make informed decisions.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you very much.

We'll wait to see what happens with the 35% tariff being imposed and with orders placed before the start of the war in Ukraine

Earlier, you spoke about the agri-stability program with Mr. Lehoux. You're saying that you are very hopeful about the meeting to be held in Saskatchewan.

Does this mean you're prepared to sign an agreement and that you're going to offer the 80% compensation rate that you proposed? Is that what we can expect?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: That's what I'm hoping for.

Mr. Yves Perron: Okay.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: We want to increase the compensation rate, as you know.

Mr. Yves Perron: That's a good answer.

On the environmental side, you're saying that you've developed new programs. We've been talking a lot with people from the sector, and the committee is currently conducting a study on that. People are hoping that the programs will be centralized as much as possible. They don't necessarily want fixed programs that would require completing forms, but would like to see more recognition for the positive steps taken by companies. You spoke about this at length earlier.

Are you considering the possibility of decentralizing programs as much as possible?

For new programs, are you taking into account what has already been done by farm producers, who have been innovative for many years now?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: There are several parts to that question.

In terms of program decentralization, under the On-Farm Climate Action Fund, we distributed funds to a dozen partners. They made proposals that were geographically adapted to their circumstances or to the sector they serve.

In Quebec, much of this went to the Union des producteurs agricoles, the UPA. It's a way of being more flexible by decentralizing programs to make them better suited to the producers' regional realities.

Mr. Yves Perron: What's happening with recognition for pioneers who have already made an enormous effort in their field?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Needless to say, the purpose of our investments is to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. We want to get people to move on to the next phase. We're not looking at the past, but determining how we could do even more to reduce our emissions and increase carbon sequestration. So the programs are developed with this objective in mind.

As you know, Environment and Climate Change Canada is developing a program under which carbon credits will be handed out. The program is still being studied, and I'm not in a position to give you any further details, but it could well be an additional opportunity to recognize these efforts.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Minister, but your speaking time has ended. I allowed you a little more time to answer the question.

Thank you very much, Minister and Mr. Perron.

Mr. MacGregor, you now have the floor for six minutes.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Welcome back to our committee, Minister. It's good to see you again.

My first question has to do with the news from April when the changes to the temporary foreign worker program were made. You presented an increase in the maximum duration of the position, the ability to hire up to 30% of the workforce in seven employment sectors, etc., and I know that in your mandate letter from December of last year you were given instructions by the Prime Minister to work with several of your cabinet colleagues, notably the Minister of Employment and Workforce Development and also the Minister of Immigration.

I know that most farms have a very solid relationships with their workers, but there have been reports from the National Farmers Union, and from the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change about the rights of those workers. They play such a critical role in our agricultural economy, but there have been instances of documented abuse.

Part of your mandate letter asks you to specifically strengthen the inspection regime to ensure the health and safety of temporary foreign workers. We want to ensure that everyone who comes here to work is treated with dignity and is paid appropriately for the work

they do and that they have the proper working and safety conditions.

Can you update this committee on how you're making out with that specific instruction in your mandate letter?

• (1600)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: I'm working on this, obviously, with Minister Qualtrough, and we've seen also in the budget that we have additional resources to put in place the trusted employer program. We are working on the criteria and what this trusted employer program will look like, but the idea behind it is really to incentivize all the employers to be even better employers and to reward those who are acting appropriately.

I think this will be an additional incentive for the employers to realize how important it is, and how it is to their benefit to give additional and even better conditions to their employees. I have absolutely no pity and no sympathy for the bad ones, and with Minister Qualtrough, because it's more under her authority, we are looking at the inspections, let's say.

We are trying to put this in place along with a clarification of our expectations regarding what it means to be a good employer. I think it's important to clarify that.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you for that.

Regarding our country's recent experience in going through two years of the pandemic, it is actually pretty amazing how well many of our sectors stood up to that extreme challenge. That said, though, when the Auditor General examined your department's response, it was recommended that the department complete a national emergency preparedness and response plan for a crisis affecting Canada's entire food system. Can you provide the committee with an update on what progress has been made on that?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: I would say that at this point we are more at the stage of evaluating what has been done and where we can improve—

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Is there anything specific, such as on the processing sector? Our committee's made recommendations to that effect. Not just the challenges but also the solutions are quite well documented. Is there any progress on that?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: No, I'm not ready yet. It's a work in progress. I'm not ready to respond, but I'll be happy to get back to you.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Okay. I'll move on, then.

I know that one of the items you want to move ahead with, too, is a fertilizer reduction strategy. I know that right now you're doing consultations, so nothing is firm at the moment. We have certainly heard expressions of concern from farmers. They are concerned that reducing the amount of fertilizer they can use could potentially impact their yields. I would argue, though, that there are also other ways of farming that can be employed quite successfully with a reduction in fertilizer use. It helps the farmers' bottom line and they also enjoy very healthy yields.

I know you're in consultation, but I also know that the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food is staffed by incredibly brilliant scientists. Have they presented to you any options on how to make this plan a feasible one?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Yes, we're working closely with the Department of Environment and the team at Agriculture Canada, obviously, with great scientists, as you said.

I just want to clarify one thing: It's not a reduction of fertilizer but a reduction of the emissions caused by it, just to be sure that everybody understands the same thing.

Yes, we are trying to do more, and are actually being ambitious. We have an ambitious target, but I think this is what we need to push us, all of us—the industry, the scientists, the businesses, the farmers—to really step forward and try to find new ways. I believe that with all the investments we are making in research and innovation, we will find new types of fertilizers or new practices that will help us achieve this goal.

Recently I had a conversation around our protein supercluster. There's something coming out of it that would bring us a new type of fertilizer that would generate fewer emissions. This is just one example. I'm very hopeful.

I think that by pushing ourselves into innovation in practices, technologies and inputs themselves, we'll find a path forward.

• (1605)

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

We'll now turn to Mr. Barlow for five minutes.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks, Minister, for coming.

I just want to make sure I'm clear on some of your answers. You will not be exempting the 35% tariff on any fertilizer purchased before March 2, is that correct?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: At this moment we're not contemplating this position. We're more looking at alternatives, at different options to support farmers.

Mr. John Barlow: Then no, you're not going to be offering that. From what I'm getting from your answer, your solution to this is expanding the advance payment program, allowing producers just to take on more debt. There's not going to be any specific compensation for that fertilizer tariff.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: We're working with the industry to really understand the needs, what sector and where, and what mechanism would be the most appropriate to support that.

Mr. John Barlow: Okay.

Is there any other G7 country enforcing a tariff on fertilizer?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: I don't think so.

Mr. John Barlow: No.

