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Chair

Mr. Pat Finnigan

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

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• (1530)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.)): Welcome, everyone.

Please take your seats. The meeting is about to begin.

[English]

Please take your seats, everyone.

Welcome to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. Pursuant to Standing Order 108, we are undertaking a study of a food policy for Canada.

[Translation]

During the first hour, we are hearing from the following witnesses: Gordon Harrison, President of the Canadian National Millers Association; Patrick McGuinness, Interim President of the Fisheries Council of Canada; and Jason McLinton, Vice-President of the Grocery Division and Regulatory Affairs at the Retail Council of Canada.

We will begin with the Canadian National Millers Association.

[English]

Mr. Harrison, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Gordon Harrison (President, Canadian National Millers Association): Thank you.

Last week before the transport committee I spoke about just-in-time delivery. My apologies for being, almost, quite late.

Thank you for the invitation to appear before the committee.

To date, our association has not prepared a formal submission. My comments today are intended to provide a broader perspective of elements of a national food policy that are already in existence and that need to be taken into account in consideration of what could be a more clearly defined new national policy.

In preparing my comments, I revisited the ministerial mandate letter addressed to Minister MacAulay in early 2016. That letter identified the following priorities, among others: attracting “investment” and creating “good jobs in food processing”; supporting “discovery science and innovation in the sector”; and developing “a food policy that promotes healthy living and safe food by putting more healthy, high-quality food, produced by Canadian ranchers and farmers, on the tables of families across the country”.

The current consultation on a national food policy translated that into the four themes of “improving Canadians' access to affordable, nutritious, and safe food”; “increasing Canadians' ability to make healthy and safe food choices”; “using environmentally sustainable practices to ensure Canadians have a long-term, reliable, and abundant supply of food”; and “ensuring Canadian farmers and food processors are able to adapt to changing conditions to provide more safe and healthy food to consumers in Canada and around the world”. These priorities and themes are not necessarily aligned, could possibly conflict with one another, and may actually not represent what is happening in Canada today.

I worked to try to capture seven or eight points that speak to this idea of looking more broadly at context and perspective. I really wasn't able to do a very good job of it, to deliver in seven minutes. I'll be able to touch on a few, and I will be preparing a written submission to the committee, to follow.

First, I would like to offer a comment about more food on the tables of families across the country, one of the themes. Canadians are actually being encouraged by Health Canada and non-government advisers to eat less food while making healthier choices and changing their dietary behaviour. This, combined with Canada's rapidly aging population and slow population growth—which is about 1.1% a year—suggests that we are going to see little growth in demand for food, in contrast with some of these objectives of the national policy. The rate of growth of Canada's capacity to grow and process food will actually outstrip growth in demand domestically.

The words “safe food” appear three times in the seven points I have mentioned so far. It should interest members of this committee to know that an organization called the Canadian Supply Chain Food Safety Coalition—of which CNMA is a member—has been calling for the development and adoption of a national food safety strategy for over a decade. Mr. Albert Chambers, who is the executive director of the coalition, has requested an opportunity to appear before this committee, and I encourage you to invite him.

The key point is that a national food safety strategy is probably an integral part of a national food policy. The references to safe food might lead readers of the consultation document to conclude that we don't have a safe food supply today and we need to invest more resources in improving food safety. A key point I wish to make is that the food sector has been strongly advocating not just a strategy but modern, science-based food inspection and food safety legislation.

In the context of considering a national food policy, there is an urgent need to reconcile the messages being provided to Canadian consumers on the subject of food safety. CFIA and the Public Health Agency of Canada have on their website, and continue to tell consumers, that four million consumers will suffer a food-borne illness in Canada annually. That's one in nine residents of Canada who will have a food-borne illness. The actual number, based on surveillance that's been going on for several years, is less than 25,000. Food-borne illness is one of the least likely causes of death in Canada. At the same time, we're telling consumers here and in other markets that we have an enviable record of food safety and a reliable food supply that will always be safe. Also, I should add that consumers in Canada are spending billions of dollars annually on food safety, because the food producers and manufacturers are spending those dollars in getting food to market.

Where Canadian regulators and agencies need to invest more resources is in the education of consumers about safe food storage, handling, and cooking. Farmers, food processors, and retailers do not have control over what happens in home kitchens. That is where a great deal of work needs to be done.

• (1535)

We also need to reconcile the federal government messages about nutrition and health. There is insufficient time to speak to it, but I would ask members of the committee to note that Health Canada is in the process of changing the number of food labelling requirements that will depict some foods as good foods and some foods as bad foods. Historically, our sector has taken the view that all foods are nutritious and make a contribution to health and nutrition, but this is changing with proposals that are neither evidence-based nor science-based coming from Health Canada at this time.

In fact, if adopted, the new dietary guidelines will discourage consumers from eating enriched white bread, hamburger buns, hot dog buns, and other bakery products made with enriched flour. The folic acid that is added to enriched flour by regulation since 1998 has reduced neural tube defects, otherwise known as spina bifida and hydrocephalus, in Canada by 50% annually since the year 2000. This is a population health outcome lobbied for and advocated by our industry in conjunction with the Baking Association of Canada and others. These kinds of subtle things need to be taken into account.

Finally, other proposed regulatory amendments that are out there will prohibit the advertising of food to children, "children" being defined as those under 17 years of age. If these are adopted in Canada, a 16-year-old will be able to drive a car and make his or her own choices about health care decisions but will be prohibited from receiving advertising about food.

These are real proposals that are out there now. They are accessible on Health Canada's website. My colleague Paul Hetherington, president of the Baking Association of Canada, would be delighted to appear, I'm sure, to explain the implications.

Overall, I think what we have to understand is that a great deal of work has been done by industry and government on elements of a robust food regulatory framework, advertising standards, and food safety in the supply chain. All of these elements are present; they need to be drawn into the consideration of developing a policy.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Harrison.

Now we go to Mr. McGuinness for seven minutes.

Mr. Patrick McGuinness (Interim President, Fisheries Council of Canada): Thank you very much.

I think this is the first time the Fisheries Council of Canada, and in fact the seafood industry, has been invited to this committee, and we're very, very thankful for it.

I noted Gordon's comment that the government is basically advocating eating less food, but what it really is trying to communicate is eating healthier food. I assume that's why you've invited the seafood industry here today.

In any event, what I thought I'd do is give you a short oversight of the Fisheries Council of Canada. We've been around this town for a long time. We started in 1915 and in 1945 we changed our name to the Fisheries Council of Canada. Our association has members from coast to coast, right from British Columbia to Nunavut. Our companies are primarily what we call vertically integrated. That means they have their own harvesting vessels, they have their own processing, and most of them are doing their own marketing.

We're also very happy that, as part of our membership, we have what we call fishermen's co-operatives. Fishermen's co-operatives are simply fishermen who have fishing licences issued by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, but they've gone a step forward and basically either built or invested in their own processing plants. We are very pleased that they're part of our organization.

I also want to talk about the indigenous situation. Of course, that's quite important these days. We had a significant Supreme Court ruling in 1999 that basically defined indigenous fishing rights. Since then, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and our industry, the Fisheries Council of Canada, have been adjusting to that. I can say right now, in terms of British Columbia, 30% of the fishing licences given by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans are given to indigenous people. We're happy, as the Fisheries Council of Canada, the leading seafood organization in Canada, that three Inuit members in Nunavut are members of the Fisheries Council of Canada, as is the only indigenous company in Labrador. That's just a bit of a capsule of that.

In terms of our industry—I imagine you focus much more on agriculture than you do on seafood, and that's understandable—we're an \$8-billion industry, and \$6 billion of that goes into exports outside of Canada. We are now the eighth largest seafood exporter in the world. In terms of Canada, we are the highest export-oriented food sector in Canada.

To comment on food policy, what the Fisheries Council of Canada and the seafood industry are really focused on is food safety. I know you have three other elements, but food safety is one that we feel most comfortable dealing with. I have to say we have our credentials on that because the seafood industry of Canada was the first food sector to adopt mandatory HACCP as food safety requirements, and that was in 1992. Basically what we've been trying to do is make sure that type of food safety regime goes across Canada.

In terms of food policy, I'll pick up on a note that Gordon mentioned in terms of having a national food safety regime that is a HACCP-based regime. I say national because that's different than federal, provincial, and municipal, and it's important that we have a national regime as opposed to just simply a federal. A federal regime basically only applies to a company that's processing in Toronto that exports its production into another province or overseas. In Canada, this is a particularly important issue. That's simply because, if you look at a city such as Toronto, Vancouver, or Montreal, you can have a fairly substantive food processing company in Toronto just basically selling its products in Ontario, and it doesn't have to be federally registered. It can be provincially or municipally registered. That is a deficiency in our food safety regime.

● (1540)

That is also a deficiency of which other nations take note. Fortunately, if you want to be in fishing industry processing, you have to be part of the mandatory HACCP program. There's no loophole in that.

I think we have to be careful about our definitions, and we're talking nationally, not just for CFIA. It's going to be a hard negotiation. I press you to move in that direction.

The other thing in terms of HACCP is this: don't give any exemptions. There is no question: if this rolls out across the country, you're going to get people or companies coming in and saying that it's going to be costly and all that sort of stuff. In 1992 we established our HACCP program. There's no question that there were small, medium-sized, and large companies that were part of it. It was all mandatory.

