

INDUSTRY NEWS | PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES | SUPPORT FOR AGRICULTURE | AND MORE

# AGRI WORKFORCE MATTERS

DECEMBER 2023

## HOW CAHRC'S PROGRAMMING

Is a Prized Catch for One Fish Farm

THE BENEFITS OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

THE LATEST LABOUR MARKET NUMBERS

TALKING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

NEW ALLIANCE AIMS TO MOVE CANADA'S AGRI-FOOD SYSTEM TO NET ZERO

## CANADA LAUNCHES

Its First Indoor Agriculture Certificate Program



CAHRC-CCRHA  
Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council  
Conseil canadien pour les ressources humaines en agriculture

# OUR NATIONAL WORKFORCE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

## A national, actionable roadmap

Canada's agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing sectors are experiencing severe chronic labour and skills shortages while growing one of Canada's largest employment and economic sectors. A national, actionable roadmap will create the desired workforce of the future that addresses immediate labour gaps and systemic issues.



# OUR VISION AND NEXT STEPS



## Perception and Awareness of Industry and Careers

*By 2030, the number of people entering the sector has increased due to positive perceptions of employment in the industry and greater awareness of the variety of occupations suited to various skill sets, the diverse communities in which careers are available, and the paths to career advancement.*

Understanding the perception of the sectors and providing awareness of the opportunities in the agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing sectors is crucial to the growth and sustainability of the industry. The Perceptions and Awareness of Industry and Careers Working Group will amplify programs bringing greater awareness of career opportunities in agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing to potential employees, either new comers to Canada, members of underrepresented groups or high school and post secondary institution students. The group will also work towards increasing the awareness of the importance of the sector's GDP contribution with government and other leading industry stakeholders.

CAHRC is conducting perception and awareness research to investigate perceptions of job seekers who have not traditionally considered careers in the agriculture sector and will recommend strategies for promoting work in the sector to job seekers who have had no connection to the sector. This will inform the development of the strategy by providing insights into the potential of attracting a new source of labour supply.



## People and Workplace Cultures

*By 2030, the sector is viewed as a desired choice for work in Canada by job seekers and workers.*

The People & Workplace Culture Working Group will look at increasing recruitment of underrepresented groups to the agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing sectors. By providing safe and healthy workplace culture, a generation of employees will desire to join the agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing sectors.



## Immigration and Foreign Workers

*By 2025 foreign workers are publicly recognized as a valued pillar of Canada's agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing workforce.*

*By 2025 Canada has publicly accepted programs to facilitate the entry of foreign workers and new Canadians into Canada's agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing sectors.*

The Immigration and Temporary Foreign Worker Working Group understands the importance of temporary foreign workers to Canada's agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing workforce. The working group will address policy changes that provide employers with a streamlined approach to gaining

access to the workforce while remaining competitive in the agriculture sector.

The working group will conduct research to inform the development of the workforce strategy. The research project will analyze existing labor market information to understand market conditions that result in the need for foreign workers and quantify the importance of temporary foreign workers to the agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing labor force, understanding both the economic impact here in Canada and in the workers home country and gather narratives or case studies that exist outlining the value of foreign workers to Canada's agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing industry.



### Skill Development

*By 2030, a National Skills Strategy ensures that the sector's workforce is appropriately skilled.*

The Skill Development Working Group will develop the National Skills Strategy as a registry to understand the current and future skills needs of the agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing sectors.

CAHRC will conduct skills research to clarify the potential impact of technology and automation in the agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing industry on future skill requirements and labour demand. The investigation will provide information that will inform skills development, training and education for the industry, and ensure that workers have the right skills for employment in the industry now and in the future.



### Automation and Technology

*By 2030, automation and technology decreases labour demand and increases productivity and competitiveness.*

The industry will see an important transition to automation and technology in each sector as it continues to experience shortages in labor. Although it is not the only answer to the falling labor supply, the Automation & Technology Working Group will understand the increase in capital investments and its correlation to labor productivity. They will also examine the need for upskilling and re-skilling due to the changes in technology.

The working group will conduct research to inform the development of the workforce strategy. It will investigate the capacity of members of the agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing sectors to increase their use of automation and technology. Industry representatives will have the knowledge required to make recommendations about how, when and what technology could be adopted to decrease the demand for labour and increase the productivity and competitiveness of Canada's agricultural and food and beverage manufacturing sectors.

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**To learn more about the issues and CAHRC's plan to address them, [click here.](#)**