Knowing, from the COP26 announcement on fertilizer reduction, which you have changed to fertilizer emissions reduction, is this 35% tariff on fertilizer just another way to push fertilizer use reduction on Canadian producers?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: There are two different things here. On one side we are supporting Ukraine with severe sanctions on Russia, and we're being strong on that. On the other side we are—

Mr. John Barlow: Right, that no other G7 country is doing—

The Chair: Mr. Barlow, you asked a question. I know you have to manage your time—

Mr. John Barlow: But she's—

The Chair: I'll watch the clock, but let the minister please have her opportunity to respond.

Mr. John Barlow: Okay, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: On one side, we're supporting Ukraine; on the other side, we're being ambitious on reducing emissions because we know it's essential for the future of our agriculture.

Mr. John Barlow: Thank you.

If the issue is helping Ukraine, anything that was purchased before March 2 does nothing to help Ukraine.

We are in the midst of a food crisis. You've talked today about how we need to increase yields. Does it really make sense to decrease yields and decrease fertilizer use when we have to fill the void of losing 20% of the world's wheat, barley and sunflower oil production? Does that make sense to you?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: We're not reducing yields. We are supporting our farmers in different ways.

Actually, from the information I got, we expect to have 7% more wheat this year, if the weather is with us, obviously.

Mr. John Barlow: I'm going to share my time with Mr. Epp. Thanks.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's good to see you, Minister.

The pest management centre of AAFC provides critical data to the PMRA on behalf of farmers, and particularly farmers of minor crops, yet their budget has been flat for a decade. Inflation has chewed away at their effectiveness. Numerous positions are vacant.

Can you explain to the community if you intend to increase the number of reports and projects they can support? They've really decreased over the last several years because of those concerns.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: PMRA is an important component connected with the agriculture department. I don't have anything specific in mind, but I don't know if the—

Mr. Dave Epp: I'm sorry, Minister; PMC is the pest management centre under AAFC, not PMRA.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Okay, that was lost in translation.

Mr. Dave Epp: The industry's calling for another \$5 million just to get back to the capacity that they had earlier. That's a major concern of the industry.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: I'm sorry. I was lost in our acronyms.

I don't have additional budget in this budget, but this is something that we pay attention to.

Mr. Dave Epp: On August 4, the PMRA did announce a transformation process, and it is considering another layer of oversight. Dr. Gilles Saindon, the ADM for science and technology, testified at this committee. I asked him for a definition of citizen science, which has been touted as being an element of that oversight panel. He basically explained that it's citizens reporting disease outbreaks or insect outbreaks.

I'm hearing back from the industry is that this is not their concern. Their concern is that it's going to lead to a non-scientific avenue into our whole regulatory process, which is not good for Canada's reputation. How are you representing agriculture's concerns on this issue to Health Canada? Can you comment?

• (1610)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: I want to assure you that we definitely want this modernization to be strongly anchored in science. We know that farmers need inputs and fertilizer for good production and yields.

Minister Duclos is the lead on this, but I'm following it very closely. We have just completed a consultation, and a report will follow. I know that the agency is working on building the expert panel that will also support it.

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you.

One more—

The Chair: Mr. Epp, I'm sorry, but we're at time. I actually gave a little bit to be generous to you and the minister and to get the answers out.

We're going to go to Ms. Taylor Roy for five minutes.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you so much, Minister, for joining us again and answering our questions about the main estimates.

I will be sharing my time with my colleague Mr. Louis.

I have a couple of questions to do with what's happening with avian influenza and canola, and globally as well.

First, avian influenza has been reported in many countries—in Asia, in Europe and closer to us in the United States—and in seven of our provinces. I'm wondering if you could explain what happens when the flock of a farm is infected and whether the producers in this case are losing everything.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Thank you.

When producers see an animal that might be sick from avian influenza, they would call CFIA. The inspector would come in a very

rapid way, make the analysis and confirm. If it's confirmed that it's an avian influenza case, then there is a protocol that will be put in place. The other animals will most likely be depopulated. There is a whole process to make sure that it's done in the right manner. There is a zone that will be established around the farm to protect the region. Different measures will be put in place to avoid contamination.

To your question on whether they lose everything, with CFIA there is a compensation program. Farmers will be paid the market value of the animals that they have to depopulate. There is already a program in place for that.

I want to mention that biosecurity is extremely important. I recognize that our commercial farmers are taking it extremely seriously because avian influenza is a serious disease. This year apparently it came mainly from migratory birds, not from contamination from one farm to another. It just demonstrates that they are taking biosecurity measures seriously. I would encourage all of them—the small, medium and large poultry farms—to do so.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Thank you very much. I know it's hit close to home here with King Cole Ducks farms, so I appreciate that this is in place.

I believe that is about half the time I have, so I want to turn it over and give my colleague Mr. Louis an opportunity to ask questions.

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): That's very kind of you. I thank the member from Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

Thank you, Minister, for being here. It's a real pleasure to have you appear before the committee.

Every day food is wasted from farm to plate during production, processing and distribution, as well as in retail sales, food services and even at home. About half of Canada's food is wasted, and it has economic, environmental and social implications for the agri-food sector and for Canadians in general.

In my riding, Kitchener—Conestoga, we have a company I've met with many times called Enviro-Stewards. They take a holistic approach and work with other companies to focus on resource conservation, helping them earn higher margins with smaller footprints. The benefits are multi-fold; they help with food loss, energy efficiency and water efficiency as well.

Can you tell us the latest initiatives taken by the government to tackle the issue of food waste?

• (1615)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Thank you. You will remember that we have launched the food waste challenge. This is a very exciting initiative that will bring us new, innovative solutions in terms of business models and technology as well. In my mandate letter, we can see that there is a fund for food waste that will also follow these challenges.

We have a few examples of innovation that have been put in place and that we supported recently. In terms of packaging, we have recycling and composting of packaging materials. This is a project we have done with the Canadian Produce Marketing Association.

Recently in my region, we supported a business that uses food waste to feed flies to make protein and peat moss. This is another very concrete example of the type of project that we can support in terms of innovation to reduce food waste.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Louis.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Perron, it's over to you now for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to return to the 35% tariff on fertilizer ordered by producers before the war in Ukraine began.

As I understand it, you are still working on it and looking for a way to provide compensation.

Is that correct?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: We are looking for a way to support producers so that they can deal with high input costs and the tariff.

Mr. Yves Perron: Okay.

In the House today, I raised the subject of bees. Yesterday, the Union des producteurs agricoles gave a press briefing on this subject.

Have you begun discussions with its representatives?

I would imagine that the Union representatives met with you before making a public announcement and that you had discussions with the Quebec minister, Mr. Lamontagne. It is, after all, a Canada-wide problem.

Did that happen?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: You're absolutely right. We had several discussions with the industry and the provinces, and we acknowledge that it's a particularly difficult year in terms of bee mortality. We have ramped up our efforts to find safe sources for bees, both queen bees and others, from abroad.