We worked with the small companies. Funnily enough, what we found was that the small companies had probably the easiest transition into the HACCP program, because what you have to identify is a critical control point. What part of your processing is going to be a potential significant health problem? In a small company, you pretty well know it. If you don't know it, you shouldn't be in the food industry. For example, in the fisheries, often that one critical point was probably just in terms of the fish being entered into the company.

So I'm saying no exemptions, and the next item I'm going to focus on is that basically in the seafood industry and the food industry, some food-processing jobs are unattractive.

● (1545)

The Chair: Mr. McGuinness, can you quickly wrap up? We're out of time.

Mr. Patrick McGuinness: All I'm saying here is that the answer is not importing temporary workers: it's innovation and automation. That's where we have to go.

What I'm going to say is that in terms of Growing Forward, you have three great programs: AgriMarketing, AgriInnovation, and AgriCompetitiveness. The seafood industry has access to AgriMarketing. We don't have access to AgriInnovation and AgriCompetitiveness, and that's important to us. That's our future. We hope we can get that voice to you in terms of having that.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McGuinness.

We now go to Jason McLinton, who is the Vice-President of the Grocery Division and Regulatory Affairs at the Retail Council of Canada.

Mr. McLinton, go ahead.

Mr. Jason McLinton (Vice-President, Grocery Division and Regulatory Affairs, Retail Council of Canada): Mr. Chair, members of the committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to discuss a food policy for Canada with you.

[English]

I want to begin by saying that the RCC is highly supportive of an overarching food policy to provide direction when developing future Government of Canada policies, programs, and regulations.

[Translation]

I will briefly introduce the Retail Council of Canada, RCC.

In the private sector, the retail industry employs the largest number of people in Canada. More than 2.1 million Canadians work in our industry. In 2016, the sector generated an estimated \$73 billion in wages. Furthermore, its sales were \$353 billion, without taking into account vehicle and fuel sales. RCC members account for more than two-thirds of retail sales in Canada.

The council is a non-profit organization funded by the industry. It represents small, medium and large retailers in communities across the country. Recognized as the voice of retailers in Quebec and in Canada, RCC represents over 45,000 businesses of all types, including department stores, grocery stores, specialty stores, discount stores, independent stores and online merchants.

I should point out that 95% of food retailers are RCC members. They provide essential services and are important employers in communities, large and small, across the country. They have a variety of recognized private labels and offer products in all food categories.

[English]

The important point there is that we represent both retailers as sellers of all types of food products, but every one of our members also has private-label brands and therefore has an interest from a food manufacturing perspective as well.

I am the vice-president of the grocery division for the Retail Council, and I manage RCC's food safety and regulatory committee. I'm here today because our members have a unique perspective in that they offer food types from every food category and they have direct interface and interactions with Canadian consumers. Healthy lifestyle is something that is very important to members and they promote it. They have a number of activities. For instance, through their private-label programs they have a strong record of product reformulation, product redevelopment, and innovation, to provide products that contribute to a healthy diet. They're also active in providing nutrition support and education to consumers through in-store dietitians, nutrition rating programs, and in-store support for health conditions that require special diets, such as diabetes and hypertension.

Our members also provide products and information that promote food skills development in support of healthy eating, from partially prepared meals that help consumers gain cooking skills and confidence, to in-store kitchens and cooking classes, to recipes and tips on preparing healthy meals and snacks at home. In addition, our members have proudly partnered with Health Canada to support important collaborative consumer education programs, including the Eat Well and Nutrition Facts education campaigns. These programs were successful in educating Canadians on both nutrition fundamentals and how to use the nutrition facts table.

Specifically with regard to comments on Canada's food policy, in order to ensure that our food system continues to be the world leader that it is—in fact, I'm sure members of this committee are familiar with a 2014 Conference Board of Canada report that actually tied Health Canada in first place with Ireland for the world's safest food safety system—the food policy must contain the following seven elements.

One, as a basis it must start with a recognition that Canada's food system is indeed among the safest in the world and provides some of the most affordable food to Canadians.

Two, it must recognize the role that government has to play in further increasing access to affordable food and further improving health and food safety, and that these are critical for all Canadians.

Three, it must include provisions to ensure that industry is consulted in order to ensure that any new policies, programs, and regulations are not only achievable, but actually promote industry growth.

Four, it must look to the requirements of our major trading partners and allow for differences only under specifically listed circumstances, such as differences in language or in climate, so as to maximize consumer choice and minimize additional costs that are associated with regulatory misalignment.

Five, similarly to international regulatory harmonization, it must promote interprovincial harmonization as well as within the federal family. The policy touches on issues that span the work of many federal departments, and also provincial and municipal jurisdictions. In many cases there is existing significant work being undertaken in these areas, such as nutrition and food waste, for example.

Six, it must recognize programs that industry already has in place, for example food waste management, and avoid regulating in these

areas in order to avoid duplication of effort. Of course, by definition, regulations are intervening in the marketplace, so if something's already being done voluntarily, we don't want to limit innovation and flexibility.

• (1550)

Seven, it must acknowledge that imported foods are an integral part of Canada's food system. After all, we do live in Canada and there are seasonal considerations. In order for us to enjoy the products that we also in enjoy in December, January and February, we need to recognize the role that imports play in our access to these foods at affordable prices year-round.

These seven elements will promote industry growth and I'd be pleased to take your questions.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. McLinton.

[*Translation*]

I would like to welcome Raj Saini, who is joining the committee today, and welcome back Ruth Ellen Brosseau.

Welcome, everyone.

[*English*]

We'll now start our question round with Mr. Luc Berthold, for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I also thank all the witnesses for joining us to testify.

I want to begin by saying that the government is currently studying several aspects of the new food policy. The department is holding consultations, the minister's office has held its own, and it is now the committee's turn to do the same. So we are seeing an overabundance of consultations, and we don't know whether the outcomes of each of them will come together and result in the testimony from different consultations being reflected in Canada's new food policy.

I am a new member of the committee, but this is an issue I am very concerned about, just as I am concerned about the proposed changes to the tax reform that will affect small and medium-sized businesses.

Our internal consultation period is very short, and hardly anyone will be consulted. However, those consultations will have an impact on each of your industries.

Mr. McLinton, you talked about affordable food. What is the proportion of SMEs in your organization?

• (1555)

Mr. Jason McLinton: I will answer your question from a food trade perspective.

[English]

I believe we have 10 grocery members. They prefer to define themselves as independent members as opposed to small and medium enterprises. Exactly how we define that is challenging, but roughly a half, maybe five of them, would be described as independent members, and then five would be the larger, more recognizable chains that you would know.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: You have seen that one of the challenges of the food policy will be to keep the cost of food very low. Every cost increase will have an effect on product suppliers.

[English]

Mr. Harrison, I can ask you the question in English, if you want.

[Translation]

Mr. Gordon Harrison: Practice is always important.

[English]

Go ahead, please.

Mr. Luc Berthold: I would like to know how many small enterprises you have in your organization.

Mr. Gordon Harrison: Nationally, the industry has about 53 milling establishments. I should have said that the companies mill wheat, oats, and barley into wheat flour and other mill wheat products like oatmeal. Of the 53, our members account for 29 or 30 establishments. The other 23 are typically very small enterprises, a number of them family-owned. Some do business only within their province, as is the case in some parts of Quebec and New Brunswick, and in Alberta.

Among our members we have two that I would describe as small enterprises. By virtue of the national definition of a small business, each one of our facilities would not employ more than 100 people, and some fewer than 50. As individual establishments, they're not large. A number of our members are large corporations affiliated with U.S. facilities as well. We're really a North American industry, but about half of the establishments would meet that category.

Mr. Patrick McGuinness: Our organization certainly does have the major seafood processors or corporations in Canada. At the same time, as I mentioned, in fishermen's co-operatives, we're very happy having them as members. We're very careful in our board of directors. We have boards of directors based on provinces. We have members of our boards from Newfoundland and Labrador, and we try to have at least one small or medium-sized member as a board member from the provincial side.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Okay, so you add it up. We're interested in this question because all these changes proposed in this period are a great concern to us.

Mr. Harrison, before I go on, you tell us that the food guide will put some food in the bad sector and some in the good sector, not based on science. How can they do that?

Mr. Gordon Harrison: I will provide some submissions to the clerk that explain this. They're not ours. They're from the Baking Association of Canada, but we've had input. The Canadian Community Health Survey provides extensive data on dietary

intake. That most recent data was not applied in Health Canada's current consultations on nutrition. Ironically, in other elements of Health Canada's purview in the realm of food safety, that survey is being taken into account.

Mr. Luc Berthold: So we have to look at your numbers and at your survey.

Mr. Gordon Harrison: We have to look at the Government of Canada's numbers carefully and incorporate them into a food policy, and that survey is completed about every 10 years.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, as I don't have much time left, I would like to use it to move the motion I submitted last week, which is the following:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Committee immediately undertake a study on the proposed changes to the tax system in order to assess their impacts on small farm businesses, particularly family farms and the inherent risks in the proposals on transfer of ownership; and that the Committee report its findings to the House no later than Friday, December 1, 2017.

•(1600)

[English]

The Chair: You all have a copy of the motion.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): I request a recorded vote.