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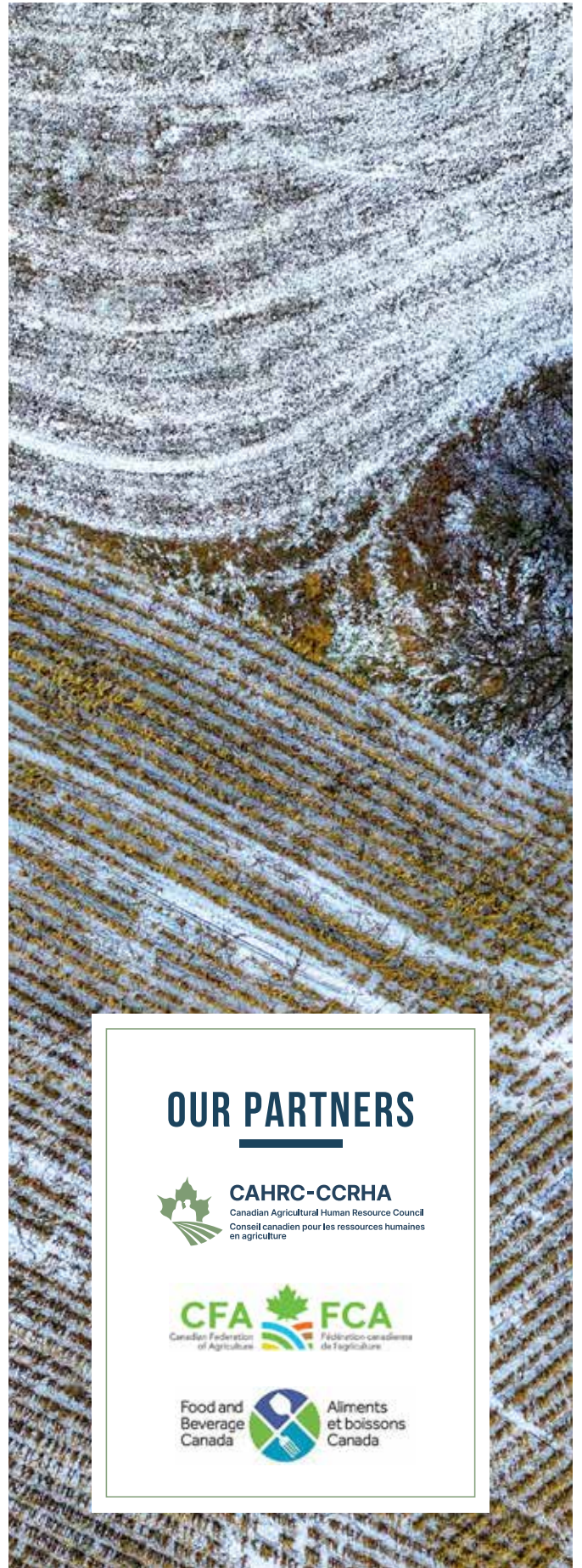
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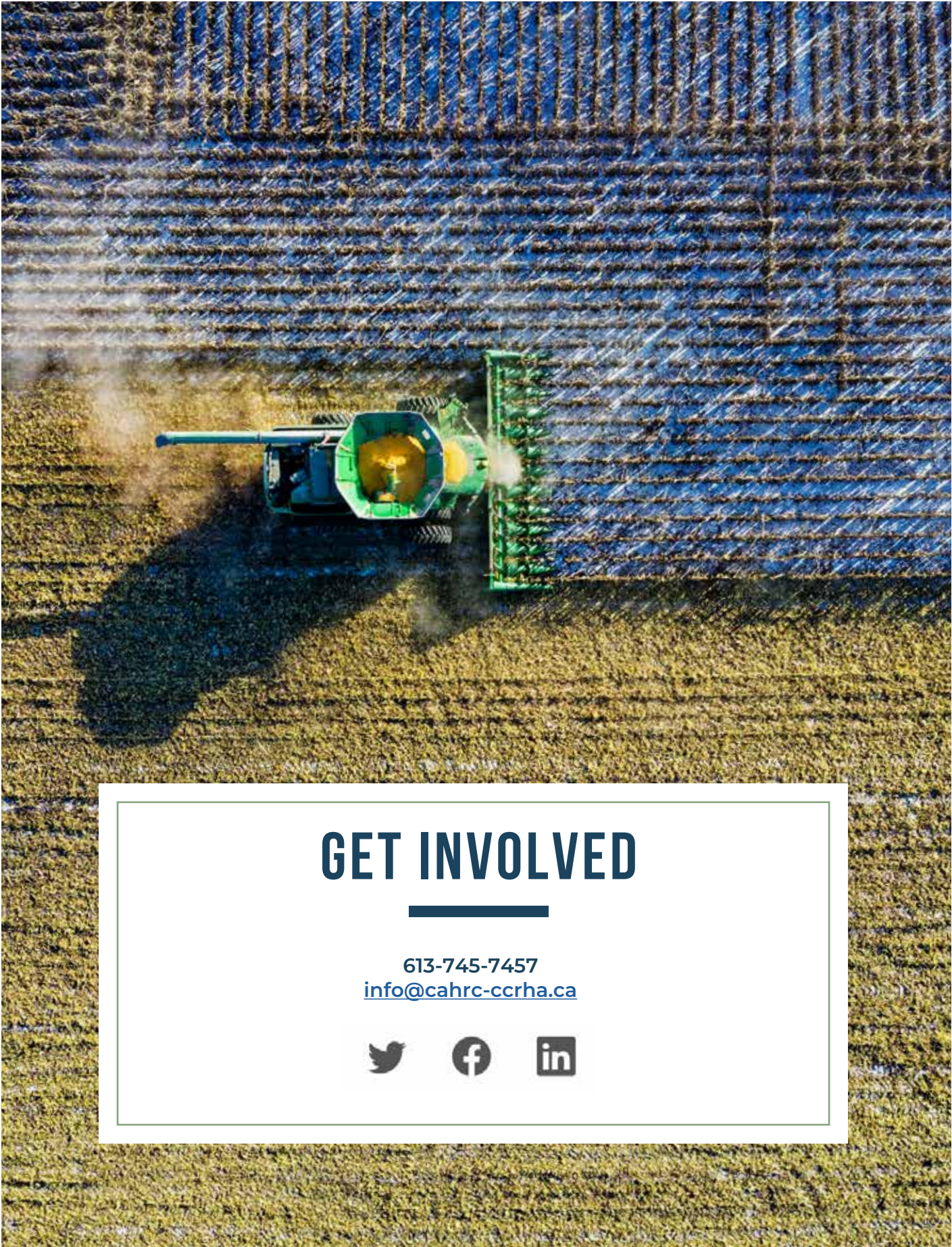
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# GET INVOLVED



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# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Dear readers,

The end of the year is nearly here. For most of us, this is a time to reflect on the highs, the lows, and the lessons learned throughout the last 12 months. This thinking often informs how we might want to approach the new year. We can decide what we want to leave behind and what we wish to embrace.