Mr. Yves Perron: Do you mean nucleus colonies?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: That's it. I have trouble remembering the term.

We would like to import large quantities of bees from reliable sources. We would also like to facilitate transportation, which has become problematic since the drastic reduction in the number of

flights resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. We are really trying to facilitate this as much as possible.

I know that the Quebec beekeeping sector informed us of their requests yesterday. So we're going to study all that closely to try and identify needs and existing programs. We are in particular asking ourselves how we can become more resilient in the future so that the situation can improve rather than worsen from one year to the next.

Mr. Yves Perron: We'll be there to see the outcome.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: I'd like to add that in Prince Edward Island, people are working specifically on this in order to be able to meet demand.

Mr. Yves Perron: In his questions earlier, Mr. Lehoux mentioned the temporary foreign worker program. You've been promising changes forever, and we'd like an implementation date for these changes.

Could you tell us about one, at least?

In my riding, there is an asparagus producer who estimates his losses at \$150,000 after being forced to mow his fields. He had requested temporary workers in April in order to make sure they would be there in May, but nothing has happened yet.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: I can't give you a precise date, but I have money in the budget. I said "P", but once again, it's the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion who is responsible for this. It's really moving forward, and the budget now has the amounts required to implement the programs we have been working on for a long time.

Mr. Yves Perron: Excellent.

I believe I have 30 seconds left.

The Chair: Mr. Perron, your speaking time is up and I'm going to have to enforce the rule.

Mr. MacGregor, it's over to you now for two and a half minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, according to your governmental plan, I think there was a figure saying that 86% of Canadian farms were deemed financially healthy. You had the goal of a 90% figure, so you were close. What can you tell us about why you were not able to achieve your target?

Also, concerns have been raised, particularly by the National Farmers Union, about the amount of farm debt and how it has increased over the years. Typically, which farms and what sectors of Canada seem to be struggling at the moment? Does your department have a clear snapshot of those figures?

• (1620)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: We have to recognize that in the last two years, farmers have had to go through unexpected situations with COVID, obviously, but also with extreme weather events. These are reasons that could explain the challenges that some of our farmers are facing.

I think our government was and is still there to support them. Last year, we had the biggest budget for the federal agricultural department in history, with \$4 billion. I think this shows our commitment to supporting our farmers in these times of crisis.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Quickly, in the 45 seconds I have, last month I was invited by the Canadian Produce Marketing Association to attend its big convention in Montreal. It was very amazing to see the innovation that is going on with regard to packaging.

I know some of your cabinet colleagues are taking the lead on that, but do you have any updates on how you're working with the CPMA in particular in trying to drive that? I ask because it seems like there were some pretty amazing breakthroughs already on display on the trade floor.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Yes, I was impressed as well. This is the project I just mentioned about food waste. Recently we gave \$376,000 to the Canadian Produce Marketing Association, and it is one very concrete example of the investments we are making toward having packaging that is either compostable or recyclable.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister and Mr. MacGregor.

We are moving on now to the final round of questions. The Conservatives have five minutes, and the Liberals also have five minutes.

Mr. Barlow, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. John Barlow: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have just two quick questions and then I'm going to pass it off to my colleague Mr. Epp.

Minister, more than a year ago Health Canada said that gene editing and CRISPR technology were safe, but you wanted to do a reassessment. When is that gene editing framework going to be announced? We've been waiting for more than a year.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: I don't have a date for you yet. This is something we're working on, but I don't have a date.

Mr. John Barlow: We now have many farmers who are saying that their income taxes are being withheld from being processed as a result of Bill C-8, the carbon tax rebate, so they're not getting their income taxes done. Now the PBO has said the carbon tax is not revenue-neutral, doesn't reduce emissions and contributes to inflation. Therefore, wouldn't exempting the carbon tax from farm fuels like propane and natural gas be a much more efficient, easier, more beneficial and smarter way to go for farmers?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: I would start by saying it would be good if we could get Bill C-8 approved. We could process the in-

come tax returns of our farmers and we could send them the cheque for that.

You know our position on the price of pollution. We believe, and it's based on experience, that it is one of the most significant ways to reduce emissions. We have a historic budget to support our farmers in pivoting toward more sustainable technologies and practices.

Mr. John Barlow: The farmers who are waiting for their income tax refund are getting \$200 or \$300. That is far below what they're actually spending on the carbon tax, so it's not revenue-neutral.

I'll pass it over to my colleague. Thanks.

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you.

I'm going to go back to the Pest Management Regulatory Agency, PMRA. I was very encouraged to hear you say that this new oversight layer will be based on science. Did I hear correctly? Will it be only scientists who will be populating this expert panel?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Yes.

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you. I'm pleased to hear that.

The August 4 announcement also put a pause on minimum residue limits, or MRLs. MRLs aren't established until all the health and safety concerns are addressed, and then they are basically a trade facilitation process. We have Codex internationally, which tries to harmonize all the world standards around that. Can you tell me what representations Ag Canada is making or you are making to the Minister of Health to get this moving and get this pause lifted?

• (1625)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: We are moving actively. The consultation is done. I've been told the panel has identified almost all the experts, so it will be announced shortly. We are moving forward on this issue.

Mr. Dave Epp: I appreciate that answer on the expert panel, but now I'm talking about minimum residue limits and the setting of those minimum residue limits. That's something apart from the registration process. It's a part of it, but it's done afterwards. That's paused; it's done after health and safety concerns. Why is that being paused?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: We said we wanted to look at the framework under which the PMRA is working, keeping it science-based, obviously. However, the law dates back to 2002, if I remember well, and we really felt that it had to be looked at and possibly modernized. The consultation has been done. I haven't seen the result of the consultation yet. It's just been completed. This is the process that is ongoing, and we have said that until we have completed this process, we will put the pesticide residue limit on pause.

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you.

I'm going to switch to the topic of the grocery code of conduct. The fresh produce sector, the fresh food sector and the manufacturing food sector, just to bring some context around it, are larger than our auto sector in Canada. It is a huge sector. I have been hearing from food manufacturers, as recently as this morning, and from the fresh food sector. They're really emphasizing the need for a grocery code of conduct with integrity—to quote their words, one that “has teeth in it”—when it comes to a dispute resolution mechanism.

I understand there are aspects of this that are provincial in nature. However, how are you going to ensure that we have some unanimity across this country? No food manufacturer wants 10—or 13, depending on how you count—frameworks dealing with a code of conduct.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Yes. This is why we have put in place a committee with all the representatives of the different stakeholders in the industry. They are working on it right now. This has been requested by the FPT agricultural ministers. Minister Lamontagne and I are following this.

