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National Cattle Feeders' Association Submission
National Agriculture Policy Framework
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Below are the responses from the National Cattle Feeders' Association (NCFA) that have been submitted to the consultation process led by AAFC for the Next Agriculture Policy Framework.

Q1 - We are hearing that stakeholders would like us to focus on areas such as markets and trade, growth and competitiveness, science and innovation, and resiliency. Do you agree with these priorities, or are there others?

Since the development of the last Framework, there has been a monumental shift in geopolitics and the global trade environment. Technology is advancing rapidly and AI is becoming a tool that is part of our everyday lives. Foreign animal and plant disease loom closer while natural disasters including flood, drought and wildfire are landing consistency on Canada's doorstep. Input costs and risk have grown significantly. And infrastructure – both built and human - is not keeping pace with the demands of a growing sector.

Clearly, now is not the time for a status quo Framework – it is not the time to default to the same priorities and programs with simple tweaks. The next Framework must take us forward in a manner that addresses not only the current circumstances but foreshadows how the world will evolve and how our sector will respond until 2033. We are at a juncture in time that calls for a reset.

The changing global landscape provides challenges but equally it provides opportunities for Canadian agriculture to address global food security, national food affordability and rural revitalization while making significant economic contributions to Canada. With a bold Framework, the sector stands ready to harness the momentum of this moment.

Before we simply move on autopilot to the next Framework, let's define a collective vision for the sector that the Framework will reflect. Despite governmental deadlines that press on the Framework, time should be taken to build the next Framework through the lens of a profoundly changing world and the opportunities the world presents to Canadian agriculture and agri-food.

NCFA sees a vision for Canadian agriculture of **leadership, resilience and growth supported by risk management tools.**

Q2 - In your view, what should be the top priorities for the Next Policy Framework?

NCFA propose the following pillars for the new Framework with corresponding priorities outlined below.

1. Leadership

- **Build and invest in a long-term strategic vision for research and knowledge mobilization** to secure Canada's place as a global leader in agriculture and agri-food including in meat and forage science. Our success in global growth and competitiveness is directly linked to our investment in research. At this unprecedented moment of challenge and opportunity, a focused vision will ensure:
 - Efficiencies in production and processing in order to compete globally.
 - Evidence-based decision making and science-based trade.
 - Growth of agriculture despite environmental shifts.
 - Canada's potential in innovation and AI.
 - National and global food security.
 - Reduced risk of catastrophic events due to foreign animal or plant disease.
- **Increase incentives for the private-sector to invest in value-added agri-food production and processing in Canada.** This will give Canada increased control over its economic growth, produce jobs, reduce transportation costs/impacts, increase national food security and reduce the reliance on processing done outside of our country.
- **Apply an economic lens to government approval systems for innovation** thus allowing Canada to lead, not follow, our global competitors in adopting the competitive benefits of new products, services and technology. And **provide incentives for private-sector investment in innovation** that is developed and/or mobilized in Canada- creating both growth and efficiencies in the sector.
- **Increase inter-governmental leadership** across départements to deliver a 'whole of government' approach to removing barriers to agriculture, food security and food affordability.

2. Resilience

- **Build upon investments for the prevention and response to foreign animal and plant disease outbreaks.** When it comes to foreign disease, the world is getting smaller and there is true potential for a catastrophic event in Canada due to changing foreign animal disease patterns. Policy and funding must incentivize reporting, increase preparedness, protect business continuity, fund operational clean up and avoid food security gaps. Innovation and traceability have a critical role to play in any response.
- **Invest in climate resilience and climate adaptation** as floods, droughts and wildfires become annual occurrences. Farmers continue, as always, to steward the land and water that they rely on for their livelihood. Efforts to address climate shifts must continue but at the same time there must be investments in supporting producers to adapt to the volatilities that the current environmental and climate changes are having on infrastructure, production and succession.

- **Look forward now on how the agriculture sector will manage water challenges** within the next decade – including access rights, resource security, irrigation innovations and geopolitical threats.

3. Growth

- **Focus equally on global market maintenance and market diversification** with a continued focus on rules-based trade grounded in science. Diversification to new global markets is beneficial but in the short and long term, Canada needs to maintain an unimpeded, tariff-free border in North America for our agriculture products – particularly for livestock sectors which are reliant on sending animals for processing in the U.S. Growth in these sectors relies on both current and emerging global opportunities.
- **Permanently change the approach to human resource** challenges in agriculture. This means finding new solutions to the decades-long chronic labour shortage in the sector through simplified access to temporary foreign workers and recruitment and retention of Canadian workers (through government investment in more services and amenities in rural communities).

With technology rapidly advancing and AI becoming part of our daily lives, skills upgrading for agricultural producers and their teams should be a priority. By 2033, when this next policy Framework concludes, the skill set required to work in agriculture will have shifted dramatically and support for skills enhancement is a must. This skills shift may naturally embrace a younger generation of workers.