At the helm of the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC), I'm energized by the prospect of building on our work in the months ahead. In November, CAHRC held its virtual labour market information (LMI) summit to reveal up-to-date data on our sector's workforce supply and demands. It also provided greater insight into what issues are contributing to the existing labour and skills gap.

I think of this data as a colourful backdrop to our National Workforce Strategic Plan (NWSP). It provides greater context for why CAHRC, along with our partner organizations the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and Food and Beverage Canada, launched this project in the first place. More than that, these numbers provide us with more direction on where we will need to apply and use the NWSP.

We also recently launched our first Agriculture Leadership Program for Women. This program sold out in just over 24 hours. To me, this speaks to our strong desire as an industry to become the best we can be. In the new year, we will have even more programming to support collaboration, HR best practices, skills development, and the growth of our workforce throughout the agricultural sector. Stay tuned for updates.

Lastly, we know that there is strength in numbers. I want to thank all of you for your support and collaboration. As we aim to build an agri workforce that is resilient in the face of future challenges, your enthusiasm and involvement in CAHRC's work are critical to achieving this goal. Let's keep it going in 2024.



All the best,

**Jennifer Wright**  
Executive Director  
**Canadian Agricultural  
Human Resource  
Council**

## SPOTLIGHT

# HOW CAHRC'S SUPPORT PROGRAMMING IS A PRIZED CATCH FOR ONE FISH FARM

The Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council's ***Growing Opportunities Student Work Placement Program (SWPP)*** — which provides employers wage subsidies to hire post-secondary students — is helping the agricultural labour market, one business at a time. This includes **Grieg Seafood Newfoundland**, which is based out of Marystown, Newfoundland. Grieg farms Atlantic salmon and has been working with CAHRC since 2022.

Kevin Smith, Research and Development (R&D) Sustainability Officer with Grieg, says the program provides welcome support for their sector, which often gets forgotten as a part of agriculture. At Grieg, fish are kept in giant tanks on land that mimic their natural environment. Then they are transferred to marine net pens in the ocean. The stock is sterile so that in the event of an escape they can't breed with the native species.

"The problem is that a lot of funding agencies classify our operation as fisheries and not farming," he says.

And like many businesses across the agricultural sector, it's not always easy for Grieg to find the workers it needs.

"There's lots of people here with a fishing background, but they're missing the fish farming piece," Smith says. "The challenge for us is finding workers with the combination of maritime experience — the ability to work comfortably and safely at sea — and the necessary knowledge related to aquaculture, animal husbandry, and biology."

### **A relationship for the long haul**

Grieg's partnership with CAHRC has enhanced the business and increased confidence in its long-term sustainability. Thanks to CAHRC's SWPP program, Smith says the business is supported in its recruitment and hiring efforts.

"CAHRC lets you apply for the subsidy for a large volume of people, and that's what we need. It makes it a lot less risky to bring on a group of untested employees when 50



per cent of their wage is paid through the subsidy,” Smith says.

Smith found out about the SWPP program through the Marine Institute at Memorial University. The school has been working with CAHRC to help employers find workers. The Marine Institute offers both a technical certificate and an advanced diploma in aquaculture.

In 2022 through the wage subsidy program, Grieg hired two students who stayed on as staff after their three-month work term. This year, CAHRC will be helping Grieg hire roughly 20 people who are graduating with a post-secondary diploma.

“These students have the knowledge, background, and logic behind the choices in our industry,” Smith explains. “They have the skill set to recognize when something isn’t right, when a feed response is poor, or when the weather isn’t suitable for fish feeding, which also helps make our jobs easier.”

### **The perks of on-the-job opportunities**

CAHRC’s support programming hasn’t just benefitted Grieg. It has provided immersive learning opportunities for students who have an interest in aquaculture and given them a chance to learn more about how they want their future careers to look.

“Marine technicians can fulfill many roles and responsibilities related to fish feeding, maintaining site equipment, transporting fish, and harvesting,” Smith says. “The work experience provides them with an opportunity to take on a diversity of tasks and find out what their interests and passions are.”

It also provides students who want to remain in Newfoundland and build their careers in the province with a chance to do so.

### **Supporting the future of agriculture**

Smith says that if Grieg didn’t have the financial support to bring on students, there’s little chance it would have taken the risk to do so. This is because new employees require a lot of supervision and on-the-job training.

“The support for training and the subsidized work term make it a lot less intimidating,” he explains. “We’re big fans of CAHRC. I don’t have to worry about applying for a subsidy being an administrative burden. It’s quick and easy — they just require a few documents and follow-ups.”

Smith adds that he was pleased that the program subsidy amount was consistent with other support programs that exist, and that CAHRC was able to approve the hiring positions well in advance of the students’ graduation date.

When asked if other agricultural employers should apply, Smith says it’s a no-brainer. “I can’t speak highly enough about it. In rural areas with an aging population and workforce, it’s an opportunity to bring students into our industry who might not otherwise have us on their radar,” he says. “It’s also a great way to let young people know that this is an industry that has room for them, [and] that it’s highly technical, challenging, and sophisticated.”