We have received the first report, the first high-level recommendation for the code of conduct, and now we have asked for a more concrete action plan to be presented to us during our meeting in July. We have also provided this committee the resources—the secretariat support—to make sure they are moving forward, and they are. I know that they have added new members on this committee, people who are really in the day-to-day business, not only the top management but those who really know how this business is being done day to day. I'm hopeful and confident that they will come forward with a very concrete action plan by July.

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you. I will be raising this issue again, but I know my time is up.

The Chair: That's your privilege. Thank you, Mr. Epp.

Thank you, Minister Bibeau.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Turnbull, you have the floor now for five minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thanks, Chair.

I know that Canada is definitely a world leader when it comes to agriculture and agri-food, but I get really excited when we talk about innovation. In the work of this committee, we have undertaken several studies that have highlighted some really impactful innovations, whether it be research in soil science that can help to preserve the health of our soils, vertical growing, aquaponics, artificial intelligence or compostable packaging. There are so many opportunities for innovation.

I notice in the main estimates that there's a fairly large budget allocation of \$711 million. Just as a starting question, how does that break down in terms of programming? I wonder if you or your departmental officials could help break that down for us.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: I can talk about the high-level programming, but if you want to have the details of the breakdown, maybe Marie-Claude is ready.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

If my memory serves me correctly, approximately \$700 million were spent on scientific innovation programs.

[*English*]

As she looks at the figures, if that's what you're asking for, I will say that we are investing in science and innovation through different channels.

For example, we talked about the clean technology program. There is one stream for research and innovation. We also have the agriscience mechanism under the federal financing of the Canadian partnership agreement.

We invest in research and innovation through different streams. As you know, under the innovation department as well, we are supporting more of these innovative solutions. The supercluster is another way. It's out of the \$700 million.

Maybe during the second round with the officials you can ask this question again and get the details of the \$700 million.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you, Minister.

Maybe I could also follow up and ask which new innovations and leading practices in the industry you think have the most potential for achieving and building a more sustainable food system in Canada.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: There are a lot. I mentioned it quickly earlier, but I would say that I was very excited when I learned that out of the protein supercluster there is one initiative around fertilizer made out of canola residue that looks very promising.

I think that everything related to having seeds that are more resilient to drought or to pests is also very important, as is research around animal feed. I have in my own riding a research farm. They are working on feed for pork and dairy cows. It's interesting to see the potential around that to reduce methane. They also have something around the biodigesters. There is a lot of very exciting innovation, I would say, in the sector.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: That sounds great. Thanks.

I'm very excited about those innovations, especially when they intersect with our climate action as a government. I think we can see benefits across the industry and also in achieving benefits to build a more sustainable food system.

Are there any initiatives in building more regional food systems across Canada and working on the resiliency of our supply chains? Could you speak to those?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Yes. You will remember the local food infrastructure fund that we've launched. The idea behind this fund actually came out of the Food Policy for Canada plan. We have supported a lot of community organizations across the country to enable them to buy some specific equipment to strengthen their local food organizations. We recently launched the last call, and actually we have decided to focus this \$30 million on remote communities and indigenous communities. It will be less directed towards one small organization in a region but more on trying to encourage these communities to work as a group within a community, to build a group and give them the means to strengthen their local food infrastructure.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister and Mr. Turnbull.

I'd like to thank you, Minister, on behalf of the committee, for the work you are doing and for the leadership you have demonstrated in the course of our study on agriculture and agri-food, which is of concern to Canadian farmers and producers.

We wish you a pleasant evening.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Thank you, and I wish you all a pleasant evening as well.

[English]

The Chair: Colleagues, we're going to take a two- or three-minute break to let the minister and some staff and folks of that nature exit the room, so grab your coffee or grab a quick drink. We're going to come right back, so don't go too far.

• (1630)

(Pause)

• (1635)

The Chair: Colleagues, thank you. We're back. We have officials from CFIA and the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food. I know you're still getting settled in, but please just be mindful of the noise, including Mr. Drouin, my good colleague.

We're going to get right into questions for six minutes. We're going to start with the Conservatives.

Mr. Falk, I believe you are up for six minutes. Let's please keep the noise down in the room.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the officials for joining us here this afternoon. I'm looking forward to our discussion. Having the minister here was very interesting as well.

Just to start off, I'm wondering if there are any sectors of agriculture that the department views as higher priorities than others. For instance, is cropping more important than the livestock industry or are there certain aspects of farming that deserve more attention than others?

Mr. Paul Samson (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food): Thank you, Chair.

I'll get right into the member's question. As the member perhaps knows, there are programs that support virtually every sector of the agriculture production system in Canada, so I think the answer to that question is no, we don't have priority sectors per se because

we're supporting everything. However, a number of the programs are designed to respond to those sectors that need the most assistance at a given time, so they're responsive programs in that sense.

Mr. Ted Falk: Thank you, Mr. Samson.

Just as a follow-up to that question, Bill C-234 passed second reading. It will find its way to committee later on and we'll be discussing that bill further. Can I safely assume that the department will be advising the minister to treat all sectors of agriculture fairly and expand the carbon tax exemption to the heating of livestock facilities as well as to grain drying?

• (1640)

Mr. Paul Samson: If you're referring to Bill C-234 specifically, the government is putting a price on carbon pollution as a critical part of the action plan, and that bill will continue to be debated. I won't refer to the advice that we're proposing to the minister at this point.

Mr. Ted Falk: Okay.

Various sectors of our supply management system have received compensation for the different trade agreements that we've had. When it comes to CPTPP and to CUSMA and others, the dairy sector of supply management has received direct compensation, whereas the poultry sector has received compensation with strings attached, meaning that they must spend money on upgrades or improvements in order to access any compensation. Is there any particular reason that this was done?

Mr. Paul Samson: Mr. Chair, the government has been clear in the overall approach to compensation. The individual compensation agreements were reached through consultation with the different groups of producers and processors. There was a decision made jointly about the best approach. In some cases there was more interest in receiving an investment-style program; in other cases there was more interest in receiving a direct payment program.

Based on all of the different considerations that were taken into account, the programs were designed in different ways. There were certainly extensive consultations on those designs.

Mr. Ted Falk: Thank you, Mr. Samson.

The minister, when asked about the whole concept of increasing crop production but decreasing the use of nitrogen fertilizer, did provide a clarification: It was a reduction in carbon emissions related to the fertilizer that she was after. Can you expand a little bit further on how exactly the department would see increasing yields while decreasing the use of nitrogen fertilizer?

Mr. Paul Samson: Certainly. I think to underline the point the minister was making, the targeted reductions are in the emissions associated with fertilizer use rather than the use itself, as I think you noted. There are a number of ways of getting at that. The minister also mentioned some new fertilizer types that are being prototyped for use. I think there simply are ways to use it a little more efficiently. We see a number of options there that can be worked out.