The Chair: Yes, of course.

[English]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Does Mr. Berthold want to defend his motion, or does he just want to call the question right away?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: If Ms. Boucher is okay with me talking about the motion, I will do so with pleasure.

It won't take very long. I think that you are aware of the situation and that you have received a lot of mail from your constituents. Farmers are worried about the tax changes proposed by the Minister of Finance. Those changes have a major impact on the taxation of capital gains of family members, on the taxation of dividends paid to family members and on the taxation of passive income.

The consequences of those changes are a higher tax rate for family farms, difficulties with family transfers and an unfair system. The system will keep the wealthiest people from being affected by that tax reform.

That is why I think that, to understand the impact of those proposed tax changes, especially on family farms, it would be important to undertake this study as soon as possible.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any other comments on what has been proposed?

Mr. Francis Drouin: I am not really opposed to Mr. Berthold's motion, but the Standing Committee on Finance normally looks into these issues. I am sure that it will have ample opportunity to do so.

We are ready to request a vote.

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

Mr. Barlow, go ahead.

[*English*]

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate my colleague's intervention, but I would argue that this food policy study that we're doing right now would be the health committee, not even agriculture. It didn't seem to stop this committee from taking on a food policy study, which again I don't think is actually an agriculture issue, whereas this is definitely an agriculture issue. I think, if anything, in this study we would be able to perhaps address some of the misunderstandings, the misinformation, or just the confusion that's out there in the agriculture industry.

I've certainly had literally hundreds of phone calls and emails from my constituents. I have not had one who supports the tax changes, but the biggest question is that they don't understand exactly how this would impact them. I get the same response from accountants and tax attorneys, that they just have not had the time in those 72 days to take a look at all of the possible scenarios and how they are going to impact their clients.

I think it behooves us to take the time to address some of the confusion and the lack of information that's out there and try to clarify exactly how these tax changes would impact our agriculture industry. As the government said in its mandate letter, agriculture's going to be one of the key cornerstones of economic growth. So if these tax changes go through and they devastate the family farm or have a detrimental impact on agriculture, I think that's something we should know. I think this is just a top priority and I don't see why we wouldn't want to dig into this.

Thank you.

• (1605)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barlow.

Mr. Peschisolido, do you have a comment?

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I think Mr. Barlow's right that as a Parliament we have to look at these tax changes, and as a Parliament we are doing so. There is a consultation process. The finance minister will bring forth proposals based on the consultation. I've had the same concerns from folks, and that's natural: it's a consultation process. I've had a town hall in Richmond with the chamber. I'm going to have another town hall on matters concerning which farmers have come to me. We have discussed it, and we're going to see.

I also believe, though, that there is a division of labour. As Francis mentioned, it will be looked into at finance committee. Here at the

agriculture committee, we're looking at something that we should be doing: we're looking at a holistic approach to our food policy.

I agree, Mr. Barlow, that we should as a Parliament be looking at it, but this committee should be looking at food policy.

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brosseau, go ahead.

[*English*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): I think it's really important that we look at these measures. We are the agriculture committee. I know the finance committee will be looking at the subject eventually. What I'm really concerned about is that the consultations started in the middle of summer.

I represent a rural riding. We had floods in the springtime. Many of my constituents weren't able to work and plant as they wanted to. It was a really rough year for certain people who owned land by the St. Lawrence. When this consultation was announced, they were out working. Now and for the last little while we've been getting a lot of calls, letters, and emails.

I think it's really important that as the agriculture committee, which is supposed to stand up for farmers and agriculture here in Canada, we better understand the proposed changes. There is an opportunity to demystify what they are and maybe calm some of the fears.

Last year we had a wonderful bill before the House of Commons. I talk about it often, and I won't stop talking about it. It was my colleague Guy Caron's bill, Bill C-274, about transferring family farms, small businesses. Most of the members on this committee supported it. I don't know whether Mr. Saini or Madame Nassif supported that bill, but it was a really important bill. It would have helped the transfer of family farms. Sadly, that bill didn't even get to committee.

I think, then, that it is even more important that we, as members of the agriculture committee, look at these changes. In my constituency I get a lot of phone calls about this matter; I'm sure you get a lot of phone calls about it too. It's our duty to look at this.

My fear is that once it gets to finance committee, agriculture will just be puffed off. We are the experts. We have to look at this. I'm really hoping that the members on the other side would be open to looking at the matter.

We know that the government, the Minister of Finance, is consulting. I think we should extend the consultation period. We should be consulting and looking into this deeper at agriculture committee. I'm not saying that we stop doing this study on food policy, but I think we need to look at the subject, maybe after this study is done, because it has to be done in November.

[*Translation*]

We have 10 meetings—

The Chair: It will be on October 5.

[English]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Anyway, I would hope that we would get to this as soon as possible, making sure that we look as an ag committee at the proposed changes and how they affect family farms.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Brosseau.

Ms. Nassif, the floor is yours.

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My participation in this committee was added to my parliamentary duties. So I am new to the committee.

Since witnesses are present, I suggest that we put off this discussion, as important as it may be, until the end of the meeting, so as not to waste the time of witnesses who have come to share their views on agriculture and food.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Nassif.

Are there any other comments?

[English]

If not, we've been asked to proceed with a recorded vote.

(Motion negatived: nays 5; yeas 4)

The Chair: Thank you.

Your six minutes have expired.

We will move to Madame Nassif.

•(1610)

[Translation]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: As I already said, I thank the witnesses for their presentations.

My first question is for you, Mr. McLinton. Food waste and food loss are two problems that particularly affect Canada. Some countries have implemented rules that prevent food waste in specific circumstances. I believe that France has already prohibited waste by supermarkets.

However, I find it troubling that it is not natural for companies and individuals to behave like this. We know that food security is precarious and that we have food surpluses. Companies like Loblaw's and Sobeys, which have a lot of reserves, definitely have a fairly high percentage in terms of food loss.

Do companies of that size avoid giving away extra reserves because, if that practice was established across the country, the cost of transportation and labour would be too high?

If so, how can we remedy the situation and what industries do you think will be the most affected in that case?

Mr. Jason McLinton: Thank you, Ms. Nassif.

[English]

Let me start by saying that food waste is an absolute critical priority for every one of the Retail Council of Canada's members. It isn't only the right thing to do from a consumer perspective, it also

financially doesn't make sense to be losing product, so on a number of levels this is critical to our members.

Every single one of the members of the Retail Council participates in food waste programs from composting to fleet management. For instance, there's making sure that when a refrigeration unit comes in with product it also is going back out with, for instance, produce for composting and that sort of thing. Again, that makes sense both from an environmental and a food waste perspective, as well as from a financial perspective.

Every one of them has partnerships with food banks in order to minimize food waste. The members I've been speaking with have indicated that the food banks currently don't have the infrastructure to handle all of the products that the members are in a position to donate to them.

That being said, I want to raise two critical elements here, number one is Canadians who look to food banks in order to supplement their diets deserve the same level of food safety as any other Canadian, so when there's a food that is past its expiry date and when something becomes dangerous, it's the responsibility of the retailer to dispose of that product in a way that is safe.

Number two, a big portion of food waste has to do with what's happening in the home. That's a big part of the conversation that I find isn't always part of the conversation and should be. I think of the role of consumer education in terms of how long you can store a raw meat product, for example; how long can you store it after it's cooked; how to properly store it; hand washing; refrigeration; all that kind of stuff. I think consumer education is a critical part of that piece and that's where the members continue to invest a lot of their energy and that's worth pursuing.

[Translation]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Thank you.

My second question is for Mr. McGuinness.

Last Tuesday, a witness from the Conference Board of Canada told us that no regulations similar to those on agriculture were currently being considered for fisheries.

In consultations on food policy, how does the lack of fisheries regulations affect industry?

How can we remedy that in consultations on food policy?

•(1615)

[English]

Mr. Patrick McGuinness: I find your comment amazing. The fishing industry of Canada has a wide range of regulations put on it by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. With respect to the food safety element, we're subject to Health Canada's rules and regulations and to CFIA. We have probably the most advanced—and it's recognized internationally—food safety regime out there. It is an asset to everyone. So I'm quite surprised that the Conference Board would make that comment. I think it's totally off-rail.

We founded an organization called the IAFI, the International Association of Fish Inspectors. The founders of that were the Fisheries Council of Canada and the U.S. organizations. We had a fantastic conference in Iceland two weeks ago and 450 people participated. We're trying to bring in fish inspectors from developing countries so that the advancements we've made and the knowledge we have will be spread throughout the world. The bottom line is that 60% of the seafood exported in the world is coming from developing countries, so we're in there trying to make sure there's as much food safety as possible. We see that, and we know we are an international market. That's why I'm totally surprised at that comment.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McGuinness and Ms. Nassif.

Ms. Brosseau, go ahead for six minutes.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am really happy that we are talking about food waste.

I think it is very important to prioritize buying local. I do it every summer and whenever possible. During the summer, there are a number of public markets, which I also visit. This year, that gave me an opportunity to talk a bit about food policy.

At the NDP, we have been working on developing a food strategy for several years. In 2014, we developed and unveiled our food policy—our strategy and vision for agriculture. We were the only party to do so before the 2015 election, and I am really proud of that. I am happy that the Liberals are holding consultations and are creating their own strategy.