For more information on the Growing Opportunities wage subsidy program, see the **CAHRC website** or contact Kelsey Courtney, Program Manager, AgriTalent at [kcourtney@cahrc-ccrha.ca](mailto:kcourtney@cahrc-ccrha.ca)

# CAHRC'S CORNER



## CAHRC'S CORNER

# STAYING CONNECTED

### NEW SUBSCRIPTION PACKAGES FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Managing and growing an agricultural operation can be difficult, but we can help! CAHRC is launching subscriber packages as an easy way for businesses to access tailor-made support that will meet their needs. Let us help you grow.

**Contact us here!**



### CAHRC IN THE NEWS

In case you missed it, the chair of our board of directors, Peggy Brekveld, spoke with *Real Agriculture*, to unpack the data in our LMI report and what the numbers mean. Have a **read or a listen here.**



### GET INVOLVED

Become a supporter of the National Workforce Strategic Plan by showcasing our supporter badge. Contact us and **learn more.**



INNOVATION • COLLABORATION • AWARENESS  
INNOVATION • COLLABORATION • SENSIBILISATION

## CAHRC'S CORNER

# SUPPORT FOR YOU

### **The Growing Opportunities Project**

Applications have opened for the Winter 2024 semester for CAHRC's Growing Opportunities project. Businesses can access Canada's largest online campus recruiting platform and take advantage of a \$7,000 subsidy for each student they hire. **Learn more and start your application process here.**

### **The AgriWorkplace Skills Training Program**

The AgriWorkplace Skills Training Program has launched. This initiative supports the development of both employers and employees through e-learning and on-the-job training. This includes providing employers with a wage subsidy of up to \$5,000 per trained employee. **Register here.**

### **TruckingHR Canada's Career ExpressWay**

Looking to train new truck drivers? Funding for driver training and wage incentives are available courtesy of TruckingHR Canada. Through this program, you can receive up to \$10,000. **More info here.**

## **COMING SOON:**

### **HR Toolkit 2.0**

Have you heard? We're updating our HR Toolkit! Expect a user experience that is more accessible, modern, and interactive. The HR Toolkit is an important resource to

support best practices in HR management for agricultural businesses. We're excited to share our new and improved version in the weeks ahead.

### **Welcome to Canadian Agriculture: An Overview of the Pathways to Canadian Agriculture Careers**

We're pleased to introduce an online self-paced training program for newcomers to Canadian agriculture. This resource, launching early 2024, is geared towards new Canadians and those considering building careers in agriculture in Canada. It includes a general overview of the agricultural sector and information on various career pathways for individuals from different nationalities and backgrounds, and with different education, experience, training, and language skills.

### **Agri HR Communities of Practice**

We know we can tackle the workforce issues facing our sector when we work together. At CAHRC we are offering communities of practices. Through our platforms, we are building virtual communities of HR professionals, employers, stakeholders, HR students, and industry experts so parties can connect, share information and best practices, collaborate, seek practical advice, and access effective and quickly deployed learning tools. More on this in the coming weeks.

## CAHRC'S CORNER

# DIVING INTO THE DATA

We can only solve the agricultural sector's workforce issues if we know the extent to which they exist, and more importantly, exactly where they exist. This is why we must rely on hard data to help us chart the best path forward.

CAHRC's most recent labour market information (LMI) forecast provides a much-needed snapshot of the industry, our current challenges, and the opportunities for us to grow. In November, CAHRC, along with The Conference Board of Canada, presented these numbers at our Agri LMI Virtual Summit.

### **In case you missed it, here are the numbers at a glance:**

#### In 2022...

- The agricultural sector reported a peak vacancy rate of 7.4 per cent — well above the 5.9 per cent national average.
- Two out of five agricultural employers said they could not hire the workers they needed to meet their business demands.
- There were lost sales amounting to \$3.5 billion due to businesses being unable to find the workers they needed.

#### In 2030...

- More than 85,000 retirements are expected, amounting to 30 per cent of the current agricultural workforce.
- There will be a 15 per cent increase in the current domestic labour gap overall.
- Heavily impacted sectors will include greenhouse and nursery production, fruit and tree nut farming, and vegetable farming.
- Approximately four out of five vacant positions are expected to be filled by foreign workers, leaving 22,200 jobs unfilled during peak season.

### **So, where do we go from here?**

All this data might seem like an overwhelming and bleak place to start. Luckily, the National Workforce Strategic Plan (NWSP) for Agriculture and Food and Beverage Manufacturing provides our industry with a framework to achieve workforce stability by 2030. The NWSP interim report published in December 2022 and our recent LMI research identify several action items to help us build the workforce needed to grow the agricultural sector.

## These areas of focus include:

- **Improving perception of the sector**

This means showing different career opportunities beyond the misconception that the only agricultural job is as a farmer. Ensuring people are informed about employment opportunities, including researchers, technicians, operators, mechanics, scientists, and managers, will attract more people to the sector.

- **Enhancing best HR practices**

Good HR practices will increase employee retention, and help find new workers and keep them on the job. In our recent LMI survey, 34 per cent of respondents said good management practices are why they remain in the sector. A positive work environment that prioritizes the health and well-being of workers is essential for any industry that wants to retain staff.

- **Attracting skilled immigrants**

We know the domestic population will not be enough to satisfy the current and projected workforce vacancies. Based on our perceptions research, we know that a large portion of immigrants are open to pursuing a career in agriculture. As immigration numbers increase, we will need to see a combined effort between the government, placement agencies, and farm operators to find individuals with relevant skills and experience and encourage them to settle in rural communities where there is agricultural work.