- **Build long term strategies for supply chain reliability** that includes addressing work stoppages, infrastructure gaps and regulatory transportation barriers. To be reliable suppliers to national and global clients, agriculture producers need reliable and trusted supply chains that do not threaten markets and animal welfare due to work stoppages. Gaps in infrastructure funding for the roads and bridges that take products from farm gate to national corridors remain significant. In addition, uncoordinated transportation regulations across the country are adding costs and time to the movement of agriculture products and livestock.

4. Risk Management

- **Boldly modernize the suite of agricultural business risk management tools** to reflect current and future realities of risk, risk thresholds, inflation, farm structure, and the approach of global competitors to risk management.
- Meaningfully acknowledge that **one size does not fit all** commodities or regions when developing business risk tools and address the **long-standing imbalance** of available tools between livestock and crop production.

- Respond to the long-time request for these programs to be **flexible, straightforward, bankable and timely** so that Canada can enjoy both food security and food affordability.
- These **solutions** come in both changes to existing programs and new programs entirely.

This can **include**:

- Pilot a whole-farm revenue insurance program.
- Increase the Agri-stability cap from \$3 million to \$15 million with regular reviews of the cap in line with the Framework.
- Enhance the Agri-stability payment trigger to 85% of the reference margin.
- Make Livestock Price Insurance a permanent, subsidized and national program.
- Permanently increase the Advance Payment Program interest-free portion to \$350,000.

Q3 - Given recent challenges and unpredictability facing the agriculture and agri-food sector, what do you see as the issues, both current and emerging, that are creating the most pressure for the sector? What do you see as the greatest opportunities for the sector?

Most significant challenges to Canada:

- Labour shortage
- Foreign animal disease threats
- Input costs
- Trade friction with U.S.
- Disinvestment in Research
- Supply Chain Reliability
- Nonsufficient business risk tools
- Water
- Regulatory approval processes and timelines

Greatest opportunities for Canada:

- Value-added processing
- Diversification to global markets while maintaining US market
- Global leadership in research and evidence-based decision making
- Global leadership in innovation adoption
- Climate adaptation

Q4 - How can FPT governments best work with producers and processors through the Next Policy Framework to address these challenges and help advance sector priorities?

The conditions of success for Canadian agriculture lies beyond the walls of the federal and provincial agriculture departments. Growth for the sector requires the removal of significant barriers that fall under the responsibility of multiple departments.

Federally, for example, the sector's path to success involves removing barriers that rest with ESDC/IRCC (labour shortage), Treasury Board (regulatory reform), Finance Canada (taxation/tariffs), Environment Canada (climate resiliency), Labour (work stoppages), Transport Canada (supply chain), Health Canada

(PRD,VDD), Canada Border Services (product movement), Canadian Food Inspection Agency (regulatory reform) and Global Affairs (global markets).

Historically the Framework has remained in the silo of agriculture departments but its vision needs to be bigger and bolder - by clearly acknowledging barriers that lie outside the traditional jurisdiction. We call for a commitment in the Framework for AAFC to work across departmental lines; to proactively facilitate the sector's relationships with other departments and to fund the solutions no matter what department hold responsibility.

Q5 - We are nearing the halfway point of Sustainable CAP. What is working well in your view, and where is there room for improvement?

When the current Sustainable CAP was created, the government and sector could not have predicted the change in the global trading environment nor the geopolitical environment.

But we could predict increasing production costs and increasing risks, yet the BRM programs under the current Sustainable CAP continue to not meet the needs and realities of the sector. The timeliness and bankability of the programs has been a decade-long challenge that is not fully resolved. The current caps on programs limit the relevance to the sector and the imbalance between the available programs for crop versus livestock producers remains significant. Without meaningful modernizing of these programs in the next Framework, the growth in the sector will be limited and the succession of a next generation of producers will be stunted.

Q6 - What are the lessons learned that should be considered in the Next Policy Framework?

As noted in comments above, the new Framework needs to:

- Be responsive to the profoundly different realities for Canadian producers including changes in geopolitics, global trade, costs, risk and innovation.
- Be forward-looking with informed-predictions of what the sector will face by 2033.
- Build a policy vision for agriculture that is not limited by self-imposed jurisdictional and departmental restrictions.
- Go beyond simple tweaks to business risk management tools.
- Prepare for innovation and technology that will move at an unpredictable speed.

Q7 - Do you have any other ideas, comments, feedback or suggestions to share on Canada's Next Policy Framework?

Public trust remains important but food affordability is now the primary focus of consumers and this concern is not going to lessen in the coming year. The next Framework has the opportunity to incentivize 'food affordability' innovation in the sector. This may include a dedicated programs focusing on how Canadian agricultural producers and processors can remain competitive while making steps to reduce food costs for consumers.

Not addressing food affordability crisis in the Framework and the role of agriculture to contribute to a solution would be a missed opportunity for the sector to build trust with consumers.