The consultations are under way as to how that plan will be implemented. We don't have something that we're pushing through. This will very much be a joint approach with producers.

Mr. Ted Falk: Thank you, Mr. Samson.

My final question is on the whole aspect of honey and bees. We know that bees are important for not only the production of honey and our honey industry but also the pollination of many crops. We saw some severe winterkill this year. The minister alluded to some safe regions being considered for the importation of bees from those regions. Can you update this committee on how that's going?

Mr. Paul Samson: Chair, I thank the member for his question.

From the information that I've seen, we do understand that mortality is an issue this year. The minister mentioned also that it has been a challenge logistically during COVID-19 because of fewer flights and some restrictions, but the number of bees coming into Canada looks to be steady. We're not seeing a significant reduction in our ability to bring bees in—queen bees that are brought in specifically, as well as these packets of worker bees. Both of those channels still exist. Those bees are coming into the country.

We'll certainly be monitoring that situation carefully. If we feel that there is a shortfall, we'll look at ways to resolve it. In fact, we are looking at additional opportunities there. I know that the CFIA is working intensively on this issue to see what other options there would be if we need them.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Falk. We're at time.

Mr. Louis, we'll turn to you now.

Mr. Tim Louis: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that. You know what? In reciprocity, I'll share my time with the member from Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

I want to thank the minister and associate deputy minister for their time and expertise today.

The agriculture sector has the biggest use of fresh water. I know how important it is to protect water for our farmers. I've had town hall meetings with farmers and other environmentalists, and we all agree that everyone wants to do their part. Protecting our water is very topical in my region and very important in Kitchener—Conestoga and throughout Canada.

On farms, we talk about surface runoff from pesticides, fertilizers or manure or of nitrogen leaching into groundwater, which eventually finds its way into our lakes and rivers and oceans. Again, I know that our farmers want to do their part for water quality. They're looking for support to make that step. Can you address how

the government is supporting our agriculture sector to protect and manage our water resources in a sustainable manner?

Mr. Paul Samson: I think there are a couple of things to note here.

Certainly water is a priority for the Government of Canada and in the agriculture space for sure. You know that there's a commitment to create a new Canada water agency and to sustain the freshwater action plan. Up to \$438 million has been allocated to this in the context of the federal-provincial cost-sharing programs, as water is a prioritized area of expertise and area of action.

One final point is that the department is working on a green agriculture plan that would integrate the importance of water into climate change and some of these other priority programs that are taking place now.

Mr. Tim Louis: Besides protecting water, our small communities, rural areas and farmers have to protect themselves from water sometimes. For climate-related risks such as floods and droughts, are there other supports in the budget that we can work with for the agriculture sector?

Mr. Paul Samson: I think a good example of the response is the AgriRecovery program, which is for the negative side of water, like flooding, and getting on top of managing water issues in that sense. That program was used significantly in British Columbia last year.

Mr. Tim Louis: Thank you.

Chair, I'd like to cede my time to the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

The Chair: Great.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the member for Kitchener—Conestoga for sharing his time.

I had a question regarding the departmental plan for 2022-23. I noted that it's considering changing policies and programs ahead of the next agricultural policy framework “to stimulate the adoption of sustainable practices to help reduce emissions, increase resiliency particularly for agricultural soils, reduce risks, and open up new opportunities for producers.”

We all know how important the agricultural sector is in helping us fight climate change, especially with carbon sequestration, but I'm wondering what specific changes the department is considering that would encourage farmers to do even more to adopt climate-friendly practices and some of the new ones that have been introduced.

Mr. Paul Samson: I'm just looking here to give you the full details to respond to your question.

The minister mentioned one specific program of \$150 million, the resilient agricultural landscape program. Right now it is one of the programs being negotiated with the provinces and territories in the context of the next policy framework. There are a whole series of programs in the climate change space. If you add them up, over \$1 billion is invested in on-farm agriculture solutions, clean technology programs—both R and D, and adoption programs immediately—and R and D spending.

• (1650)

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Thank you so much.

I want to follow up on that. I know the United States Department of Agriculture, the USDA, requires producers who participate in its federal crop insurance program to comply with certain conservation requirements—for example, not planting crops on highly eroded land or converted wetlands.

Would the department consider pursuing similar requirements for business risk management in Canada?

Mr. Paul Samson: There is already an existing mechanism in the federal-provincial-territorial framework for environmental plans. They are fairly widespread in use but are not mandatory and are not used by the majority of producers. That is one of the discussions in the federal-provincial negotiations: How can those plans be used? Are they valuable to link to certain programs? What kinds of incentives can be created?

What the member is noting is very much one of the active conversations in the federal-provincial negotiations.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Samson and Ms. Taylor Roy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Perron, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to get back to the questions that were asked earlier.

Mr. Samson, I don't know to what extent you would be able to answer my question about temporary foreign workers.

How can we harmonize the federal and the Quebec process? I know that it's very complex. Producers have to go through the Quebec process, and then go through it once again with the federal government.

Have you had discussions with Quebec about simplifying the process as part of the reform we've been promised?

Mr. Paul Samson: Thank you for the question.

There are lots of discussions between Canada and the provinces, including Quebec. However, as the minister said, there are not as many on this subject with Quebec's department of agriculture, fisheries and food. That's part of the broader framework the minister mentioned earlier. That's about all I can say on this.

Mr. Yves Perron: Earlier, you mentioned assistance with bees and solutions you are trying to find in order to import bees.

Are you envisaging the possibility of providing emergency financial assistance to producers for them to renew the bee population so that it will be at a respectable level for next year?

Mr. Paul Samson: As I was saying earlier, based on our analyses, the system is still relatively stable in terms of bees. We still have partnerships in place for imports. We are closely monitoring potential shortcomings or problems that might arise, and are prepared to increase financial assistance to respond as required.

For the time being, we're convinced that things are going fairly well.

Mr. Yves Perron: Can you tell us about the negotiations that were held with Great Britain for it to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and the negotiations that were held to renew the bilateral agreement between Great Britain and Canada? It was the former that was quickly renewed during the last Parliament.

People are worried, particularly about production subject to supply management. Great Britain was exporting a lot of cheese here under the agreement with Europe.

Can you give us any details about this to reassure our producers?

Mr. Paul Samson: It's the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development who is the lead minister on this.

However, I think that the government clearly indicated that it was going to keep a strong supply management system and that it was not going to suggest a solution that was not in Canada's interests. I don't have any other updates I could give you.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you, Mr. Samson.

I'd like to take advantage of the fact that representatives of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency are here to return to what Mr. Barlow was saying when he addressed the matter of genome editing and talked about some studies in this area.

The process is still under review, but it's still somewhat obscure. I'm not necessarily against the use of genome editing, but many people have told us of their concerns about how it is being done and how it would be monitored afterwards.