- **Ensuring workers have the skills needed**

We need skilled workers. That's a fact. Apprenticeship programs are an important tool that we can use to develop a qualified workforce — these programs provide opportunities to build the technical and specialized skills required in various industries. Using apprenticeship programs to showcase skilled trades within agriculture can also increase awareness of the sector's highly skilled jobs and rewarding career opportunities. This is important to consider as the sector looks to shift perceptions and attract equity-deserving groups like women, visible minorities, persons with disabilities, Indigenous people, and newcomers.

- **Embracing automation and technological changes**

As technology advances rapidly, adopting innovations in digitization, automation, and new crop varieties will be critical to increasing the sector's productivity and competitiveness. However, the industry will still need to find, train, and keep workers who can ensure these new practices are implemented at a rate that keeps up with the pace of agriculture's modernization.

In the following weeks and months, CAHRC will publish more LMI research reports, taking a closer look at labour-force supply and demand both regionally and by commodity. Meanwhile, an executive summary of the labour market information forecast is available [online](#).

## CAHRC'S CORNER

# INDIGENOUS SHARING CIRCLES ARE BACK: HOW AGRICULTURE CAN BENEFIT FROM THE EXCHANGE OF KNOWLEDGE

Activities related to agricultural production have been a part of Indigenous Peoples' history and traditions since long before the Confederation of Canada. They are long-time stewards of this land and are its original hunters, foragers, harvesters, and anglers.

In recent years the number of Indigenous Peoples participating in Canada's current agriculture, agri-food, and food-related industries has begun to increase. This is a positive development as we aim to tackle agri workforce vacancies and increase interest in our industry. To remain on this path forward, we must ensure we are armed with an inclusive agricultural workforce that values Indigenous knowledge and perspectives. That's why CAHRC's Indigenous Agriculture Advisory Committee is hosting free sharing circles for the third consecutive year.

Each sharing circle will take the format of a one-hour Zoom session. The biweekly series will run from Wednesday, November 22, 2023, until Wednesday, March 6, 2024.

Participants will learn how Indigenous communities lead and restore cultural traditions in agriculture. This includes specific topics around harvesting, food processing, and packaging.

The sessions are open to anyone interested in understanding and developing their knowledge of First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit agricultural practices. This includes people who identify as Indigenous or are part of Indigenous communities, but we also welcome the participation of anyone who works in agriculture, education, health, and government.

We hope that in the coming months, this knowledge exchange will not only facilitate greater connection and collaboration within agricultural networks, but also generate training opportunities and raise awareness of best practices for Indigenous agricultural operations.

Learn about the topics to be addressed in each session and find the link to take part [here](#).

## CAHRC'S CORNER

# TALKING TRENDS IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR WORKFORCE SUCCESS

Canada's agricultural education opportunities are foundational to the industry's success, but to ensure our workforce remains competitive and sustainable, we must understand how to best leverage these opportunities.

In recent years, work-integrated learning has been a term thrown around by experts in professional development. Work-integrated learning is exactly how it sounds: providing students or people early in their careers the chance to apply their classroom knowledge in their place of work. The most popular work-integrated learning opportunities for the agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing sector are co-ops and internships. Work-integrated learning opportunities also include apprenticeships, mandatory professional practice, field experience, and applied research projects.

The research shows that most students who take advantage of work-integrated learning end up working in that sector right after

graduation. They are also equipped with their industry's relevant, in-demand skills because of the chance to be immersed in the working world. In agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing, this is especially important, not just because there is a labour and skills gap but also because technological advancements continue to move at a rapid pace.

### **Work-integrated learning in Canada?**

More than 34 academic institutions across Canada offer agriculture degrees and courses. Diploma, undergraduate, master's, and doctorate programs are available from coast to coast in both official languages. Well-known schools include the University of Guelph, Lakeland College, University of British Columbia, University of Manitoba, Olds College, and McGill University. We are lucky to live in a country with ample options — this includes opportunities to apply learning in the workplace.



For example, the University of Prince Edward Island's Foods and Nutrition program provides students with comprehensive training related to nutritional health, novel food product development, and support for sustainable food systems. The school offers work-integrated learning streams, including a dietetic internship in the program's third year, a cooperative education program that students can apply to in their second year, and applied research projects in food security, nutrition education, and food product development.

Vancouver Island University's Fisheries and Aquaculture Technology program includes academic skills training and practical experience in fisheries management and the aquaculture industry. Students have summer work placements with industry employers between the first and second year of the program and later participate in a practicum for an entire year. They also participate in weekly practical field placements across the industry landscape.

Algonquin College's Culinary Arts and Food Science program produces skilled graduates with food science backgrounds. Students participate in two cooperative education opportunities during the program — one in food science and one in culinary arts — and

are also offered the chance to engage in applied research projects.

## The opportunity ahead

While post-secondary institutions recognize the importance of developing their agriculture and food and beverage manufacturing programs, we must increase work-integrated learning initiatives to ensure our workers can transition smoothly into employment with the skills employers seek.

As the national non-profit dedicated to addressing HR and labour issues in agriculture, CAHRC is well-positioned to facilitate partnerships between business and post-secondary. We also exist to serve as the link between agricultural education and business. Our Growing Opportunities program, which provides subsidies to employers who wish to hire students to work on the job, is just one example of a CAHRC resource that facilitates workforce growth in this way.

We will continue to foster collaboration so that our next generation of agricultural workers can look forward to a brighter future. For those interested in tapping into our networks or wanting to learn more about our efforts, [click here](#).





# PERCEPTION AND AWARENESS OF INDUSTRY AND CAREERS

## AG IN THE CLASSROOM LAUNCHES #IAMAG CAMPAIGN

Ag in the Classroom Canada has launched a national campaign aimed at inspiring young people to consider a career in agriculture. The “I AM AG” campaign was launched at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto. The interactive social media campaign is designed to engage people who work in agriculture to “share their ag pride and highlight their unique role to inspire and encourage students to consider a career in agriculture.” The youth-facing version of the tool links students to suggested careers based on their unique attributes.

