

Minister
of Agriculture and
Agri-Food



Ministre
de l'Agriculture et de
l'Agroalimentaire

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0C5

Quote: 256513, 256853, 258606

July 30, 2020

Mr. Corey Beck
Chair
Agricultural Service Board Provincial Committee
PO Bag 100
Didsbury AB T0M 0W0

Dear Mr. Beck:

Thank you for your correspondence on the passed resolutions by the Agricultural Service Board Provincial Committee. Your input is important as we work to improve programming and support to the sector, including working with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and our provincial and territorial partners. I regret the delay in this response.

Federal, provincial, and territorial (FPT) officials are continuing to examine ways to improve business risk management (BRM) programs. In December 2019, FPT ministers agreed to conduct an assessment of the BRM programs to help guide the ongoing work to develop approaches to better meet the needs of producers and make programs more effective, agile, timely, and equitable for producers. We continue to work with our provincial and territorial partners to ensure that the suite of programs is meeting new and evolving risks in the sector.

Under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, FPT governments continue to provide support to producers through BRM programs, as well as strategic initiative programs. This includes \$2 billion in FPT cost-shared strategic initiatives and \$1 billion in federal activities and programs aimed at growing trade and expanding markets, fostering innovative and sustainable growth in the sector, and supporting diversity in a dynamic, evolving sector. Over the Growing Forward 2 period (2012–2017), FPT governments provided producers across Canada with over \$8 billion in support.

To enable AgriStability to help more producers manage the challenges of COVID-19, the enrollment deadline for the 2020 program year has been extended without penalty, from April 30 to July 3, 2020. Furthermore, interim payments have been increased from 50 to 75 percent in most jurisdictions, facilitating greater access to cash flow.

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In addition, the recently announced national AgriRecovery initiative, of up to \$125 million in funding, will help producers faced with costs incurred by COVID-19. This includes a \$50-million set-aside program for cattle producers dealing with the consequences of market disruptions. I encourage your organization and industry groups across Canada to continue to work with provincial and territorial governments to initiate AgriRecovery assessments to provide support to producers facing extraordinary costs associated with recovering from a disaster.

The Government of Canada has a long history of working with provincial and territorial partners and industry stakeholders to help support and enhance the sustainability of Canada's agriculture sector. This has included researching the benefits of on-farm woodlots and shelterbelts, and encouraging their establishment on working lands. The Canadian Agricultural Partnership is continuing to help producers to address soil and water conservation, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and adapt to climate change.

Under the Partnership, approximately \$430 million is available for FPT cost-shared programs that are designed to raise producers' awareness of environmental risks and accelerate the adoption of on-farm technologies and practices to reduce these risks, including the on-farm shelterbelts. These cost-shared programs are delivered by provinces and territories, enabling them to reflect the environmental priorities of the sector in each region, including identifying the practices and technologies eligible for incentives to producers.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) remains committed to collaborating with provinces, territories, and the sector to explore alternate approaches that support and encourage the adoption of innovation and nature-based climate solutions, such as establishing shelterbelts, as a way to address climate change and contribute toward Canada's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.

I recognize that industry has raised concerns that the current "Product of Canada" and "Made in Canada" guidelines are overly restrictive and inconsistent with some provincial requirements. Recommendations to revise these guidelines were included in the Agri-Food Economic Strategy Table Report. In response to these recommendations, CFIA and AAFC committed to review the guidelines as part of the Agri-Food and Aquaculture Regulatory Roadmap.

The review sought to encourage increased use of the claims on food labels. AAFC consulted with industry in March 2019 on a proposal to lower the 98 percent threshold for "Product of Canada" claims to 85 percent, and to allow more flexibility for "Made in Canada" claims. CFIA's survey of Canadians in June 2019 sought to verify that any proposed changes continue to provide valuable information for making purchasing decisions. These consultations generated a number of comments from consumers and industry, including some similar to those outlined in your resolution 13-20. These comments are being taken into consideration as the Government

considers next steps. The Government of Canada will communicate any changes that are made to the guidelines to industry stakeholders and Canadians.

The 51 percent Canadian content requirement quoted in your resolution comes from a previous policy. Currently, the use of the “Made in Canada” claim applies to food products whose substantial transformation has occurred in Canada. You can find more details on CFIA’s current guidelines for these claims at www.inspection.gc.ca/food-label-requirements/labelling/industry/origin-claims-on-food-labels/eng/1393622222140/1393622515592?chap=5#s1c5.

You may also be interested to know that, regarding honey, the *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations* require any blended varieties to state the country or countries of origin on the label. Any changes to “Product of Canada” and “Made in Canada” guidelines would not alter this requirement. You can view the guidance on labelling blended honey at www.inspection.gc.ca/food-label-requirements/labelling/industry/honey/eng/1392907854578/1392907941975?chap=6.

I trust that this information will be of assistance to you. Again, thank you for writing to me on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Bibeau', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, PC, MP