One issue that comes up often is food waste. During the summer, I had an opportunity to participate in a press conference held by Moisson Lanaudière. For some time, Moisson Lanaudière has been working with retailers from the region. IGA and Metro make donations to Moisson Lanaudière. In Mauricie, Moisson Mauricie/Centre-du-Québec has virtually the same program, and I know there is a similar program in Montreal. It is important to ensure that the poorest people who are in need have access to healthy food.

Last year, I introduced a bill asking the federal government to take action by planning the development of a national strategy to reduce food waste.

Mr. McLinton, you talked about the importance of funding to fill the gaps in infrastructure. Trucks and refrigeration systems are needed. Can you tell us more about the importance of making a recommendation on that kind of a program or on the support that must be given to food banks in terms of supply and transportation of food from retailers to aid organizations?

Mr. Jason McLinton: Thank you, Ms. Brosseau.

[English]

Well, I'm in a position to comment from a retail perspective, as opposed to a food bank perspective. Every one of the members I represent has partnerships with food banks, and every one of them I've spoken to has said that the food banks are not equipped to handle the amount of product they're able to provide to them. I would agree very strongly that this is a conversation worth having. It doesn't limit innovation and flexibility. Because this is being done on

a voluntary basis already, I'm quite convinced that regulation is not the way to go. In respect of infrastructure and that sort of thing, however, I think this is absolutely a conversation worth having.

• (1620)

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: One thing that was included in the bill I had before the House—and sadly it didn't even get to committee but was voted down—was to talk about education. You are right that a lot of the food is wasted at home. We need to make sure that people know how to keep food and store it properly, and also pay attention to make sure they don't eat food that is too funky and that can make them sick. I think that's something that could be included in this food strategy: the education part on how to store food and keep it.

Mr. Jason McLinton: I agree very strongly. We do some of that work already with Health Canada. They're a wonderful partner with us in terms of producing materials. We're talking about social media and all this kind of stuff. We are enthusiastic partners about doing more of that.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: The ag minister announced the food strategy and he will be leading it, but it will obviously touch on other departments like Health and Indigenous and Northern Affairs. We need to get the nutrition north program right, because we're talking about a lot of people who are food insecure, and the further north they are, the harder it is to get fresh and affordable food.

I'll throw the question out to everybody: does anybody have any examples of how alignment didn't occur in the collaboration between different ministers' offices? Do you have any suggestions on how this could be handled correctly? It's going to include a lot of actors.

Mr. Harrison.

Mr. Gordon Harrison: I'd like to comment on that.

I spoke about misalignment, and that is the misalignment in what is actually being done in terms of active outreach to consumers. There may well be good partnerships with members of the Retail Council who are dealing with consumer education, but we really aren't seeing that consumers are becoming more informed, in my opinion. I don't think there are statistics to indicate that we've really moved the dial to make a lot of improvement in the number of consumers who can comprehend labels and comprehend how to handle food, store it, etc. There has been a misalignment. We have this conflict in which we're telling consumers in Canada and in importing countries that we have a wonderful safe food system, while at the same time we're telling Canadians they have a one in nine chance of being sick from food every year. Statistics don't support that. That's a misalignment.

I cannot speak to access. A very significant problem you're talking about is having local and regional access to a wide variety of foods, but I do believe that there is far too little effort and far too little public expenditure going towards consumer education on nutrition and other things.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Harrison. Unfortunately, we're out of time.

[Translation]

Mr. Drouin, you have six minutes.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Thanks to all the witnesses for being here.

One of the issues we talked about is food waste. The biggest question is how do you make sure that people at home don't waste? Just to look at my personal example, for instance, I'll have milk after the due date, but my better half will not touch it at all. It doesn't mean that food is bad; it's just that she will not have it. What do you think the solution is to educate the population in terms of minimizing food waste at home?

Mr. Jason McLinton: If I may take that, Mr. Drouin, there's a role, obviously, for government to play, and there's a role for industry to play. Again, from a retail perspective, we have direct interface with the consumer, so we have a role to play in that as well.

Your example is a really good one, in that there's a difference between expiry date and best-before date. Madam Brosseau referred to northern communities. This is particularly important in northern communities, for example, where there may be products that are perfectly safe to consume but that are past their best-before date, which is literally what that means: it's past that certain freshness date but it is perfectly safe to consume. I don't know if public-private partnership is the right term, but there's a role for industry to play, in partnership with government, in order to get that message to Canadians.

If I may, Mr. Drouin, I just want to touch on something that Madam Brosseau said around opportunities for alignment. Right now I believe there are five labelling proposals out there between CFIA and Health Canada. There's front-of-pack labelling. There's the best-before date—we were talking just now about best-before date and expiry date. There's the nutrition facts table. Every time a label needs to be changed, you don't just add something to it. There's a team of experts who sit down, from different companies, marketing, and food safety, and it involves an entire redesign. Imagine doing that for every single product. Our members sell hundreds of thousands of products. An opportunity for alignment would be to make sure that all of these proposals that allow for one product redesign come into force at the same time. These costs do not get absorbed into the system. Every cost that is incurred by industry ultimately gets passed onto Canadian consumers. It would be a real opportunity to do all of these at once.

• (1625)

Mr. Francis Drouin: Do you have any statistics in terms of how many consumers actually look at the labels on the back? I know the comprehension of the labels is not there, but actually looking at them as well, does your industry have statistics on that?

Mr. Jason McLinton: I do not have statistics on that, no.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Go ahead, Mr. Harrison.

Mr. Gordon Harrison: I invite some research to be done by the committee analysts, but I believe the information would indicate that perhaps as many as 75% to 80% of Canadians don't really read labels very often unless it says “new” or “improved” or they've never seen the product before. It's a very low level, as I understand it, but there are data out there. I'm sorry that we don't have them for you today.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I'll just go back to the Retail Council.

I'm sorry, Mr. McGuinness, did you want to add anything before I go on?

Mr. Patrick McGuinness: Not right now.

Mr. Francis Drouin: You sort of had your seven-point plan. One of them is that governments have a role to play in affordable food, and we think about the nutrition north program. Is that what you're referring to?

Mr. Jason McLinton: Yes, exactly. Our members take accessibility very seriously, so they engage in a number of programs. There are breakfast programs, for example. There are backpack programs for kids to bring food to school. Through most of our members, you can order food online. There's home delivery. There are all sorts of programs out there to ensure accessibility. The point there is that government, to use the example of nutrition north, has a role to play. If it's not economically viable to open a grocery store, I think it behooves governments to create conditions that would be economically viable. If we want a grocery store in a certain community, for example, whether it's through tax incentives or whatever else, government should make it attractive for business to open, and businesses will open. That's the idea there, that if government facilitates that, if government builds it, they will come.

Mr. Francis Drouin: One of the last witnesses we had at the last committee meeting talked about food security and its whole transportation corridor. I was using just the simple example that, if Highway 401 or autoroute 40 in Quebec closed down for 48 hours, your members' shelves would probably be empty. Has there been any thought about how we should address that or how your members have done so? Are there strategies in place to make sure that food security is in place in case unpredictable events happen?

Mr. Jason McLinton: Absolutely, yes. I don't know that the members would speak of it in terms of specifically “food security”, but it doesn't make good business sense to not have product to sell to consumers, so they have a number of vendors and a number of suppliers. Again, it depends on seasonality and all this sort of thing.

That goes back to the point that I made about the critical role that imports play. Of course every member has a different business model and different suppliers—some have more local suppliers and some fewer—but all of them have a range of suppliers so that if, for instance, the 40 or the 401 were closed, hopefully that other highway or the local roads would not be. There are numerous suppliers. They don't speak of it in those terms, but it doesn't make good business sense to not have shelves that are stocked.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thanks.

The Chair: I think that will, unfortunately, wrap up this hour. I want to thank our guests.

For your information, I just want to point out that the next information package we'll have will show the stats from 2010 on food waste. I don't think there are any stats on how many people look at the label, but on food waste itself, we'll have it in our next package.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Thank you for coming to testify today Mr. Harrison, Mr. McGuinness and Mr. McLinton.

[*English*]

We'll take a short break and be back with the second hour.

• (1630)

(Pause)

• (1630)

The Chair: I would ask the guests to take their seats.

For the second hour we will hear from the Canadian Seed Trade Association, Mr. Dave Carey, executive director. Welcome, Mr. Carey. From the Egg Farmers of Canada, we have Mr. Tim Lambert, chief executive officer, and Mr. Roger Pelissero, chairman.

We'll start with the trade association. You have up to seven minutes for an opening statement.

• (1635)

Mr. Dave Carey (Executive Director, Canadian Seed Trade Association): Mr. Chair, honourable members, on behalf of the Canadian Seed Trade Association, or CSTA, I'd like to thank the committee for your invitation to discuss our perspective on the food policy for Canada.

Before I make some comments, I'd like to just quickly frame up who we are and what our members are about, to give you the context of what we're speaking about.

CSTA is a not-for-profit, non-partisan, voluntary trade association based here in Ottawa. We have more than 130 company and association members that are engaged in all aspects of seed, from research and development and plant breeding, to production and processing, marketing, distribution, and sales, and the sales are both domestic and international.