Ms. Lapointe, could you comment on the process?

• (1655)

Ms. Sylvie Lapointe (Vice-President, Policy and Programs, Canadian Food Inspection Agency): Thank you for the question.

We are currently reviewing our regulatory guidelines on genetic modification and technologies related to genome editing. We held some broad consultations last year and are now doing some follow-up work with stakeholders who have given us their comments.

As you may know, the points of view are rather divergent. Before publishing these new guidelines, we want to make sure that they are based on the best available scientific advice, that they are transparent to Canadians, that they are predictable for people in the industry and that they encourage innovation.

Mr. Yves Perron: Do you have a timeline for this process? When will it be finished and when do you intend to announce it?

Ms. Sylvie Lapointe: We don't have a date yet, but there's a lot of discussion at the moment with the various parties.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you, Ms. Lapointe.

I have some questions now for the department's representatives.

Have you had any in-house discussions about small-scale production of things like mead and cider, which might be affected by the excise tax owing to the complaint made by Australia?

Have you done any work on this? Can we expect a measure or an exemption for these products?

Mr. Paul Samson: The Department of Finance is entirely responsible for the tariff. We don't have anything to do with it.

Mr. Yves Perron: Okay.

With respect to...

The Chair: Mr. Perron, you have only 30 seconds left.

Mr. Yves Perron: It's difficult to find the right wording for a question in 30 seconds, Mr. Chair. Thank you for warning me and I think we'll wait and take two minutes and 45 seconds on the next round.

The Chair: We could do that.

Mr. MacGregor, you now have the floor for six minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Samson, my question follows the subject matter that Ms. Taylor Roy was talking to you about. She was talking to you about the next agricultural policy framework. It's trying to stimulate the adoption of sustainable practices.

With regard to the term "sustainable practices", how do you define those terms? Is it by metrics? Are you trying to achieve a certain level of carbon sequestration or a reduction in fertilizer use or pesticide use? Those terms can be very open to interpretation, so could you elaborate a bit more? If we're to understand these terms from the department's point of view, it would give a better sense of how those goals could actually be put into place.

Mr. Paul Samson: Yes, there is a focus on sustainability in the next policy framework. The Guelph statement, which came out in November of last year, showed the ambition there.

In terms of how to define sustainability, it is a bit broader than just pure environment, but there are discussions under way about how to define and quantify the emission reductions, for example, to be clear on the objectives and the results that would be achieved. Those numbers have not been finalized, but they're under discussion.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Are they going to focus, do you think, exclusively on emissions, or will there be other factors at play? Maybe a farm would be able to reduce its pesticide use through alternative management practices, etc.

Mr. Paul Samson: Yes, there will certainly be other factors in play, because the approach is one of flexibility for provinces to design their approaches, and in some cases other environmental priorities will absolutely be part of it.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Perfect.

Carrying on, business risk management programs are a big part of the next policy framework, and our committee has done a study on them.

What has the department learned, particularly in the context of climate disasters? What's the main feedback you've been getting from farmers on how BRM programs have or have not worked?

Knowing that extreme weather events are going to be more common in the future, where's the discussion headed on how BRMs might have to be tweaked in order to properly respond to the challenges that are inherent in 21st century agriculture, particularly in the context of climate change?

• (1700)

Mr. Paul Samson: The business risk management suite is designed to have a holistic approach to the kinds of risks that were noted. There's an AgriInsurance component, which provides a form of crop insurance. There's AgriStability, which responds to income loss or other shocks to the system. There's AgriRecovery, which was the tool used to respond to drought and flood. There's AgriInvest, which is essentially a matching fund for producers to use to draw quick liquidity.

We're looking at all of those to identify the best response, and there is certainly a recognition the system is evolving in terms of the types of risks and frequency, so that is very much a factor in terms of assessing all of those programs and making adjustments.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I think it was in 2019 that I had the opportunity to go to the Okanagan and visit AAFC's Summerland Research and Development Centre. The scientists there were so very kind in giving us a tour and explaining a bit about the important work they were doing.

One of the shocking things I found out, though, was the number of novel pests and diseases we import every year. Could you inform the committee what kinds of trends we are seeing? Is the danger from novel pests coming into Canada increasing? How are you coordinating with other departments, both in detection and isolation, so that vast sectors of our agricultural economy are not affected in a negative way?

Mr. Paul Samson: I'll first offer a comment and then turn to colleagues from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency who may wish to add something, because it's a critical issue for them.

Clearly we are operating in a more globalized setting in terms of trade and the movement of people and things, so there have been some increased risks of transmission. I would just note that by way of a broad context.

Sylvie or Philippe, would you like to comment on the CFIA's assessment on this situation?

Mr. Philippe Morel (Vice-President, Operations, Canadian Food Inspection Agency): Thank you. Yes, we can certainly add to this.

It's a very important activity for us at ports of entry to look for new species or new diseases that can come with some imported products. I can give you the example of wood imports coming in with certain species that are not welcome. The Asian moth in the west is one of them that we have to destroy.

It takes many years to track and destroy and contain these to an area where we can get rid of those invasive species that can be very costly for our economy. The identification, prevention and destruction of those species are key to support the economy and to make sure that they don't get into areas where we don't want them to be.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor. Thank you, Mr. Morel.

Colleagues, here's how we're going to play this: We are going to go for a 15-minute round of five minutes for the Conservatives, five minutes for the Liberals, and two and a half each for the Bloc and NDP. I'm going to exercise one question, because I enjoy asking them. Then we're going to go to estimates and we'll be done for the day.

Mr. Barlow, you have five minutes.

Mr. John Barlow: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I may split my time with my colleagues here. I'll see how fast I can get through.

This is for the CFIA. The avian influenza certainly is a huge issue for chicken producers across the country. In Alberta, we've had some producers who've been waiting for up to two weeks for CFIA to come on farm to depopulate. My understanding is that this should be done within 36 hours to contain the spread of the flu. It is obviously a big concern if we're waiting for up to two weeks.

What steps has CFIA been taking to try to address this situation to ensure we can contain this outbreak?

Mr. Philippe Morel: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question of the member.

The first thing we have to do when there's an outbreak of avian influenza is to make sure that the birds are contained and don't move. That is usually done after we receive an indication that the disease could be present on the farm. Usually, it's done when either a local veterinarian or a farmer notices a large number of animals that are sick or dying—

● (1705)

Mr. John Barlow: Yes, I appreciate that, Mr. Morel. I'm sorry, but I have only a limited amount of time.

Is CFIA taking some steps now, seeing as some producers are waiting up to two weeks for CFIA to come on farm to do the depopulation? Are there some concrete steps being taken to address that situation?