## REVITALIZING CANADA’S FOOD SECTOR: THE PATH TO \$25B IN VALUE-ADDED PROCESSING

Protein Industries Canada released The Road to \$25 Billion, an updated roadmap

for Canada’s ingredient manufacturing, food processing, and bio-products sector. An update on the report originally released in 2021, the new version now outlines the immediate steps required for Canada to seize a \$25 billion annual economic opportunity through value-added processing.

## ONTARIO IMPROVING ACCESS TO VETERINARY CARE IN UNDERSERVED AREAS

The Ontario government is launching the Veterinary Incentive Program to encourage newly licensed veterinarians to practice in northern and underserved communities. The program intake opened October 26, and will provide grants of up to \$50,000 over five years to veterinarians who provide care to livestock and poultry in these communities. Through this program, up to 100 newly licensed

veterinarians will be incentivized to provide specialized care to animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, and poultry in underserved locations of the province. It is being delivered by the Agricultural Adaptation Council (AAC).

## 'QUEBEC BEEF' WILL BE IDENTIFIED AT THE GROCERY STORE

A new logo will appear at the grocery store on Quebec beef, providing consumers with information about where their food is coming from. The Quebec Cattle Producers will announce this via the creation of the “Quebec Beef” certification. “Quebecers love beef, and they like it as local as possible. With this certification, producers wish to respond to this consumer demand,” said Jean-Thomas Maltais, president of Les producteurs de bovins du Québec to French media. Criteria to obtain the label are as follows: 100 per cent of the animals used to produce the beef must come from farms in Quebec, and at least 85 per cent must be born in Quebec.

## CANADIANS TRUST FARMERS DESPITE HIGH FOOD COSTS — FOR NOW

**Rising food prices** have been drawing the ire of the Canadian public, but the bulk of that frustration and anger is not directed at farmers. While food retailers are viewed unfavourably, farmers remain one of the most trusted demographics in the food system, according to the latest Canadian Centre for Food Integrity consumer trust survey. However, that trust is at risk. Lack of understanding about food production and the workings of food supply systems poses risks to the high levels of **public trust** in Canadian farmers. Canadians are increasingly

concerned about lack of transparency at all levels. Combined with an increasingly volatile world, the perception of opaque food systems could eventually have negative repercussions for farmers.

## SCOTTISH FARM CHARITY HELPS TO RAISE AWARENESS OF DYSLEXIA IN AGRICULTURE

A Scottish agricultural charity has announced a new initiative to raise awareness of dyslexia in the farming community where it provides free professional assessments to farmers — particularly those over 40 years old — who may never have been tested or are unaware they have a learning difficulty commonly associated with problems in reading, writing, and spelling. The campaign also aims to raise awareness of ways in which farmers with the diagnosis can improve their day-to-day tasks and more easily run their businesses.





# PEOPLE AND WORKPLACE CULTURE

## STUDY EXPLORES COMMON RISKS AND RESILIENCIES IN FARMERS' MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

Dwayne Kelndorfer knew something was wrong when he could no longer sleep. He chased rest but his mind kept spinning. For three harvests, his crops had been snowed under. Ugly fault lines had opened in his marriage, and long days working his fourth-generation farm south of Killam, Alta., had him running on fumes. Kelndorfer's story is not an uncommon one. It echoes the findings of new research from the University of Alberta exploring threats to the mental health of farmers and the industry's elevated risk of suicide.

## QUEBEC PORK INDUSTRY FINDS ITSELF AT A CROSSROADS

A sharp increase in insurance compensation paid out to Quebec pig farmers this year will harm producers' liquidity, according

to Les éleveurs de porcs du Québec. In Chaudière-Appalaches, home to many of the province's pork producers, Agricultural Income Stabilization Program payments amounted to \$86.6 million to 397 producers for 2022-2023. For all of Quebec, the total payments were \$240.3 million. No amount was provided for the previous year, but industry says the current numbers are a direct consequence of the closure of the Olymel plant in Vallée-Jonction.

## FARMERS LEAVING 'MONEY ON THE TABLE' WITHOUT TRANSITION PLAN

Huron County is the most agriculturally productive county in Ontario. Its 2,564 farms have capital assets worth more than \$12.2 billion. That's more than some countries. A recent survey conducted by Huron County found that only 14 per cent, or 358 of those 2,564 farms, have a farm transition plan to transfer the farm and its valuable land to the next generation of primary food producers.

## SUSTAINABLE GROWTH INVESTMENT PROGRAM PROVIDES MORE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR PRODUCERS FACING FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

Nearly 2,600 businesses will be eligible for government assistance as the MAPAQ Sustainable Growth Investment Program relaxes its rules. The program aims to improve the aid provided to agricultural producers affected by the weather difficulties of 2023 and the inflationary pressures present since the start of the pandemic. The loans granted by the government will be combined with financial assistance of up to 15 per cent and a working capital loan, representing an additional sum of \$10 million, for a total of \$25 million in assistance provided to this point by the ministry. The Sustainable Growth Investment Program parameters have also been modified to increase aid according to turnover.

## OTTAWA TAKES STANCE ON RIGHT TO REPAIR

The federal government is siding with Canadian farmers on the right-to-repair debate. A statement from the federal

government calls for an adjustment to the Competition Act that would prevent manufacturers from refusing to provide the means of device and product repair in an “anti-competitive manner.” That would presumably include **certain software and modules** on farm equipment that has been off limits to equipment owners. The statement was made in the **2023 Fall Economic Statement** released November 21.

