

Call-to-action to make a new sustainability index a reality for Canada's agri-food sector

Ottawa: June 9, 2021: Momentum is building to establish Canada's first agri-food sustainability index. A private–public coalition of thirty-four diverse partners has released the *Business Case for Establishing the National Index on Agri-Food Performance* to affirm Canada's agri-food leadership in a more demanding food world.

There is a global race to reduce environmental impacts, meet net-zero-emission targets, and improve health and societal outcomes. Proof of sustainability is increasingly required to compete at home and abroad in an industry that is expected to show progress on these pressing matters.

As other countries position themselves to respond to these same global priorities, Canada can seize the initiative and demonstrate its rightful place as one of the most sustainable and responsible food systems in the world. The proposed national index will provide the rigour needed to demonstrate the Canadian agri-food sector's role in combating climate change, enhancing food security and confirming meaningful environmental and socio-economic improvements across the Canadian food system.

Presenting internationally accepted credentials is critical to grow and protect market share and project a stronger presence on the international stage. Showing that ingredients and value-added foods are sustainably-produced is vital to build greater trust in the domestic and global marketplace, alike. Moreover, credible benchmarking is key to inform and align policy and strategy.

The index would be housed in a newly proposed Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking, a neutral and authoritative body with shared private–public leadership and governance. The centre would enable stakeholders to collaborate and prepare an integrated picture of sustainability from farm to retail. Its work would be based on science-driven and verified indicators and be informed by sectoral benchmarking work and national statistics.

“This sustainability index should become Canada's signature response for a society and marketplace that increasingly values transparency and accountability for how food is produced”, says David McInnes, the coalition's coordinator. “We want Canada to be known here and abroad as the trusted source of food.”

The coalition now seeks further feedback from stakeholders and to broaden its representation as well as identify the optimum path to financially support the project by the fall. The intent is to publish the index by late 2022.

Partners: Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Alltech, Arrell Food Institute (University of Guelph), Bayer Crop Science, Birds Canada, BMO, Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance, Canadian Federation of Agriculture, Canadian Horticultural Council, Canadian Produce Marketing Association, Canadian Wildlife Federation, Chicken Farmers of Canada, Le Conseil de la transformation alimentaire du Québec, CropLife Canada, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Enterprise Machine Intelligence & Learning Initiative, Farm Credit Canada, Fertilizer Canada, Fisheries Council of Canada, Food, Health & Consumer Products of Canada, Global Institute for Food Security, Lakeland College (Alberta), Loblaw Companies Ltd., Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development, Manitoba Protein Consortium, Ontario Cattle Feeders Association/Ontario Corn Fed Beef, Nutrien, Olds College (Alberta), Protein Industries Canada, Pulse Canada, Statistics Canada, Syngenta, TrustBix Inc., World Business Council on Sustainable Development

Contact: David McInnes, Coordinator, National Index on Agri-Food Performance Project: davidmcinnes@gmail.com