Our members serve the needs of their farmer customers by developing seed produced through various production methods, including organic, conventional, and biotechnological. They range from small family-owned businesses to large multinational firms. Our members work with over 50 different crop kinds, ranging from

corn, canola, and soybeans, to wheat, barley and oats, forages and grasses, and vegetable and garden seed.

The seed industry contributes about \$6 billion to the Canadian economy annually, and employs more than 57,000 Canadians. It exports close to half a billion dollars a year worth of product to more than 70 countries.

Seed may seem at first glance to be far removed from a national food policy, but it's important to remember that seed is the start of it all, the first step in the agriculture and agrifood value chain. Our members are the ones who develop the varieties through breeding programs and produce the seed that is planted across the country. Seed that our members produce becomes the crops that are harvested and processed, and ultimately end up on the grocery store shelves.

According to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, nine out of 10 bites of food start with the planting of seed. Any national food policy must keep in mind where food comes from and take a holistic approach to the entire value-chain process. CSTA therefore views three key components as being critical in the development of a successful and robust food policy.

The first is education. Canadian farmers have done an exceptional job in producing an abundant, affordable, safe, and nutritious food supply, so much so that most Canadians are far removed from primary agriculture and unaware of exactly how food is being produced, and ending up at their local Loblaws or Metro. Food security has never been an issue for most parts of Canada. We are fortunate to be a net exporter of agricultural goods. As such, CSTA views a national food policy as an excellent tool to educate and inform the Canadian public about the agricultural value chain and build an awareness of what it truly takes to feed a growing world.

More education is needed across the country to encourage Canadians to learn where their food comes from, and how nutritious, affordable meals can easily be made. There's also the opportunity to dispel mistruths about modern agriculture and promote the fact that farming has never been more environmentally sustainable.

Second, it requires the whole of government. Food policy cannot be developed in a vacuum. It needs to be developed using the whole-of-government approach that cuts across departments and agencies, and it also takes into account other government initiatives under way.

The federal government currently has several initiatives under way that must be taken into account when designing a food policy. For example, Canada's healthy eating strategy, the proposed safe food for Canadians regulations, and CFIA's plants and animals health strategy. There are a lot of moving parts that must be complementary or the results will be policies and initiatives that are misaligned and/or contradictory. We hope that those leading each of these initiatives are in regular discussions with one another. It is important to ask how a food policy fits with all this other work under way.

We must also ask ourselves how we can design a food policy with the goal of affordable food without addressing regulatory burdens and policy misalignment that impact production costs. How can we expect more from agriculture, and in particular farmers, without removing impediments that stifle growth, let alone adding new ones?

Lastly, a food policy must be grounded in transparent, risk-based science with objectives that are clear, measurable, and reproducible. Sometimes, scientific decisions aren't the popular ones to make, but we must be steadfast. This government has made growing Canada's agrifood industry a key priority, as evidenced by both the Barton report and the subsequent budget that sets out to increase agrifood exports to \$75 billion by 2025.

A food policy based solely on affordable food will not help achieve this goal. Again, we need to make sure our policies are aligned and complementary.

As this committee deliberates, I would ask that you keep in mind what the agriculture industry needs to be successful, to thrive, to innovate, and ultimately to produce safe, healthy, and affordable food for Canadians.

The agriculture industry is concerned about its continued access to key crop protection products that they rely on. The Pest Management Regulatory Agency is currently proposing, in some cases, to cancel the registration of products where no viable alternative exists. Crop protection products are critical for food production and growers need these effective tools to continue to provide high quality food in a sustainable production system.

This policy also cannot be developed solely at the federal level; there must be engagement at the provincial level. Whether that's through the FPT process, I leave to you.

• (1640)

For example, in Ontario we have regulations. Quebec is now proposing regulations that would severely restrict growers' access to the use of critical crop-protection products. Alberta has a zero-tolerance policy for fusarium, despite its being widely established across Canada and in Alberta as well. These regulations are not founded in science and they create a patchwork of different provincial rules. Without alignment across the country, we cannot hope to reach the stated goals of a food policy.

In conclusion, CSTA is supportive of the minister's mandate to "Develop a food policy that promotes healthy living and safe food by putting more healthy, high-quality food, produced by Canadian ranchers and farmers, on the tables of families across the country." However, this policy must have clear priorities, must be easy to administer and oversee, and cannot be weighed down by competing

priorities such as wanting farmers to produce more food for less but limiting their access to essential tools to be more productive. The left hand needs to be speaking to the right.

I would welcome any questions that you have today.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Carey.

We go now to the Egg Farmers of Canada for seven minutes.

Mr. Roger Pelissero (Chairman, Egg Farmers of Canada): Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank everybody for inviting us here today to be part of your study on a food policy for Canada.

My name is Roger Pelissero. I am a third-generation egg farmer from St. Ann's, Ontario, and I'm also the chair of the board for the Egg Farmers of Canada. With me today is Mr. Tim Lambert, CEO of Egg Farmers of Canada.

As we all know, the world's population is estimated to grow to 9.6 billion people by 2050, requiring a 70% increase in global food production. It is our belief that this impending population growth makes safe, secure domestic food production even more pressing, and the Canadian egg industry is a success story in that regard. We are an industry equipped to not only meet today's domestic demands for a fresh, nutritious food; we also aim to grow our industry alongside increasing consumer demand for our product, the humble egg.

I am proud to be here today representing Canada's more than 1,000 family egg farms across this country. Our decades of expertise as a food-producing industry lead us to believe that a national food policy must begin with evidence-based research. This allows us to benchmark progress with reliable metrics rather than perception.

Canadian eggs are produced in all 10 provinces and in the Northwest Territories. They are, by nature, best produced locally and consumed fresh. They are also one of the most affordable sources of high-quality protein you can buy. To put it in perspective, a dozen eggs costs less than the price of a latte. Further to this, every Canadian egg farmer is committed to continuous improvements in food safety and animal welfare. We do this through our national programs that hold our members to a common set of standards. We run these programs so that we can offer Canadians a firm guarantee: that their eggs are fresh, healthy, and safe, and produced on family farms that are held to the highest standards.

To ensure that our industry continues to thrive for generations to come, it is our hope that the theme “growing more high-quality food” remains at the forefront of the food policy for Canada discussion and that farmers remain engaged in that process. Dialogue focused on expanding Canada's agriculture sector by supporting primary producers is a critical concept in the long-term vision to enhance Canada's food system. As the government looks to increase availability of high-quality food domestically and internationally, it is important to maintain support for domestic policies like supply management that offer a secure food supply, and support to young people willing to take on a career in agriculture. Your support in these areas offers stability to farmers who reinvest in their operations and in their industry.

One example of this investment is environmental sustainability. The transition to a greener economy is accelerating fast, and the same principles hold true for farming. Thanks to the stability of supply management, egg farmers have seized the opportunity to take a leading role in preserving the environment, by producing more with less. In fact, over the the last 50 years, Canada's egg industry has sliced its environmental footprint by half and at the same time doubled its production.

As the government continues to bolster practices that conserve soil, water, and air, egg farmers are investing in research that will identify further opportunities to make egg farming more environmentally sound. Canadian egg farmers are proud to provide the constant supply of fresh, local, and high-quality eggs that Canadians want to buy and enjoy, and look forward to working with you to build and expand a food policy for Canada that truly works.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pelissero.

Now we'll start our second round of questions.

Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Lambert. That latte really got me off track.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Tim Lambert (Chief Executive Officer, Egg Farmers of Canada): Thank you.

I echo Roger's thanks. We appreciate being part of this.

We understand that one of the priorities of the food policy is to help Canadians make healthier food choices and to deliver food that is as safe as possible. Under this framework, we think that building and nurturing public trust is of paramount importance.

If you don't know, our industry, the egg industry, has grown by close to 30% in the last decade. That very much is a direct response to consumers seeking to eat better. The good news about the nutritional benefits of eggs is becoming better understood, and we're seeing tremendous growth in our industry. Also, as Roger referenced, in terms of producing eggs, one of our priorities is not just producing more and producing higher quality, but producing food sustainably. We think that's of critical importance.

As the government looks to revise important policies and resources that help Canadians make decisions on the food they offer their families, what's really important—Mr. Carey said it and Roger said it—is that we need evidence-based research and we need

evidence-based decision-making. Incomplete or inaccurate information is going to lead to confusion for consumers and unintended consequences for the agriculture sector.

Our members and colleagues have expressed a great deal of concern over the highly anticipated food guide, which we expect to be released in early 2018. It's our belief that a focus on protein sources that are nutrient rich is more important than emphasizing plant-based protein sources alone. In fact, it's been well proven that the bioavailability of protein from animal sources is superior to that of plant-based sources. Our point here is about not favouring one or the other. It's about balance and evidence-based research.

It's also important that the guide encourage food items that offer a broad nutritional package rather than limiting foods containing specific nutrients such as saturated fat. Further to this, encouraging Canadians to eat according to overall healthy eating patterns is a more efficient way to meet requirements for important nutrients such as iron, zinc, vitamin D, calcium, and vitamin B12. It is our hope that the new food guide and the broader food policy for Canada include these considerations and are supported by objective science.

Finally, we know that farmers are significant contributors to the economy and are major employers in rural regions. It is these rural communities that are the heart of a strong national food strategy. We believe that our growing global population needs more food such as eggs—affordable, rich in protein, nutritious, and healthy—so we act to help make sure more people can benefit from our work. Our farmers donate more than three million eggs every year to community food banks and also support breakfast clubs in schools.