## DREW SPOELSTRA ELECTED ONTARIO FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE PRESIDENT

Drew Spoelstra, a dairy and crop farmer from Binbrook, Ont., has been elected as the new president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA). Spoelstra was chosen to lead the provincial farm lobby at an executive meeting following the conclusion of the organization’s annual convention in Toronto last week. He has served on the OFA board as the director representing farmers from Halton, Hamilton/Wentworth, and Niagara since 2013 and has most recently held the role of vice president.





# IMMIGRATION AND FOREIGN WORKERS

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## CANADA EXTENDS SPECIAL MEASURES TO HELP EMPLOYERS HIRE MORE TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS

On October 26, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages Randy Boissonnault announced changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) Workforce Solutions Road Map to help employers address key labour shortages through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. The Temporary Foreign Worker Program Workforce Solutions Road Map is a continued measure to better enable employers to respond to labour and economic conditions in Canada as they occur, by adjusting the TFWP accordingly.

## THE AUDITOR GENERAL CALLS ON FEDS TO CORRECT LONG PROCESSING TIMES FOR IMMIGRANTS

Refugees applying to Canada face lengthy waits due to significant immigration

delays. Auditor General Karen Hogan is calling on the government to create a way for them to apply online immediately. However, in a report she published October 19 on immigration processing times, she notes that Ottawa does not even measure the effect of the solutions it is already putting in place to tackle the backlogs.

## U.S. COMMITTEE TO ISSUE REPORT ON MINIMUM WAGE FOR FARMWORKERS

Maine's Agricultural Worker Minimum Wage Committee, convened by Gov. Janet Mills, met in November to report on what they learned during listening sessions with farm employers. Committee members investigated support for future legislation regarding minimum wage for agricultural workers, how to apply it, and whether they will pay Maine's hourly minimum wage of US\$13.80 or the federal wage of US\$7.25 per hour.

## GREECE TO TAP INTO UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS TO CURB LABOUR SQUEEZE

Greece's conservative government is working on a plan to integrate hundreds of thousands of undocumented migrants to fill worker shortages in agriculture, construction, and tourism, ministry officials said on September 27.

Like other European countries, Greece faced an exodus of workers from the labour force, both natives and legal immigrants, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of whom never returned. The new proposal would look at allowing the 300,000 migrants estimated already to be living illegally in Greece to work in some sectors, Migration Minister Dimitris Kairidis told state broadcaster ERT.

## SURGE OF WESTERN CANADA BUSINESSES LOOKING TO HIRE TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS

According to statistics provided by Employment and Social Development Canada, as of November 5, the number of Labour Market Impact Assessment applications – the first step toward hiring a temporary foreign worker – has increased 39 per cent nationwide compared to the same period last year. In Western Canada, the increase was even higher at 83 per cent. Yukon was the only province or territory to see a slight application decrease this year.

## NEW HUMANITARIAN PATHWAY FOR COLOMBIAN, HAITIAN, AND VENEZUELAN FOREIGN NATIONALS LAUNCHED

Canada **announced** November 17 that it will be providing an alternative to irregular

migration by welcoming 15,000 people through a family-based humanitarian pathway in addition to existing programs. The Honourable **Marc Miller**, Minister of **Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship**, announced that the dedicated humanitarian pathway will provide permanent residence to Colombian, Haitian, and Venezuelan foreign nationals. The pathway is now open for applications.





# SKILL DEVELOPMENT

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## MANITOBA COLLEGE UNVEILS SCHOLARSHIPS

Westman Group Inc. (WGI) and companies under its umbrella will invest an additional \$300,000 in student financial awards for Assiniboine College in Brandon, Manitoba. The scholarships will be for students entering their second year of studies at the college. WGI intends to distribute a \$5,000 annual award on behalf of each of its six divisions, for a total distribution of \$30,000 per year for a 10-year period to students entering their second year in programs that correspond to the industries in which each of the divisions operates.

## CANADIAN CANOLA JOINS REGENERATIVE AG PROGRAM

Farmers Business Network (FBN) is providing its digital farm business

management platform, called Gradable, to canola farmers in Canada. This tool allows growers to submit their sustainability information. The company then translates it into “outcomes and claims” that will be passed down the supply chain. In Canada, the information will be used to calculate a carbon intensity score for canola. The program was first launched in 2022 in the United States, where it enrolled 1,900 growers and covered 1.2 million acres of cropland.

## APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN FOR THE 2024 AGRICULTURE STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP IN SASKATCHEWAN

The governments of Canada and Saskatchewan announced applications are being accepted for the 2024 Agriculture Student Scholarship Program. The scholarship amounts have increased this year to \$6,000 for the top recipient and



three runner-up scholarships of \$3,000 each. This year's theme is farming and environmental sustainability. Scholarship applicants are encouraged to explore the idea of environmental sustainability within farming and the importance of public perception of modern farming practices. The scholarship encourages conversations about where our food comes from and how everyone along the value chain shares a role in communicating about food production.

### TUITION HIKES RISK ISOLATING QUEBEC'S SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY AND THREATENING FOOD SECURITY

It's difficult to understand how discouraging English speakers from elsewhere from attending McGill, Concordia, or Bishop's universities helps the goal of protecting French in Quebec, writes Karen Fisher Favret, an oceanographer who teaches ecosystem ecology and fisheries and wildlife management at McGill University. Raising an enormous tuition barrier around Canada's preeminent agricultural campus should be reconsidered, she argues,

because it could have serious food-security ramifications in the face of climate change.