Mr. Philippe Morel: At the moment, right now we have close to 700 of our employees, which is more 10% of the agency, deployed to specific sites. We have 89 sites that are active at the moment, so we go by priority, but we make sure first that the biosecurity is there, that the birds are not moving, and as fast as we can go, we have more people deploying to every site to make sure they don't wait too long.

Mr. John Barlow: Thanks.

Mr. Samson, my next question is for you.

I've been speaking with potato producers in P.E.I. They've now been told that the disaster funding they received as a result of the export ban is now going to be considered income and could have a pretty profound impact on their AgriStability. Is that true?

I just want to make sure that this is truly the case. If it is, what impact would that have on their AgriStability, not only for this season but potentially for years to come?

Mr. Paul Samson: Thanks, Chair, for the question.

Typically, most Government of Canada programs—I think the vast majority—are counted as income when received, so therefore, if there's another program that comes later, as in the case of AgriStability, it will count that previous program payment as income.

This happens quite regularly with the AgriStability program. It's not a big disruption if a producer has had a very significant loss that year. That kind of program support should not crowd out in a significant way the other support that would be received. It's done in a balanced manner.

Mr. John Barlow: Thanks.

I'll turn it over to Mr. Epp.

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you.

The Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act exempted on-farm gasoline and diesel. Greenhouses received an 80% exemption, but mushrooms nothing. Bill C-8 obviously is proposing a rebate, and Bill C-234 is proposing an exemption. In broad strokes, can you comment on the impact between the three different processes for mushrooms and for the greenhouse industry?

Mr. Paul Samson: Chair, I thank the member for the question.

I wouldn't really be able to comment on the dynamics of the difference between those three. We can certainly give you something in writing if you'd like an answer to that question.

Mr. Dave Epp: I would very much appreciate that. Thank you.

I've been hearing a lot of concerns from the industry that there's the potential for pulling agriculture out of the temporary worker program and putting it into some form of its own stand-alone. They're concerned that perhaps ESDC does not fully understand the importance of the seasonal agriculture worker program. What kind of representations are you making over to EDSC on the seasonal agriculture program and its component as a stand-alone entity?

Mr. Paul Samson: There is a very close relationship between the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food and ESDC, and certainly on this program. I think they understand the importance of the agriculture sector, particularly coming out of COVID-19 and the food security issues that have arisen. We are arguing strongly for the strong recognition of that group of workers coming in and are not sensing that there's a disconnect, if I can put it that way. I think we're well positioned.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Epp and Mr. Samson. That's time, unfortunately.

Ms. Valdez, you have five minutes.

Mrs. Rechie Valdez: Thank you, Chair. I'll be sharing my time with my colleague from Whitby.

Again, thank you to the witnesses.

Mr. Samson, we touched on this earlier, but I want to see if you can comment on the situation in Ukraine as it pertains to the way in which it's impacting Canadian fertilizer. Is there anything we can do to mitigate the risk and produce fertilizer locally?

Mr. Paul Samson: The way that fertilizer is organized, let's say, in Canada is really quite different depending on the region. The western part of Canada is completely self-sufficient in fertilizer, both the nitrogen fertilizer and the potash, which is a huge export for Canada. There's a regional difference. The outbreak of the war in Ukraine highlighted that eastern Canada imports nitrogen fertilizer into the country, and a little bit over 30% of their fertilizer comes in that way.

I'm pleased to announce that the last of the fertilizer-laden Russian vessels that were coming to the eastern part of Canada were approved to come in. Those did come in as planned this year. Companies are now positioning to not use Russian fertilizer going forward, because there are a lot of other options. As the member noted, there are also plans being looked at as to how we could increase production in the eastern part of Canada or transport additional fertilizer from the western part of the country.

• (1710)

Mrs. Rechie Valdez: Thank you.

I'll hand it over to my colleague.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thanks, Chair.

Again, Mr. Samson, thank you for all your answers here.

I'm interested in asking a few questions about the new agricultural policy framework. I've looked at the Guelph statement. I'm very happy with it. I just wanted to ask you and confirm this from your perspective: Did that work really outline the fact that the new agricultural policy framework will be centred on a sustainable development lens in terms of how it approaches agricultural policy for the next five years?

Mr. Paul Samson: Chair, I'd like to thank the member for the question.

The framework, just to remind members, is a \$3-billion framework that is coming to its renewal next year. What's being negotiated right now is the next five years, starting in 2023. The lens is to drive sustainability, innovation, economic growth and competitiveness. All of those are important, but we've elevated in the conversation, as the member noted, through the Guelph statement, a focus for additional work on sustainability. That's where the budget announced \$150 million of new money for the resilience agriculture and landscapes program, as an example of that direction.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you.

I'm wondering where we are in terms of the process. How close are we, and where are we, in terms of consultations and conversations with provinces and territories? I'm assuming that they are part of that process, and a pretty essential part.

Mr. Paul Samson: Ministers have already met a number of times on this framework. The next meeting of ministers will take place in early June. That will be a conversation. The big ministerial event will be in the third week of July in Saskatchewan, which is the host province this year. At that time, ministers are expecting to finalize a number of elements, if not all elements, of the framework, and at that moment they would have a launch of the next framework, which would start in 2023, as I mentioned.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you.

We've had some conversation about ecosystem services as well as calls from some of the industry players and organizations to say that we need to reward agricultural practices that are preserving our environment, protecting biodiversity and being more efficient with the natural resources they rely upon.

Is having a way to reward farmers who are adopting the best possible practices being considered within the new agricultural policy framework?

Mr. Paul Samson: As I mentioned before, a lot of the programs do have an integrated lens on both climate change and environment and do take an ecosystems approach or value the ecosystem services. An example of that would be the on-farm climate program, which is very much about the sustainable management of the land, which will bring benefits for biodiversity, soil, conservation—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Samson. I apologize. I even gave you a few extra seconds, but I want to make sure we get to Mr. Perron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Perron, please go ahead for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

In connection with the food processing committee's regional studies, there was much discussion about the need to improve processing capacity in the regions, particularly slaughter capacity.

We've been talking about the environment a lot since the beginning of today's meeting. There's something illogical about transporting animals for hundreds and even thousands of kilometres.

Where do you stand in terms of the plans to develop a program that would facilitate the establishment of new facilities?

• (1715)

Mr. Paul Samson: Thank you for the question.

I believe that is indeed a key question, a strategic question. But I think it's mainly one for the representatives of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. I will therefore give the floor to my colleagues.

Ms. Sylvie Lapointe: Thank you.

You may know that one of the priorities of Minister Bibeau and his provincial and territorial counterparts is facilitating internal trade, particularly for slaughter activities.

In keeping with the Guelph Statement, one of the priorities we need to work on is drafting a report on progress. The report will be sent to the minister in July.

We have had many discussions with several provinces to introduce pilot projects and explore the opportunities available to us, particularly with respect to slaughterhouse capacity in communities located near the border between two provinces.

