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# **Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri- Food**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, October 17, 2017**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Pat Finnigan**



## Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Tuesday, October 17, 2017

• (1530)

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC)):** Hello, everyone.

I would like to welcome you to this meeting of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are continuing our study on a food policy for Canada. This is our last meeting on the subject, which has taken up much of our time over the past few weeks. I thank you for being here.

Today, we have two groups of witnesses. In the first group, we will hear two witnesses via video conference, as well as another witness who is here in the room today. That witness is Ms. Christina Franc, the executive director of the Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions.

Good day and welcome.

We will also hear Ms. Hilal Elver, the special rapporteur on Right to Food, from the United Nations Human Rights Council. She is testifying as an individual via video conference from Istanbul, Turkey, where it is 10:30 p.m.

Ms. Elver, thank you very much for making this small sacrifice to be with us today.

From Calgary, we also have a video link with the vice-president of the National Cattle Feeders' Association, Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg.

Thanks very much and welcome.

I remind the witnesses that they will have seven minutes to make an opening statement.

Ms. Franc will start, and then we will hear our two witnesses via video conference.

[English]

**Ms. Christina Franc (Executive Director, Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions):** Thank you, everyone, for taking the time to allow me to speak today, representing the Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions. I am representing 800 fairs, agricultural societies, and exhibitions across the nation, from the Calgary Stampede right down to the Havelock Fair, a one-day event in Quebec.

Fairs are living reflections of the life and times around them, rooted in agriculture and volunteer driven. They hold deep cultural, traditional, and emotional connections to the people of their local area, and define a sense of community. Fairs and exhibitions have been, for decades, leaders in innovation while upholding tradition. Communities have relied on them in the past to bring them the latest information and technology, from farming technology right down to the latest entertainment system.

While our fairs have recently seen a period of decline, we are now growing and expanding. This is because of a cultural shift. People want to know and understand where their food comes from. There is no better place to do this than at a fair, where livestock is exhibited, agricultural displays are presented, and food and farming education is a key component.

That brings me to my first point. In planning the national food policy, I strongly encourage you to engage and support the fairs and exhibitions across Canada. A 2008 study showed that we have access to 35 million Canadians each year. We are one of the few places where rural and urban life collide. Think about the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. Hundreds of farmers and farm businesses show up there each year, in downtown Toronto, a decidedly urban location. At least a few urbanites are going to visit that spot.

There are great agricultural and food education projects going on at these events, large and small. The Norfolk County Fair, in Ontario, has an agricultural passport for children, where they have prizes if they answer clues and questions on farming and agriculture.

Our events are almost always overlooked because we don't have the resources to represent ourselves and get our voices heard. Frankly, I'm sure this is the first, if not the second time, most of you have heard about my organization, despite the fact that most of you, I'm sure, have a local fair or a fair-like event in your own riding.

The point being, fairs and exhibitions have the tools, knowledge, and passion to support the national food policy and educate the public about it. It's something we have been doing for decades in partnership with a wide variety of stakeholders, which touches on my second point.

Developing this policy, it will be critical to focus on education. By that, I mean providing access to healthy and safe food is critical, and I fully support it. However, the saying, "Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime" stands true here. Teaching people about healthy food choices and getting through all the noise and misinformation on social media and other media outlets will prove to be much more valuable in the long run.

Depending on the province, fairs and exhibitions are eligible for funding towards agricultural education, but this funding is constantly at risk of being cut, now more than ever. This is unfortunate because I have seen some really great projects come through this funding, including videos on local farm industries and local farmers, and interactive exhibits on the development and processing of crops and livestock, and more.

These have been extremely well received and incredibly successful in educating our visitors. Helping people understand their food through education will also encourage a cultural shift that once again will support farmers, as individuals will have a better understanding of where their food comes from. Therefore, strategic education is a key component of this policy.

Finally, this policy will have the opportunity to give the people what they want in an innovative and strategic fashion. More importantly, we can do this proactively rather than reactively. Too often we see the bad news stories coming out about farming, and we have been beaten to the punch.