### OLDS COLLEGE LAUNCHES NEW INDOOR CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Olds College of Agriculture & Technology in Alberta is launching its Indoor Agriculture Certificate program, the first of its kind offered in Canada. Designed to meet the surging demand for skilled professionals in the controlled environment agriculture (CEA) sector, this four-month program will equip students with the knowledge and hands-on experience for a fulfilling career in controlled environment agriculture, addressing the growing demand for sustainable and high-tech farming methods. The Indoor Agriculture Certificate program offers a blend of on-campus and online courses, providing students with the flexibility to learn in diverse environments. The curriculum focuses on crucial aspects such as crop production techniques, state-of-the-art technologies, and business practices tailored to the CEA sector.





# AUTOMATION AND TECHNOLOGY

## NEW ALLIANCE AIMS TO MOVE CANADA'S AGRI-FOOD SYSTEM TO NET ZERO

Seven companies and organizations have established a new coalition called the Canadian Alliance for Net-Zero Agri-Food (CANZA). The intended goal of the alliance is to help Canada feed a growing population while reducing emissions, becoming more sustainable, and creating new economic opportunities for Canada. The first two initiatives by CANZA are to grow a national biodigester network and to coordinate investments and scale projects that advance the technologies, infrastructure, policy, and financial mechanisms needed to help farmers implement net-zero solutions successfully.

## CANADA AND THE EU: EXPLORING THEIR PROGRESS IN GENE EDITING

The Canadian plant-breeding sector recently got some good news when the Canadian Food Inspection Agency clarified

that it would not be regulating gene-edited crops the same way GMOs are regulated. Researchers are now looking to adopt gene-editing techniques to develop crops with improved characteristics, including increased nutritional content, reduced pesticide dependency, and enhanced resilience to environmental stressors. On the other side of the Atlantic, the European Union has taken a different approach to gene editing, attempting to strike a balance between fostering innovation in agriculture and ensuring the safety and transparency of gene-edited products.

## BAYER UNVEILS PIONEERING DIGITAL SOLUTIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AT AGRITECHNICA 2023

At this year's Agritechnica event, Bayer **affirmed its dedication** to digital farming innovations crucial for regenerative agriculture's evolution. The life sciences giant showcased an array of cutting-edge solutions at the world-renowned

agricultural machinery exhibition. Throughout the event, Bayer experts and guest speakers illuminated the firm's digital strategies, including upcoming product launches that promise to bolster agricultural sustainability. Frank Terhorst, Head of Strategy and Sustainability at Bayer's Crop Science division, emphasized the role of digital technologies in creating a regenerative agricultural system. He noted that technology is now a fundamental aspect of agriculture, from seed breeding to crop protection, and is essential in all phases of the farming cycle.

### ONTARIO COMPANY LAUNCHES FACIAL RECOGNITION FOR BARN

An award-winning Canadian tech start-up that enables livestock producers to protect against entry by disease-risky vehicles has launched a new service to do the same for human visitors. Protocol is billed by Guelph-based Farm Health Guardian as a "system us[ing] facial recognition technology to proactively control livestock and poultry barn entry points, enabling farm managers to lower the risk of disease entry and protect animal health." It could eventually replace cumbersome and failure-prone controlled-entry systems that use keypads, fobs, or card scanners.

### OPTIMIZING CARCASS COOLING CAN BOOST PROCESSING PLANT MARGINS

A sensor-based system for carcass cooling could save processing plants considerable money while also improving meat quality. The innovation by Manitoba-based Mode40 recently received funding from the Canadian Agri-Food Automation and Intelligence Network Beef and Pork Primary Processing Automation and Robotics program. At a time when margins are slim for the meat processing sector, and the pandemic put

a spotlight on its labour shortages, worker safety, productivity, and supply chain disruptions, this is much-needed technology to improve the entire food system.

### PLANT PROTEIN PARTNERS DEVELOPING AI TECH TO IMPROVE INGREDIENT QUALITY

Showcasing the potential of Canada's full plant-based value chain, companies from across the sector have partnered to develop new artificial intelligence (AI) technology that is expected to improve the quality of Canada's protein crops and ingredients. With the support of **Protein Industries Canada** (PIC), project partners Enns Brothers, Crop Sentry, DL Seeds, and AGT Foods will develop the technology to meet the needs of farmers and ingredient processors alike.

### GOVERNMENT POLICY ON AG TECHNOLOGY WORRIES PRODUCERS

Farmers from countries reluctant to approve new tools such as gene editing say they could use those technologies to meet demand, be profitable, and ensure environmental sustainability. Several representatives, including organic farmers, said during a North American European Union farm leaders conference that innovation is critical. The pandemic, war in Ukraine, and climate change all show how vulnerable the European food system is, said Lone Anderson, an organic dairy farmer from Denmark. The milk from her family farm, which uses milking, feeding, and cleaning robots, is sold through a farmer-owned co-op to China for baby milk.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

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FCC YOUNG FARMER SUMMITS,  
DECEMBER 2023-MARCH 2024

14TH ANNUAL CANADIAN AGRI-FOOD POLICY  
CONFERENCE,  
JANUARY 25-26, 2024

THE FUTURE OF FOOD CONFERENCE 2024,  
FEBRUARY 13, 2024

FOODTECH NEXT PROJECT SHOWCASE,  
FEBRUARY 14, 2024

CANADIAN FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE ANNUAL  
GENERAL MEETING,  
FEBRUARY 27-28, 2024

WORLD AGRI-TECH INNOVATION SUMMIT,  
MARCH 19-20, 2024

CANADIAN SUMMIT ON FOOD SAFETY,  
APRIL 24-25, 2024





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