I think that by July, we will have made more progress to report on with respect to this important issue.

Mr. Yves Perron: So at the moment, you have nothing to tell us about the new facilities. You did, however, rightly mention the problem about facilities at the border between two provinces.

Ms. Lapointe, I would now like to talk about reciprocity with respect to standards.

Where do you stand on the DNA tests developed by Canada's poultry producers? It's still not being used to prevent illegal imports.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds left, Ms. Lapointe.

Ms. Sylvie Lapointe: Are you talking about spent hens?

Mr. Yves Perron: Yes, that's right.

Ms. Sylvie Lapointe: I don't have an update on the DNA test but I can say that there's much more cooperation with the Canada Border Services Agency. We've also identified several problems. We are working closely with the United States to make sure there isn't a problem.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lapointe and Mr. Perron.

Mr. MacGregor, it's over to you now for two and a half minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I've been looking abroad at what other countries are doing with respect to their agriculture programs in trying to combat climate change. Two notable examples are Australia and France.

Australia has a national soil strategy. France, through its rural development plan, is really trying to invest heavily in agroforestry.

During our environment study, we heard witnesses talk about the importance of soil, but one of our witnesses, Mr. Eric Toensmeier, was talking about how agroforestry in particular is one of the most efficient ways of taking carbon out of the atmosphere and storing it below ground.

Mr. Samson, is the department looking abroad at best practices as examples of how we can tailor Canadian policy? Can you provide any examples? I wouldn't want us to ignore what's working around the world that might be successfully brought to Canada.

Can you provide any answers in that regard, please?

Mr. Paul Samson: Yes, we do certainly look at best practices abroad as part of the natural climate solutions program across the government, which includes Natural Resources Canada and the tree-planting program, as well as Environment and Climate Change Canada and Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Trees are part of the various programs. An example of a best practice would be a shelter belt, which would be established on a field through the planting of trees.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: With the two-billion-tree initiative, are you trying to involve agricultural crop trees as well?

• (1720)

Mr. Paul Samson: Yes, we are.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I'll end there, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Okay, I'm just going to ask a couple of questions. I love being your chair, but sometimes I miss the opportunity to engage as the members have the chance to. I'm just going to go quickly.

Mr. Barlow asked about gene editing documents. My understanding is that Health Canada actually released those yesterday. I have a tweet out, so I would encourage my colleagues to retweet that and get the message out.

Mr. Samson, do you have that information? I know it wouldn't be directly in your department, but I think it was released yesterday. Is that correct?

Mr. Paul Samson: Thank you, Chair.

Yes, indeed, a gene editing guidance document was released earlier this week, as I understand it. When the minister spoke earlier and said that we haven't acted yet, I think she was referring to the CFIA. I don't know the exact date, but CFIA would be coming out with some gene flow related to the environment guidance as well.

I think it's not all out. I guess that's how I would describe it.

The Chair: Mr. Samson, I would like to ask about Ukraine. A lot of conversation today was about global food security. I happened to read yesterday that the Russian Federation was targeting the plant breeding program in Ukraine. Specifically, I think there were 200,000 types of seeds. Of course, we know how important that work is here in Canada and around the world.

My understanding is that the seeds have been destroyed. Moving forward, can Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada do something to provide support to Ukraine through our research facilities to share seeds and re-establish that program that they're going to have to get back up and running?

Mr. Paul Samson: Yes, absolutely, there are things that Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada can do as a leader in that space. There was a specific request from Ukraine for a certain type of seed that Canada was able to provide. I'm not sure if it has actually arrived yet. There was some sensitivity about announcing it before it had actually arrived, so I don't want to name exactly what it is at this point, but we can certainly provide that information shortly.

Yes, we are responding to those requests.

The Chair: That's great. I'm glad to hear that. I don't want to predetermine where this committee might go, but we are looking at Canada's role, potentially as a future study, so I think that this information would be valuable for all committee members.

For the last question, Mr. Barlow talked about biosecurity. There were conversations from members about avian influenza. There was an outbreak in my riding of Kings—Hants. One of the farmers in question actually transported a sample to the UPEI lab for some preliminary analysis, at which time there was some recognition that there were issues. The sample then had to go to Winnipeg to a CFIA-certified lab.

Perhaps this question is for Madame Lapointe or Mr. Samson. If we're looking at actually trying to build regional facilities that are up to national standards such that the CFIA can act more quickly, is there a facility in Fredericton—a lab that has just come online—that is of that national standard?

If not, what suggestions would you have for proponents on how we can get labs to a higher level so that we have quicker response times in the regions?

Mr. Paul Samson: Thanks. I will let Sylvie or Philippe give you an answer on that.

Ms. Sylvie Lapointe: Thank you, Chair, for the question. It would probably make more sense for me to go back and speak with my colleagues in science and get you an answer in writing.

The Chair: Okay, I appreciate it. Again, it was just more while we had you here.... In the Atlantic region, UPI, for example, is looking at ways they can expand their capacity so that we can work with CFIA to respond. Thank you. I'm happy to work with you offline to provide that information to the committee.

That's all the time I'll take, colleagues. Thank you for letting me indulge.

We do have estimates that I hope you'll want to pass. I've talked to you offline on this piece. Can I get unanimous consent that we actually just vote on all five of the motions at one time? I think that's not going to be a problem.

An hon. member: On division.

The Chair: Okay, we'll just move to that. Shall all votes referred to this committee in the main estimates carry?

CANADIAN DAIRY COMMISSION

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$4,153,333

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

CANADIAN GRAIN COMMISSION

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$5,299,399

(Vote 1 agreed to on division)

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Vote 1—Operating expenses.....\$608,022,545

Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....\$38,309,523

Vote 10—Grants and contributions.....\$582,506,527

(Votes 1, 5 and 10 agreed to on division)

The Chair: That is agreed to on division.

Shall I report the votes back to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: To our guests, to the officials, to our interpreters, Madam Clerk and our whole team, thank you for the work that you do. Thank you so much, colleagues.

We will see you back on May 30—

My apologies, Mr. Turnbull. You might have just a quick point to make.

• (1725)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Yes, I have a very quick point. I just didn't want the members to be surprised that I'm putting on notice two motions. One is to study the national school food program and its implementation. Another is on Canada's new agricultural policy framework.

I'm putting those on notice today. I'm not moving them, of course. I just wanted to make you aware so that you're not surprised when they hit your inbox.

Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Turnbull. Yes, I know you'll be sharing those with the clerk, who will disseminate them to the entire group.

Colleagues, enjoy your break week. We do have a subcommittee on May 26, I believe, on Thursday from 2:30 to 4:30 Eastern Time, and that will help determine some of the questions on future studies.

Thanks to everyone. Enjoy your break week.

The meeting is adjourned.

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