This policy can help shape cultural perceptions before the bad news stories make the headlines. This can only work if, in developing this policy, the marketing component and how to appeal to the masses is considered. Yes, people are interested in where their food comes from, but generally speaking, they are interested in how the cows are taken care of rather than the implications of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

In order to ensure the success of this initiative, I hope the government weighs heavily on what the population wants to know versus what information the government wants to get out. There is a balance to be struck where all parties can be satisfied.

Overall, I look forward to seeing where this policy takes us. It is a very exciting opportunity and capitalizes on a growing desire of the population.

• (1535)

Please keep us, Canadian fairs and exhibitions, in mind as you move forward, particularly for the education and outreach components. We look forward to working with you throughout this process, from farm to fair to fork.

Thank you.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Thank you very much for your testimony.

We now turn to Ms. Elver, for seven minutes.

[English]

**Ms. Hilal Elver (Special Rapporteur on Right to Food, United Nations Human Rights Council, As an Individual):** Thank you very much.

Distinguished members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, ladies and gentlemen, to begin with I would like to congratulate the Canadian government for developing the first-ever national Canada food policy discussion. Such an initiative, despite its policy importance, is rather uncommon among developed countries, especially those, such as Canada, that

do not have significant food insecurity challenges and possess an established agricultural system.

Food insecurity, however, especially in relation to eliminating all forms of malnutrition, has recently become a universal challenge that pertains to developed countries and certainly to Canada, which is one of the world's largest food producers and ranks high among the wealthiest countries in the world.

A few facts underscore the relevance of malnutrition to the Canadian reality. One out of four Canadians is obese. Type 2 diabetes is rapidly spreading. As well, 1.15 million Canadian children go to school hungry because fresh, whole, nutritious food is either too expensive or unavailable. These forms of severe food insecurity are particularly prevalent in the northern part of the country, above all in remote communities where most aboriginal peoples live.

The standing committee should also be commended for adopting a holistic approach, which insightfully connects the health of people with the health of the planet. In this way, agricultural policy and food systems are addressed together, which is an important step forward, especially in view of the relevance of climate change and emerging resource scarcities.

I would like to take advantage of my opportunity to talk with you to underscore Canada's international commitments to uphold the right to food. As one of the fundamental principles set forth in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to food is by now considered a right embedded in customary international law principles that is obligatory for all governments, whether or not they have ratified the contents.

Canada is a leader with respect to confirming the obligatory status of the right to food, having ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights back in 1976, which legally acknowledged the right of everyone to adequate food and a life free from hunger.

Canada has also ratified several other international legal instruments that confer a right to adequate food on particular segments of society, such as women and children.

Most recently, Canada made a commitment to adopt a national plan for the realization of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. Particularly relevant is goal number two, which affirms a commitment to end hunger, achieve food security and nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. This commitment is very central to Canada's evolving national and international food security.

Unfortunately, for a considerable period there was no effort made by the Government of Canada to internalize the international law commitments through national legislation with respect to the right to food. I consider this initiative an important opportunity for the Canadian Parliament to demonstrate the seriousness of its commitment to uphold its human rights obligations.

Let me discuss now some of the specific issues in relation to pesticides that I believe to be vital to include in Canada's food policy.

The four components of the national food policy are expected to address not just access to affordable food, health, and food safety, but also the way in which food is produced, which should always be treated as a fundamental component of ensuring food security.

The major inputs of desirable standards of agricultural production include clean and healthy soil, water, and air, as well as ensuring a variety of seeds and ensuring biological diversity. Monoculture is illustrative of the most intensive type of agriculture production. It is in effect an enemy of ecosystems and often wasteful of vital natural resources.

For these reasons, we should try to strike a delicate balance between agricultural production and sustainability. Such a balance allows for the planning of long-term food security and is not just a creature of short-term profitability.

• (1540)

Increasing production without thinking about future generations is selfish and short-sighted from the perspective of Canada's long-term agricultural national interests. Canada's diversity of agriculture is precious and should be carefully protected.