We also look to share our knowledge internationally through the International Egg Foundation. The foundation's flagship project, led by our farmers, has built an egg farm in Swaziland, Africa, and we supply over 4,000 eggs each and every day to orphans in that country. That's just one example of how our farmers are committed to giving back and to helping more people benefit from the high-quality protein found in eggs.

In conclusion, Canadian egg farmers are well positioned to help shape a strong and vibrant food policy for Canada. We look forward to working with you to build a strategy that not only works for our fellow Canadians, but strengthens Canada's position as a global leader in food production.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lambert.

Mr. Barlow, you have six minutes.

[English]

Mr. John Barlow: *Merci*, Mr. Chairman.

Really quickly, I've revised our motion by Mr. Berthold and I want to submit a revised motion for next week, please.

Thank you. We'll table it for next week.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. John Barlow: Thank you very much to our witnesses for being here today. I want to touch on a couple of the main themes that our witnesses have talked about.

Mr. Carey, I'm going to start with you. You talked about some of the policies that we have in place and the focus to ensure that we have affordable food and affordable opportunities out there. I'm concerned that some of the policies our current government is enacting or repealing are going to cause our food to be significantly more expensive. I'd like your opinion.

We can look at the carbon tax, eliminating the deferral on cash grain tickets, these potential tax changes that they're talking about now, and also the potential to ban neonicotinoids for pesticides. Are there concerns among your members about some of these changes and this direction in terms of the sustainability of the family farm and the ability to provide affordable food?

• (1650)

Mr. Dave Carey: It's a big question, so I'll do my best.

I think, writ large, the concern we have is that you have policies, like those outlined in the budget, about increasing agriculture and agrifood exports that would come from, say, the second-largest net exporter, but then you have a similar policy that makes it more difficult to do business in Canada. It's not a concern government to government, but overall, when we have so many consultations going on, what we've seen is that departments still act in silos. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is going in this direction, implementing some really great things, then perhaps Finance Canada is going in a different direction that may hurt some of what's happening. I think it's a concern across our membership, for sure.

Specifically about access to crop protection products, neonics or others, that's a huge concern, because these are still.... An example of one that is not a neonic is called Thiram. It's the most registered fungicide in the world. If my horticulture colleagues were here they would go into greater detail, but it's the most widely registered fungicide in the air. The PMRA is currently proposing to cancel its registration for all uses. If you want to increase us as an exporter, for us to get agriculture products into Mexico they have to be treated with Thiram. Again, we're going in two different directions. Without getting into too many specifics, the concern is that we want to move in one direction here, but then a new policy is limiting our ability to do that.

A lot of our members would be impacted by the proposed tax changes. We haven't had a chance to consult our members yet, but we're hearing from the grain growers and those who have been very vocal about it, so there's definitely concern about that. They ask, "How can I continue to innovate when I don't have access to crop protection products? The cost of my business is going up." Then we

get into this food policy that's about producing more affordable food, but we're making it more difficult for producers to do that.

Again, it's about a misalignment. Maybe we're not all talking to each other.

Mr. John Barlow: You bring up issues like neonics, which have improved yield to such an extent —15% to 20% sometimes—that when you remove some of those opportunities it certainly makes things more expensive.

The one comment that you made that I thought was really interesting is the fact that you haven't had a chance to consult with your members on some of these tax changes, which is exactly our point. There simply has not been enough time for our agricultural producers to have a chance to really dissect what these changes will mean, and I think it's really imperative that—

Mr. Dave Carey: Seed companies are in the middle of harvest, too.

Mr. John Barlow: Exactly. It's really frustrating.

To the Egg Farmers of Canada, are some of these potential changes a concern that most of your producers have seen? I have some egg farmers in my constituency. They are certainly concerned about some of these potential tax changes and what it's going to do to their long-term stability. Have you had a chance to speak to your members on these issues?

Mr. Roger Pelissero: It is a concern. We are currently undertaking some analysis and assessing the potential impact to our farmers. We will make sure we will communicate them through the proper channels. It's really early in the game, and we want to make sure that we evaluate everything properly before we make some comments.

Mr. John Barlow: I know it's early, but the deadline is October 2. We're really hoping that will get extended, but it shows the short timeline we have here.

In terms of affordable food, the CFIA is now going through some potential transportation changes. When we add bureaucracy to some of these changes, it makes things more expensive. Have you had an opportunity to provide feedback and input on these potential CFIA transportation changes?

Mr. Tim Lambert: With that particular one we've been quite actively engaged and have had a lot of concerns because, simply put, the way it was being.... I don't want to be critical, but some of the changes are tough to deal with. We have been very actively engaged, as all of the poultry sectors have, with that particular issue. It is a concern to us.

•(1655)

Mr. John Barlow: On the concerns we've heard from both witnesses about science-based, evidence-based decision-making, it seems to me a lot of these transportation changes aren't based on science, even the neonics. Is that a concern?

Mr. Tim Lambert: It is. You see the pattern. We're quite involved internationally as well. We have an international trade association. Both Roger and I are involved very much in that. We see the same patterns, where you get a certain amount of science and then...now the term is social science. You get a lot of tinkering around the edges where certain other pressures are brought to bear that really aren't supported by science.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lambert.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Barlow.

Mr. Breton, you have six minutes.

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Good afternoon, gentlemen.

Mr. Chair, I will share my time with my colleague Jean-Claude Poissant. Please let me know when three minutes have gone by, so that I can leave some time for my colleague.

I put this question to witnesses at our last meeting, and I will now put it to the three of you.

It is clear that consumption of healthy and safe food contributes to better health and that consumer education is key to good eating habits.

What do you suggest we include in the policy we are now studying in order to help consumers learn about healthy eating habits?

Mr. Carey, you can answer first.

[English]

Mr. Dave Carey: When you're talking about educating, it's obviously jointly federal and provincial, but throughout, courses such as food nutrition, which is something that was still around when I was in high school, are not around anymore. If you want to get it into education, you have to do so early. I would love to see a modern agriculture course in high school so that people who grew up in the suburbs, such as me, get a real appreciation for it.

It starts in the classroom. You're starting to form lifelong habits in your mid-teens, so that would be the first place, the actual education system.

The Chair: Monsieur Lambert.

Mr. Tim Lambert: Actually, nutritional education around eggs has been a priority for us for a long time. One of our most successful programs was a physician education program we launched quite a few years ago similar to what pharmaceutical companies will do. They'll send a rep out to meet individually with doctors and talk about a product. We developed an information kit, and we met with over 30,000 family physicians across Canada over a number of years to talk directly about the myths around things such as cholesterol and eggs. It was a phenomenally successful program. It's part of the reason we've grown 30%.

We have a partnership as well with Agriculture in the Classroom Canada, so likewise we place value on that. School breakfast programs that we've been involved in for a number of years likewise provide an opportunity to provide education and knowledge to children around healthy eating habits. I agree 100%; it's a huge priority and something we've been investing in for a lot of years.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Breton: I think that you, egg producers, are an example to follow when it comes to education. We really follow what you are doing in advertising and what you produce over the course of a year. I think that Canadians are very aware of what you are accomplishing. We should be inspired by that in the food policy and use themes, like you do. Congratulations!

I will now yield the floor to Mr. Poissant.

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (La Prairie, Lib.): I want to thank the witnesses for coming to talk to us about food policy.

Before I became a member of Parliament, I was a dairy and grain farmer for over 40 years. Some of the things I produced are seed barley and IP soybeans. We know how much crop yields have changed over the years, at least over the past 30 years. Yes, we want to protect bees and we know that the use of neonicotinoid pesticides is partially to blame for their deaths, but our government is investing a lot in research.

Mr. Carey, could you tell us about the importance of research in the seed industry?

•(1700)

[English]

Mr. Dave Carey: It's absolutely critical. Basically where the innovation is in agriculture, at least on the plants side, is all delivered in that tiny seed. The way I like to describe it, the seed is basically the microchip that makes your computer work. It's the Intel processor. When you put it in perspective, a bag of canola seeds sitting on this table is more than an acre's worth of production. That gives you a sense that the innovations delivered there really go far forward.

In Canada alone, our members do about \$100 million a year in private sector research. Canada is coming into compliance with what's called UPOV 91, with plant breeders' rights legislation that came into effect in 2015, so I think we're going to see that increase exponentially by.... I couldn't guess. We'll do our survey this fall.

We're doing the research on our side. Where the concerns come is that it's very easy to throw around, "We need to use science," but it's really important that we continue in the Canadian and U.S. tradition to use risk-based science and not hazard-based science. Risk-based science is a much more fulsome discussion. Hazard-based science identifies the hazard, "Is there a hazard? We should stop." Risk-based science says, "There's a hazard. How do we mitigate it? What are the potential ways you interact with that hazard?"

What we've seen is a bit of a creep towards more of a hazard-based, precautionary approach. We need to continue doing the research, but there is such a thing as good and bad science. I think we see a lot of mistruths. Documentaries such as *Food Evolution* are coming out to combat some of those. We're doing the research, but our governments are the ones that regulate us, so we really need to make sure that risk-based decision-making is the science that's used.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant: Supply management has a proven track record here, in the country. Could you tell us what you think it represents for our next generation? With supply management, that generation may consist of more people.

