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Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

AAFC.AgEM-GUAq.AAC@agr.gc.ca

RE: Emergency Management Framework Feedback

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's consultation on the *Emergency Framework for Agriculture in Canada*. The Canadian Cattle Association (CCA) and National Cattle Feeders' Association (NCFA) represent 60,000 beef producers, from cow-calf farmers and ranchers, to feedlot producers.

The Canadian beef industry contributes \$21.8 billion to the Canadian economy (GDP) and employs 347,000 Canadians. Our producers are innovative and adaptive, but are still very susceptible to production and supply chain disruptions such as disease, drought, flooding, strikes and other supply chain disruptions. These emergencies can quickly devastate the industry by negatively impacting mental health, animal welfare and financial stability.

CCA and NCFA are generally supportive of the 2016 Emergency Management Framework (EMF) as a foundation for improving emergency preparedness and response in the sector. However, we believe our suggestions could help make the EMF more effective in meeting the emergent needs of beef cattle producers.

QUESTION 1: In your opinion, is there any relevant information or gaps that should be added to the 2016 Framework? If so, what is missing?

While broadly speaking the scope and purpose of the framework are sound, we suggest that the types of risks included in the EMF include logistical interruptions to Canada's trade infrastructure network such as rail strikes, blockades, and port strikes. As an export-oriented industry, our members depend on reliable, on-time, and resilient trade networks to help meet our trade and economic obligations while keeping Canadians, and the world, fed. There are also questions about what constitutes tampering at the farm level and whether this includes biosecurity.

We recommend that additions be made to the glossary of definitions under **Annex 1**. Specifically, the definitions of the terms **disaster** and **emergency** should be edited to include animals, crops, and people to provide a more fulsome risk assessment rather than only focusing on one aspect of agriculture. Additionally, there are no provisions for

business continuity and financial assurances under the term **resilience**, which we believe are necessary to help producers stay afloat during emergencies such as diseases and extreme weather events. We would appreciate an expanded focus on specific business continuity activities that could be implemented under an updated EMF, particularly in the wake of threats to Canada's trade-enabling infrastructure.

There is a lack of detail and reporting around the progress that has been made towards the implementation of short-term activities identified in the 2016 EMF along with associated metrics for success. We would suggest that regular progress reports be instituted. Additionally, activities in medium-or longer-term implementation time frames are not identified. It is also critical that dedicated resourcing for implementation of the EMF is identified and realized in order to undertake key activities.

Finally, CCA and NCFA recommend that the EMF provide more detailed protocols for information-sharing between stakeholders. These protocols could include dedicated communication mechanisms, frequency, and roles and responsibilities of relevant parties. In this vein, there is need for more clarity regarding measuring specific performance metrics for evaluating the success of implementation across the four pillars. Industry and government should work together to develop clear targets and indicators to measure progress.

QUESTION 2: Are the Roles and Responsibilities in the Framework accurately reflected?

The outline of roles and responsibilities in **Annex 2** are helpful but do not provide adequate insight into these roles in practice. In some sections, the wording is quite vague (e.g., "provide assistance with recovery," and we would suggest that these roles could be detailed with more specificity. We urge the federal government to be more explicit in this regard and work with provinces and industry to undertake regular and adequately funded simulation exercises to help each stakeholder understand their practical role in the case of an emergency.

Additionally, given the close integration of supply chains between Canada the United States, all orders of government and industry on both sides of the border require clear roles and responsibilities in improving our emergency preparedness and response for the beef sector.

QUESTION 3: Are there any emerging threats not mentioned in the Framework that could pose a risk to Emergency Management in the food system?

While the EMF does incorporate most key risks, there are a few other emerging threats that were not included, such as:

1. Global pandemics or disease outbreaks of both human and animal variety, for example COVID-19 and High Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI).
2. Logistical interruptions such as rail strikes, blockades, port strikes, and cyber-terrorism events.

3. Extreme weather events such as floods and droughts.

QUESTION 4: Are there any lessons learned from your experience over the last five years that would be valuable for our understanding and policy development?

For beef cattle producers, the last five years have demonstrated the need for stronger and more resilient supply chains in the face of threats posed by pandemics, labour strikes, wildfires, extreme weather and significant infrastructure interruptions. Canada's position as a viable trading partner was already challenged before the COVID-19 pandemic, but that and other events have demonstrated this need more than ever.

As new technologies and trends arise, government and industry stakeholders must continue to find new ways to collaborate on fighting emerging threats to our supply chains. To this end, some of the roles and responsibilities as outlined in **Annex 2** are impractical for industry organizations, which may not have the resources to provide members with financial assistance in cases of emergencies.

Additionally, the last several years have demonstrated the need for close cooperation between Federal, Provincial, and Territorial (FPT) governments, industry associations, and producers to keep the EMF current by regularly undertaking necessary exercises and simulations that are appropriately resourced. While it may be difficult to predict with exact certainty how an emergency would unfold, through performing these exercises we are able to adequately test emergency procedures and planning in order to ensure a high degree of preparedness.

We appreciate the opportunity to make a submission on this important issue for our sector and would be pleased to discuss this further.

For more information contact:

Jarred Cohen
Regulatory Affairs Manager
Canadian Cattle Association
cohenj@cattle.ca

Melissa Downing
Director, Regulatory and Sustainability
National Cattle Feeders' Association
mdowning@cattlefeeders.ca