From this perspective, increasing excessive use of synthetic pesticides is one of the most critical and controversial issues of current industrial agriculture. Reducing reliance on pesticides is the best way to minimize harm, and for those that are shown to be dangerous to human health and the environment, outright prohibition is the only responsible course of action. In particular, farm workers, children, and indigenous communities living in remote rural areas are more exposed to pesticides and the harmful and chronic effects of them, which are often especially insidious because it is so difficult to diagnose this at an early stage of exposure.

The language barriers confronting migrant workers also mean that warning labels fail to help workers take safety measures, a situation aggravated by the tendency of farm workers to work under pressure for long hours to earn hourly wages, their highest priority. To avoid adverse long-term impacts on human health and the environment, the precautionary principle should be implemented with respect to pesticides that can and do cause harm.

Unfortunately, synthetic pesticides are being more widely used, suggesting the need for greater security and regulation. This can be difficult in the face of strong resistance of powerful interest groups, especially in the context of the genetically modified organisms that are now prevalent in monoculture agriculture. Actually, overuse of pesticides over time is bad for agriculture, as it decreases the yield rather than increasing it. This has now been scientifically proven.

In Canada, fertile soil has significantly decreased due to dysfunctional pesticide use. It is increasing problems in watersheds, posing threats to aquatic life, as well as endangering the quality of drinking water. Declines in pollinator populations such as bees and butterflies due to exposure to synthetic insecticides, directly and severely affects the future of food security—

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Unfortunately, Ms. Elver, your time has almost run out. I see that you still have many pages to read, but I will give you 30 seconds to wrap up your statement.

Could you conclude quickly? I am sure that the members of our committee will let me give you a few extra seconds to do so.

• (1545)

[English]

**Ms. Hilal Elver:** Coming back to my most recent report in March of 2017 to the UN Human Rights Council, I introduced several recommendations designed to reduce pesticide use worldwide and develop a framework for banning and phasing out highly hazardous pesticides and for promoting of agroecology.

I would suggest members look at these recommendations and try to introduce not all of them but those relevant to the Canadian reality.

Thank you very much.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Thank you for your understanding.

Mr. Vander Ploeg, you have seven minutes.

[English]

**Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg (Vice-President, National Cattle Feeders' Association):** Thank you very much, and good afternoon.

I'm Casey Vander Ploeg and I serve as the vice-president of the National Cattle Feeders' Association. I thank the committee for this opportunity to share our perspective on the development of a national food policy.

NCFA was established in 2007 to serve as a national voice for Canada's cattle feeders. Our activities are centred around three focus areas: first, securing growth and sustainability for our sector; second, increasing our national and international competitiveness; and third, providing leadership for Canada's beef industry. This trio—growth and sustainability, competitiveness, and leadership—is mirrored to some extent in the themes identified in the documents for a national food policy.

I'd like to focus my comments this afternoon on three points: first, what I think the current documentation around the national food policy has gotten right; second, what any national food policy must get right if it is to succeed; and third, what I believe might be missing. On the first point, in July 2017 we communicated to Minister MacAulay that we fully supported the concept of a national food policy and that the four pillars enunciated by the government are all objectives that NCFA definitely supports.

In the documentation, there are two other points that are raised, and while they're not necessarily pillars, we do believe them to be equally important. It is noted, for example, that a policy can serve as a vehicle to "address issues related to the production, processing, distribution, and consumption of food." To the extent that a national policy can aid agriculture in resolving some of our unique challenges, that's all to the good.

The documentation also notes that sufficient access to affordable, nutritious, and safe food is, in and of itself, not enough. Canadians also, and again I'll quote from the documents, "require information to make healthy food choices", and with that we absolutely agree. That also explains why we have jumped into the consultations with Health Canada around the new Canada food guide.