[English]

Mr. Roger Pelissero: I can speak directly to that. Actually, just recently there was an interview that I did with my son for *The Globe and Mail*. He committed to come back to the farm full time because of the security that supply management has brought. He knows he'll be able to provide a living for his wife, and although they're not expecting any children now, in the future, for their family also. I've seen those benefits my whole life.

My father was in the egg business in 1950, before supply management. When supply management came in, it dramatically changed how we were able to cover our costs all the time and make a fair return, to produce a product for consumers that was safe and high quality.

There are many next generations coming back to the farm. In fact, about 30% of our egg farmers in Canada are under the age of 45.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pelissero.

[Translation]

Ms. Brosseau, you have six minutes.

[English]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Thank you, Chair.

Speaking of family farms and transferring family farms, there was an important bill that was before the House that didn't even get to committee stage because it is now more advantageous to sell your farm or small business to somebody you don't know than it is to transfer it to your son or daughter. This is something that had broad support across Canada, and it's unfortunate the Minister of Finance himself spread disinformation and it didn't even get to committee. I would say that most members on the other side voted for it, but we did not give tools or extra help to farmers looking to transfer their farms, and small business owners, and even people who have fishing businesses. It's sad that we didn't get to have that, because I think it would have been very helpful.

On the topic of the national food strategy, I consulted my constituents throughout the summer. You could go on and on and talk about everything, and I know that the government has narrowed it down to four subjects. Public trust came up when we were doing a study at committee on the next agricultural framework. How do you think this food strategy could help increase public trust?

Mr. Roger Pelissero: At Egg Farmers of Canada, public trust is one of our top priorities. To have our consumers trust us to produce a safe product for them is a top priority. In fact, we have hosted many

tours on our farm, opening our doors wide up, showing consumers today how we produce food. They are just astonished when they walk in the door at how well we care for our hens, how the barn is, the cleanliness. We're producing a food product, and it's not at all what they expect. They go on the Internet, they hit "Pictures", and they see a description of how we produce food. That's why it's so important for us to tell our story to one person at a time. We want to build and maintain that public trust, because it's our top priority.

• (1705)

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Mr. Lambert.

Mr. Tim Lambert: To build on that point, we sponsor and support a network of research chairs at Canadian universities. For example, we sponsor a research chair in sustainable production at the University of British Columbia. We've also started a national round table for sustainable egg production. We're doing a project evaluating the environmental impact of our production systems with the World Wildlife Fund. We've done our own 50-year study, and we've reduced our environmental impact by 50% over the past 50 years while producing 50% more product. We've also helped found a Global Roundtable for Sustainable Egg Production. To echo what Roger is saying, it's a huge priority for us.

Mr. Dave Carey: From my perspective, I think it's a chance for the government to come out in favour of science, innovation, and the food available on grocery store shelves. It's easy to talk about innovation in the cellphone industry or the car industry, but it's still taboo to talk about innovation when it comes to food. Food forms part of our social mores, I understand that, but this is a chance for the Canadian government to come out and say the product of the farmer in his overalls 75 years ago was less sustainable than what we have today. We have so much more information—big data and analytics.

Things have changed to allow the government to come out in favour of innovation, in favour of science in the agriculture industry, as opposed to just in the high-tech industry. We deal with the same things. You see in grocery stores non-GMO, when there's no GMO equivalent. So you're seeing non-GMO wheat, when here's no GMO wheat anywhere in the world. It amounts to a scare tactic. If I don't see non-GMO on that barley, is there GMO? Well, there's still no GMO barley. So it's a chance for the government to come out in favour of our own regulatory system, which is science-based.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: We hear a lot, too, about the importance of education.

[Translation]

Every year on September 10, the UPA organizes Quebec farm open houses. I had the honour of participating for the sixth time this year. I love it. It is my favourite day. As my riding is in a rural environment, I have to make tough choices. A dozen farms host an open house, and I have to decide where to go on that day. Consumers from cities get an opportunity to learn about farm realities. The event also helps young people realize that they can make a life and a career in farming. It is very interesting.

[English]

One thing with this food strategy is that it can be big. It's going to touch other ministries, other departments—Health Canada, Northern Affairs Canada. Can you talk about the importance of coordination between government entities? Do you have examples of alignment or misalignment between different departments at the federal level?

Mr. Tim Lambert: I don't know if I can point to specific examples of misalignment, but I would underscore the point that having alignment is critical. It's important that farmers have a voice. We're ultimately producing the food, and we need to make sure there's alignment. That's why we keep coming back to evidence-based, science-based principles. It needs to be accurate and it needs to be right.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: As well, at committee we had consultation and we did a study on Growing Forward 3, or the next provincial-federal framework, especially on the importance of making some of the business risk management programs better and more useful for certain farmers. Could you maybe speak on the importance of the business risk management program?

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Brosseau, your time is up.

Mr. Peschisolido, the floor is yours.

[English]

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be sharing my time with Raj, so at three minutes cut me off.

Guests, thank you for coming out.

Let me begin by saying that I love my eggs. Whenever I go out, I have omelettes. I try to have a couple of eggs a day. I get them from a buddy of mine, Steve Easterbrook, who owns Rabbit River Farms. I asked him once, "Why Rabbit River?" He goes, "Easterbrook: Rabbit River."

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: I also give five dollars to David Graham. He has chickens, and he's a member of Parliament from Quebec.

Mr. Pelissero, I mention that because I like the point you made that you take care of your chickens. Farmers don't produce eggs, chickens do. I had a visit to some of the henhouses in the valley. I won't say where I went, but it bothered me. It bothered me to see six to eight chickens on top of pretty well nothing, and to see that confinement-type approach. It actually hurt me to see that.

I was pleased, Mr. Pelissero and Mr. Lambert, that you talked about the importance of the whole approach to animal welfare. Can

you talk a bit about where the codes of practices are going, and comment on that?

• (1710)

Mr. Roger Pelissero: Sure. The code of practice was recently completed, just in April of this year. We have new guidelines that all egg farmers across this country have agreed to. As we move forward, there are timelines in the code that put in place the times that farmers will need to meet certain requirements. We have so many different housing types in Canada because we provide several different types of eggs. Consumers want choice, so as egg farmers, we provide choice.

We are happy that the code is done. We're proud to produce eggs following the code guidelines, because our number one priority is taking care of our hens.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: Absolutely.

Mr. Carey, you mentioned the importance of education. In Steveston—Richmond East, I have Kwantlen Polytechnic institution. They have a lovely program for seeds. Can you expand a bit on how our national food policy, when it's implemented, can work with post-secondary institutions?

Mr. Dave Carey: I think the key is to not reinvent the wheel but to funnel into organizations like Agriculture in the Classroom, which we're also supporters of. They already have the infrastructure built. I would suggest that when this policy is developed and there's a budget allocated to it for outreach and education, you partner with farm groups that have the ability to reach those audiences. Rather than try to create a made-for-government outreach approach, I'd recommend using groups like the 4-H program and Agriculture in the Classroom. They're already actively doing it, and they could carry your message forward.

The Chair: Mr. Saini.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I want to touch on a point that Mr. Lambert raised about educating physicians about the quality of eggs. I'm a pharmacist by profession. When I started, eggs were bad. We used to recommend egg whites, not egg yolks. Then egg yolks weren't so bad. Now eggs are good, but limited. You can see the circular argument that's happening. People don't realize what's within the egg yolk: antioxidants; vitamins; zeaxanthin; lutein, which is great for the eyes; and choline, which is great for the brain.

My point is that, first, I think the education piece is very important, and you shouldn't focus just on physicians. You should focus more on pharmacists and nurses and dieticians, because they actually spend more time with the patients.

There is also something else. You didn't mention this, and I want to bring this to your attention. When I was a pharmacist, one of the things I used to treat arthritis and joint inflammation with was eggshell membrane. Lots of potential health benefits can be derived. I know that eggs have had a bad rap because of cholesterol, but even that has been mitigated. The cholesterol is saturated fat, and it's not that the body produces more cholesterol.

I think it would be good for business commercially but also good for health care if that message could be brought about in a way that reflects the advantages of what eggs can do and also demystifies some of the myths out there.

Mr. Tim Lambert: Those are all good points.

I didn't expand on the physician's education piece, just given the time, but we also do a lot of outreach to nurses and dietitians, but probably less to pharmacists. I would say that would be a gap we should look at. Also, there's a lot of research going into alternative uses for eggs. One is Dr. Wu at the University of Alberta, and he's doing some really interesting work in alternative uses for things like shell membranes, even research into how they can be used in the medical field for wound coverings and all sorts of fascinating applications.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Saini.

Mr. Raj Saini: No, it's okay, thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Drouin, you have six minutes.

[English]

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thanks to all the witnesses.

Mr. Lambert, Mr. Pelissero, I'll get back to you, but I'll just ask this to Mr. Carey quickly.

You mentioned different jurisdictions doing different things and impacting industry as a whole. I don't know if this exists, but are there any provincial bodies or interprovincial bodies that deal with these sorts of issues, so you're not stuck with the piecemeal of regulations that your organization deals with?