However, in order for a national food policy to be successful and meaningful in the lives of Canadians, there are several things we believe it must get right. First is that agricultural producers must be foundational for any food policy. It is not enough that producers be a "pillar" or that they simply be "consulted". Producers are foundational. Without Canada's base of tens of thousands of Canadian farmers producing safe, quality food in a competitive and sustainable way, we don't have much of a food policy beyond figuring out exactly how we would go about feeding 35-plus million Canadians.

We were somewhat concerned by the lack of agricultural representation at some of the consultation round tables and some of the tone around that dialogue. When we hear things like agriculture should not drive a food policy, it does make us wonder whether the foundational role of producers is, indeed, being recognized.

Second, it's quite important to acknowledge that agriculture producers recognize and respect the views of other stakeholders and while there may be some natural tensions here, everyone must understand that producers are already deeply committed and deeply invested in all four of the pillars. For example, we all want access to affordable food. Today's beef industry is highly innovative and sophisticated, using a number of safe and proven production technologies, such as growth implants, vaccines, carefully crafted rations, specialized feed supplements with vitamins and minerals, radio frequency tags, leading-edge management approaches, and even chute-side computers with animal tracking software. All of that boosts our efficiency and productivity and keeps production costs down, and that allows us to grow more high-quality beef using less resources and to do so in a safe way that is affordable.

Producers are working with these four pillars each and every day. That's not to say we can't improve, but improving means Canadians must remember that agriculture and agrifood is also a business, and the food policy must not economically disadvantage producers. If it does, we put the nation's food production at risk. If we want to grow more food and keep it affordable, then we need to focus on our competitiveness, and that means continuing to invest in research, development, innovation, and technology, and it means resolving a number of competitive challenges, whether that's access to labour, the regulatory burden, or even investing in rural infrastructure.

• (1550)

Finally, we must ensure that all policies across the federal government, and even provinces, are aligned. We have a clear emphasis on agriculture in budget 2017. We have the Barton report. We have the new Canadian agricultural partnership program. We have Canada's new food guide, and now the idea of a new national policy for food. All of these initiatives must work together, and they must align.

In thinking all of this over, we may be missing a fifth pillar—it was mentioned earlier this afternoon—and that relates to education, information, public trust, and social licence. The great majority of Canadians have little to no idea of how their food is produced and why it is produced that way. There is a tremendous disconnect here that I believe a national food policy must address.

Government has largely abandoned the role of consumer education when it comes to agriculture, but this could be picked up again as a unique focus of a national food policy. Canadians should have a choice when it comes to their food, but that choice also needs to be an informed choice.

I just want to quickly point to two examples before I close.

For example, some Canadians believe that grass-fed beef is somehow superior or more natural than grain-finished beef. However, do these Canadians know that grass-fed cattle produce five times the methane that grain-fed beef does? Do they know that methane has 25 times the potency of carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas? Do Canadians know that in the 1950s it took 10 units of input to produce one unit of beef, and today it's six units of input for one unit of beef? Do Canadians know that if we used the technologies of the 1950s to produce the beef we produce today, we would need another 45 million acres?

All of these things are important information that leads to informed choice. In late September—

[*Translation*]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Mr. Vander Ploeg, unfortunately, I have to interrupt you, but I am sure that some of my colleagues here would be interested in hearing your second example and the conclusion of your statement.

I do have to allow time so that the parliamentarians may ask you their questions. Thank you very much. I will now turn over to Ms. Sylvie Boucher, for a first six-minute round of questions.

[*English*]

**Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC):** Ladies and gentlemen, welcome.

I will be sharing my time with my colleague, Martin Shields.

I have many questions to ask you. I am new to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and I have received quite a lot of information. There is one thing that is troubling me. People talk a lot about affordable food.

The new generation, the one that is just a bit younger than us, is short on time, what with children, school and sports, and it buys quite a lot of frozen products. This is common in our communities. We want affordable food, but the government imposes numerous taxes. I represent a rural riding, and farmers are worried about the new tax. What can we do to fix this?

When you go to the supermarket, healthy food and fruits and vegetables always cost a bit more than chips, chocolate and cola. We therefore have to teach young people, but how do we go about it? What can we all do to ensure our food is healthy and affordable?

People are turning more and more towards organic foods, but they are much more expensive than the usual products. The price of an organic carrot and that of an ordinary carrot is not all the same. What can we do to have food that is healthy and affordable, and suited to today's lifestyle, what with harried parents who buy more and more frozen food? I would like to know your take on this.

You can all answer.

• (1555)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Ms. Franc, you have already spoken about the importance of exhibitions.

[English]

**Ms. Christina Franc:** I am going to wear my millennial hat for a bit here. People are actively making a choice to have better experiences with their food. Yes, they are buying fast food and junk food, but what we are seeing, at the fairs and exhibitions even, is that a lot more people are interested in buying the artisanal food, the organics, and they are willing to make that investment. It is a matter of budgeting.

In terms of the education component, if you add a component where we are teaching them how to manage their money in terms of food, there is.... I can't remember the day in February, the national day of how much food has been.... Your entire grocery bill should be spent. You can use those education tools to say, "How can you better use your money to spend it on better foods?"

The trend is continuing. Costco is now one of the leading producers of organic produce. Because they are producing more, and they are known for wholesale and better prices, prices are slowly going down. It's a trend that is coming and starting to change. It's going to be a cultural shift, and I think it's going to be a mix of education and a bit of supply and demand as well.

I don't know if that helps, but hopefully it does.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Yes, your answer has helped me a little.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Is that all?

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Yes, thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Mr. Shields, over to you.

[English]

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just quickly, I think the education piece has been referred to, but partnerships are critical to make this work. I know for the National Cattle Feeders' Association, for example, your code of ethics policy for feedlot operators is world class and is being used. That was a partnership you worked to develop. Now to get out the educational piece, like the fairs say, "how and where?"

Alberta Open Farm Days have been around in Alberta for about five years. The Toronto world fair was classic and as a kid I remember it, but nobody knows about it anymore. That's not

working. We have to find a different mechanism. Alberta Open Farm Days is when you get the people out to the farms, and they come by the hundreds.

Casey, is there any response to send to the producers and how that could work in your industry?

**Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg:** We actually, for the last two years, have started down that road with our communications manager, Shannon. She is organizing tours, primarily at this point in time, for students in schools across Alberta and getting them out to a modern cattle feeding operation, and showing them how it works and what the farmers do. Those children are absolutely fascinated about what goes on there.

Industry is reaching out to the extent that it can, and we're seeing some successes there. We'd certainly like to expand on that and, in the future, hope to do so. It's just one small way of trying to connect the Canadian farmer to the consumer and to increase that understanding about how and why we feed people the way we do.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** I think that goes back to the partnership. You developed an industry standard with a partnership with the federal government. You did that with some funding.

**Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg:** That was the development of a Canadian standard for the care of animals on Canadian feedlots. We know that consumers are increasingly concerned that livestock animals are well cared for on farming operations. We know that our farmers are committed to that, but how do we demonstrate that commitment? We thought what we should do was develop a standard, a protocol, that is fully auditable and Canada's feedlots could then be tested against that protocol. That program is now completed. We did do it in development in partnership with the federal government.

Interestingly enough, that program is being picked up by feedlots now in the United States who see that it is an excellent program. That's a good news story for Canada's cattle feeders to be sure.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Thank you, Mr. Shields. Unfortunately, you have run out of time.

Mr. Drouin, you have six minutes.

**Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Vice-Chair. It is good to see you here today.

I would to thank the witnesses for their statements.

• (1600)

[English]

Ms. Elver, I just wanted to touch on a few points that you've mentioned in your speech. It has to deal with preserving soil and water and protecting our environment with regard to agriculture. You just mentioned—I'm not sure if I heard you well—but you don't see a role for GMOs to play in there as the food production increases in the world?

By 2050, I think it's the FAO that says we need to increase our food production by at least 50%. You don't see a role for GMO or...?