•(1715)

Mr. Dave Carey: Not on the government side, at least that I'm aware of, but definitely on the research side; for example, every provincial beekeeper will get together, a group of apiarists. But often we find that, when we do have government to government at the provincial level reaching out, it's not at senior levels. It's more about the working levels, so while they're sharing information, they're not the ones who make decisions.

We see federally it would be great if, during the FPT meetings, those things were really brought to bear. For example, you definitely know the different rules for how you operate in Quebec and Ontario, more than anywhere else, and that doesn't really make a lot of sense when you consider that most agriculture production is actually out west.

That would be a good initiative, at least at the senior level, because it's definitely at the working grassroots level, but they're not the ones who can change regulations or push through legislation. They're the ones who work with industry and do extension work.

Mr. Francis Drouin: It's actually something we've been pushing for, and when we talk about harmonizing regulations, we're pushing this through NAFTA. I know the other side is not with environment, but environment impacts our industry here. We think it's important that you include it because time and time again we've heard from industry representatives that we're not harmonizing our regulations with the U.S. or with Mexico, and this is causing problems for a lot of your members. This is something that I truly believe is why we're pushing through NAFTA; but anyway, I'll get back to that later.

Tim, just on the egg production side, I want to touch on what Raj has touched on a little bit. There are a lot of health benefits, but unfortunately some who would call themselves scientists or would call that science—well, I'll just name them, Mercy for Animals—will say eating eggs is just as bad as smoking five cigarettes per day. Unfortunately, you have to counteract that. How do you counteract that as an industry? How are you looking at this, within the next five years, because obviously we know that we have a lot more urban Canadians who are not connected to agriculture, and who may use these so-called scientists, or will get their information online. How do you counter that information? What sort of strategy are you implementing? How should we, as a government, implement that in the national food policy?

Mr. Tim Lambert: Those are good questions. I'll start, and Roger can comment as well.

We invest a lot in research, as I mentioned. One of the groups we're very much involved in is an organization that's U.S.-based. It's called the Egg Nutrition Center; we're partners in that. There's a team of experts. It's an actual doctor, Dr. Spence from southwestern Ontario, who makes this crazy claim. The best counter to that is objective, third party, and evidence-based. Yes, that would be a doctor, too, but you get a lot of other voices that will speak out against that. So when crazy things like that happen, we do tap into a group of third party experts who can speak.

The other thing we do a lot is our outreach to Canadian consumers through people like Roger, directly through the farmers. We get tired and frustrated, and that's one example, among others, of misinformation about food production, about egg production. So it wasn't designed to sell more eggs; it was designed to have people like Roger talk about animal welfare, talk about food safety, talk about what he does on his farms. It's interesting that, when we started to put their faces in front of the product, it really resonated with consumers. Farmers are highly trusted, as you know, and lo and behold, not only did it improve public trust, but it actually sold a lot more eggs.

The good science, third party experts, and the faces and voices of our farmers, are probably a three-pillar combination around countering misinformation and bad information.

Mr. Dave Carey: I'd like to add really quickly, I think you're starting to see a push-back on social media from people who are recognized as experts who are pushing back against bad science. That's happened very organically.

If we, as an association and our members tried to do that, it wouldn't be as effective. Now, you have guys like Bill Nye, the science guy, and Neil DeGrasse Tyson, who are slamming bad science on Twitter, and I think that's gone a long way toward pushing some of that....

There was Teh Food Bae for a while who is very widely discredited now, but was really altering people's buying habits. Now, when you have internationally recognized scientists, who have become celebrities in their own right, taking on the mantle of stopping bad science that.... Some of the larger multinationals are giving their staff the ability to interact online and tell them to have those conversations.

I'm hoping they're seeing a wave of people who now want to know that the information they're getting is accurate and not just accepting what they hear, because they're the so-called experts.

• (1720)

Mr. Francis Drouin: Just quickly, you mentioned non-GMO wheats, which makes me laugh because I still see some companies out there advertising this. What do you think, should the government play a role in this or should it not or should it let industry market the way it wants to?

Mr. Dave Carey: If you get into the labelling thing, it's a slippery slope for how far you can get down into it. I think it's about education. I generally don't believe you should be able to label something that's....

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Drouin.

Ms. Boucher, you're up for six minutes.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Chair, if I may, I will read the following motion, which I will move next week:

That the Committee invite the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food and the Minister of Finance to provide a briefing on the government's consultations titled "Tax Planning Using Private Corporations" and how this will impact family farms and the Canadian agriculture and agri-food economy.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here.

Your comments are very insightful. I myself am from a rural area, a large riding that is part of the Quebec City region, Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

As my colleagues told you earlier, a number of farmers were wondering this summer about the new Canada's Food Guide and the new liberal tax that will affect farmers. More and more farmers are concerned. I don't know whether people have also talked to you about it, but we have been receiving hundreds of letters weekly about this issue. As my colleagues have discussed this at length, I will put another question to you.

Canada currently has a agricultural policy framework that supports the country's entire agriculture and agri-food system. What difference do you see between the next agricultural policy framework and the government's upcoming food policy?

You can all answer.

[*English*]

Mr. Dave Carey: Having taken part in those consultations, I guess the one question we were left with was this. There's an increased emphasis on the environment and environmental sustainability, which we're very much in favour of and also on the public trust side. The only concerns we had were that those should be additional buckets of funding if we want to expand outside what the policy framework has traditionally been, which is about helping farmers grow, market access issues, things like that.

During the consultations, instead of talking about some of the things that traditionally we'd talk about, we talked a lot about environment, sustainability, and the carbon taxes. All well and good if that's the decision. We're all in favour of environmental sustainability, but is that going to come out of the existing bucket of funding? I think that's been less clear than in the other iterations of Growing Forward. If we're adding new things, is there additional funding? Those are the questions I heard from my members. It's very environmentally focused. Are we still going to have the resources for the other core focuses typically then added on?

Mr. Tim Lambert: I guess we find ourselves ourselves in a slightly different place. I would say that's because of supply management, so that our farmers are able to get a fair return for their investment in producing food. What that's allowed us to do is to look at environmental sustainability. Public trust is one of our biggest opportunities to grow.

We fully support the concerns raised on the other side of it, but what we have been able to do is embrace and invest in it. We think that's a massive opportunity for Canada globally. I've had the opportunity to speak on public trust writ large in countries as far away as China. I was invited to speak last year. Make no mistake; it's not just Canada or wealthy western European countries. The concept of trust in the food system is one of the biggest issues in China, because—back to the melamine scare—they don't trust their domestic food supply, hence we are speaking on that.

My point is that we view public trust, environment, and sustainability as a massive opportunity to grow our exports and to supply Canadians, with our focus being domestic markets. It's a powerful opportunity in our view. We don't see it as a threat.

• (1725)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Monsieur Pelissero, do you have something to say?

Mr. Roger Pelissero: I have no comments to add. I think you pretty much covered it.

It is a benefit of being in the supply management industry that we have received a fair return, and we fully support the other sectors of agriculture that don't have that same benefit, so we share their concerns.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Thank you.

Do I have any time left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have 45 seconds left.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Okay.

What sustainable model should Canada prioritize?

Canada's Food Guide tries to oppose certain types of agriculture. That worries me. Dairy products have been pushed aside in favour of plants, but those two can coexist.

How can a food guide be created without putting those two types of agriculture at odds?

[*English*]

Mr. Tim Lambert: I think we did bring it up a little bit, and that is to focus on the nutrient-rich foods rather than picking plant versus animal. You're going to get pressure from Mercy for Animals and PETA. Of course, they have an agenda to promote eating plants rather than animal protein. I think that focusing on the science as well as on the nutrient-rich foods, rather than whether it's plant-based or animal-based, would be a powerful tool.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lambert.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mr. Lambert and Ms. Boucher.

The question and answer period is over.

Mr. Berthold, do you have anything to add?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Yes. Thank you very much for giving me a few seconds.

Is it possible to plan a meeting of the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food? Since I am a new vice-chair, I would like the opportunity to have a discussion with you within that subcommittee about how you operate.

We have had two meetings this week, and we have operated differently in terms of the order of the speakers. We could discuss this in the subcommittee.

The Chair: I see no problem with that. If you want us to plan a subcommittee meeting, that would be possible.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you.

The Chair: We will confirm that.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: How are we going to plan a subcommittee meeting? Does the clerk take care of that? There is a new clerk. I wasn't here on Tuesday.

The Chair: The last time, there was the vice-chair—

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Will we receive confirmation by email?

The Chair: Yes, we will send it to you.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Will this meeting be held next week?

The Chair: Yes, as soon as we can.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Okay.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Chair, for your information, in the time of your predecessors, the subcommittee did not function and we had to hold a committee meeting, but if people want to hold a subcommittee meeting, I don't have any objections.

Mr. Luc Berthold: We have a new clerk, and I want to know what is happening. It means that I won't have to ask the same questions in front of everyone. We could do it in subcommittee, but if you want us to continue in committee, I have no objection to that.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: We have three members on the subcommittee. That is where we plan our future activities and discuss the motions tabled during the day or the studies that will be required.

I think it's worthwhile to have a meeting. In the past, we have made decisions that have not taken into account the decisions that were made in the subcommittee. It is important to work together to plan our future work.

The Chair: We'll start with one meeting, then we'll see.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: We like that, meetings and consultations, don't we?

The Chair: We love it.

The meeting is adjourned.

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