**Ms. Hilal Elver:** Let me explain this. First of all, food production basically makes more and more available food, but this food is not accessible. According to FAO—there is a kind of calculation because of climate change—we need 50% more food, but this doesn't mean that we are really dealing with hunger and malnutrition. You can have even more wheat, more corn, more rice, which is more than 60% or 70% of the agricultural production, but this doesn't mean that this food goes to the people, or that it's accessible, actually healthy, or affordable. GMO has a certain kind of role. This is acceptable, but GMO basically is used for maize or more soy, which is animal food—and also some other foods too.

There is a claim that GMO will sort of solve the problem of climate change, but so far there is no significant scientific data about it. More production is good, but it's not going to help us because it will not be sustainable. GMO means you have to use certain kinds of pesticides, which are systemic pesticides, which over the years make the soil much more tired and cause it to lose the major minerals. Sustainable agriculture is certainly not going to use GMO.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** I guess there's this theory out there that as soon as you use GMO you have to use more pesticides, but there's the other side of it, which is that you need to use less water. As you know, climate change means that we have longer, drier periods. You either have to use less water, or your crop requires less sun to grow. If we have wet periods, it can be beneficial, or if we have dry periods.... Where I'm from this seems to be the case. Last year we had a dry period; this year we have a wet period. It seems to play a role. I've spoken to some of the farmers. I've spoken to industry, obviously. GMO alone is not going to solve it, but once you include precision farming, once you include.... Fertilizer also plays a big role. I know Bill Gates believes that fertilizer will play a big role in ensuring that food production is available.

I agree with you that food production alone is not going to solve the issue. In Canada, 50% of our food waste is done at home, so whether we produce more food or not, we're not going to solve the issue.

Christina, in terms of the roles that the fairs could play, we can legislate anything we want to stop food waste at home, but it would be unenforceable and so unpractical from our side. How do we teach society and how do we give them the right tools to reduce food waste at home? How could we use the fairs to do that? CNE is almost in downtown Toronto now, and that's the population we need to target because they don't know where food comes from anymore.

**Ms. Christina Franc:** Exactly. It goes back to the whole education component. People are coming to the fair and they're not just coming for the midways. Our studies show that they're coming to learn about food and farming as well. They have an ideal opportunity to do that at our event. If you want to focus on food waste, work with us, and we will develop educational packages and information that can be disseminated to the fairs for exhibits and interactive exhibits. We've seen a lot of those really good things already.

At the CNE, in particular, they have a farm building and people go in and they meet some animals. Dairy Farmers of Canada has a great

display there on the different types of feed and things like that. It's putting the information in front of people and then giving them take-home tools. We could very easily work on a program like that. We have done programs like that across the nation before. That's the opportunity.

• (1605)

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** That's great. Thank you.

Casey, you mentioned an important word, “trade-offs”, and discussed whether consumers are aware of the trade-offs of eating a particular kind of beef. Should the government be playing a role in terms of the false marketing we see? I know one company, A&W, will say their beef has no hormones, while we know beef doesn't usually have any hormones. How do we counteract that particular false marketing out there that plays on consumers' feelings or demands?

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Mr. Vander Ploeg, please keep that question in mind. You are unlucky. You are always the one that I have to interrupt.

[English]

I'm sorry. Could you answer in 20 seconds?

**Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg:** I was hearing the French language here, so I apologize for that.

It is a bit of a sticky wicket, and it's certainly something that aggravates producers too. What I hear on a regular basis at different industry gatherings and so on is this deep misunderstanding about things like marketing campaigns that imply that a certain product is better than another when that's not necessarily the case.

There are trade-offs. The UN report—

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** I would ask you to keep in mind this UN report. We will no doubt be given the opportunity to come back to it.

I will now turn over to Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau for her turn in this round.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP):** Thank you, Vice-Chair.

I would like to thank all the witnesses for their statements and for helping us in our study.

[English]

I will let you finish, if you have anything. You wanted to talk about a report, Mr. Vander Ploeg? If you want to conclude, I'll give you 30 seconds because I know you've been cut off a lot.

**Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg:** Do you mean my answer to Mr. Drouin's question?

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** Yes.



**Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg:** I just wanted to say that it is a frustrating thing. There is this huge gulf of information for Canadians about how their food is grown and some of the decisions that have to be made. Is there a role for government there in helping to close that divide? Yes, I would think there is. In partnership with industry, I think there's actually a lot we could do in that area to help inform Canadians to make good choices.

• (1610)

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brousseau:** Madam Elver, that was a great presentation. I love the fact that you talked about the health of people and the health of the planet. Could you maybe elaborate a bit more about what the correlation is between sustainable food production and the long-term security of food?

**Ms. Hilal Elver:** Of course, there's a strong correlation between the two. Sustainability, as we all know, is about using the resources, but what we need in agriculture is water, soil, and seeds. These are very valuable resources, and these resources are actually also in danger because of agriculture. Agriculture needs these, and these are also part of the problem and the environmental issues. In relation to climate change, our witnesses made very clear the kinds of foods we eat and how much greenhouse gas emissions we are producing. This is an extremely important issue.

When we talk about food security, long term, we have to first understand the way in which they produce the food. Sustainable food means more organic, more agro-ecological systems that many countries are using. I'm sure many Canadian farmers are also practising agroecology, but the problem is that government should really support these kinds of projects and these kinds of farming practices.

More and more, with the intensive agriculture direction that we are going in, we have more and more food production but our food system is broken. For instance, one of the members was talking about affordability. Nutritious food, frozen food, is a serious and important issue because that is where we have to put our money as a government. If we want to support small farmers or agroecology or sustainable food producers, this is the best money to do it, rather than giving some kind of incentive to big-time, export-oriented agriculture.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brousseau:** I know that my colleague on the other side talked about food waste. Food waste is something that I've been bringing up in the House since about 2012. Canada really hasn't taken any leadership on food waste. I realize that a lot of the food waste happens at home and we can't control what people do at home, but there are a lot of things that I think the federal government can do with respect to education.

Also, other countries have moved and legislated to ban food waste. I'm not talking about giving people trash or about making people sick, but there have been amazing projects in Quebec. In Montreal and in the regions of Mauricie and Lanaudière, there are amazing partnerships between supermarkets and food banks. I would love to see the day that in Canada we do not have food banks, that we do not have people living in poverty, but the federal government needs to make steps.

Could you maybe talk about food waste?

I don't know how much time I have, but if we have time, I would like to also have you talk about the importance of agroecology. We've heard about that a few times at committee during this study. Is the government doing enough to educate farmers and maybe move away from certain practices of overuse of pesticides here in Canada?

**Ms. Hilal Elver:** Agroecology is also in general connected with food waste. Agroecology means not producing more than we consume. We are talking about more responsible production activity.

In developed countries, food waste is at the consumer level. For instance, if you go to developing countries, again there is a significant amount of food waste but at a more local level because they don't have enough infrastructure. They cannot access the market. This is not the case for Canada.

The thing is, we can handle supermarkets. Maybe we should look at what kind of packaging we are using, because government can regulate this. For instance, we could look at the "best used by" dates. We can regulate this, because many false dates are given for products that are still easily consumable after that period. For instance, when we buy pasta in a supermarket, they say "best before 2018" but you can easily use it in 2020. I'm not talking about dairy products or meat, because those cases are very different.

It has to be regulated by government, genuinely working together to educate consumers and of course working with farmers. Farmers' markets are basically a much better way to buy our food. Of course it's more expensive; we know that. But there's less consuming and less wasting of food because it's on a smaller scale, rather than going to the big supermarket and buying tomatoes for 10 families.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Thank you very much, Ms. Elver.

Madame Brousseau, thank you. Your time has elapsed.

Mr. Poissant, the parliamentary secretary, has six minutes.

**Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (La Prairie, Lib.):** I would like to thank our witnesses.

I have a question for Ms. Elver.

Earlier, we were told that as of the middle of February, we will have finished paying for our food for the whole year. On the other hand, I also hear that as of the middle of September, the planet has used up its food resources and that it lives on credit up to Christmas.

Do you think there any solutions, and what lessons can we learn?

[English]

**Ms. Hilal Elver:** As far as I understand your question, this is about how much we pay for our food. Am I right about that?

• (1615)

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant:** No, that is not exactly what I was aiming at.

We want to put a food policy in place, but at the same time, we know that we will have finished paying for our food or our food basket on average in the middle of February. However, on a global scale, we know that as of mid-September, we will have consumed all that has been produced. Sooner or later, this problem will come back to haunt us.

Canada is of course a huge producer that exports much of its production, but one day, this global problem will catch up with us.

I was wondering if you could suggest any strategies or measures that we should include in our food policy to counter what is coming.

[English]

**Ms. Hilal Elver:** Again, if I understand correctly—I'm very sorry that maybe my distance doesn't allow me to understand—you're talking about what we produce and what we export or use locally. Am I right that you are asking this? Canada is a major food exporter. Canada also has no problems concerning the availability of food, but in certain areas Canada's food is very expensive and not affordable.

If we go to the more remote areas, Canadians spend extreme amounts of money on food you can easily get more cheaply. Of course, price is a market issue, based on demand and supply. If there is not much demand, sometimes the prices can go very high. If there's no available food, then the price goes high.

Of course, these things should not be completely dealt with by market forces, because food has become more of a global common good. I'm not saying government should be giving food away for free, but that they should be able to regulate to protect self-sufficient agricultural policy for Canadians while they are thinking about exports.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant:** My next question is for the beef producers.

We have heard that there is a problem with the next generation. I wonder if there will be enough new blood in the beef industry to take on the coming challenges. I would like you to talk about the next generation.

[English]

**Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg:** There is concern right across agriculture with respect to getting the next generation of farmers into production. A lot of that has to do with the high capital costs. We're talking a lot of times about millions of dollars of investment required. Now we have new things happening with the tax system that some are saying may make it even more difficult.

It's an issue we continue to wrangle with as an industry, but definitely one we need to resolve—in short order, too. The average age of farmers is increasing, and that next generation has to ask to come on board to take over those operations. Hopefully, we'll be able to come up with more successful ways of doing that than we have in the past.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant:** My final question is for Ms. Franc.

When I was a boy, we would go to fairs and eat candied apples and play whack-a-mole.

However, you spoke something that seems quite promising. You talked about perhaps including an educational component at fairs. How would you see that being done? What would be the target audience? Would all types of food production be included?

[English]

**Ms. Christina Franc:** Yes, absolutely.

It depends on the province. For example, in Quebec the provincial government allows funding towards agricultural initiatives, and education specifically. You can get \$30,000 in funding if you are doing agricultural education on anything. It could be farmers, beef, dairy, or whatever. It's already happening. These are videos. These are interactive displays. They are having exhibitors animate sessions. There is a huge opportunity for educating in every sector.

I think I may follow up with the NCFCA afterwards to see how we can work together on programs we can share. We're building relationships with agriculture more than ever, with agriculture in the classroom, and so on, to see how we can engage and what new education opportunities....

It's unending. The outreach is huge and there is a lot of potential there.

• (1620)

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** On that fine offer of cooperation, I thank you.

Mr. Longfield, over to you.

[English]

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. You are doing a great job. It's tough to keep us all on track.

Thank you to all the witnesses.

I want to start with Casey Vander Ploeg. Last Friday I was in Arkell, Ontario. We made an announcement, on behalf of Minister MacAulay, with the Canadian Animal Health Coalition, of \$1.12 million to go to training and certification for livestock transportation. We looked at emergency management tools and animal care assessment, particularly for chicken farmers. We were working on this coalition that had farmers, producers, and transport people. In their coalition they also have civil society.

Do you have something similar out west that would help us? You said it was very important for ranchers or producers to be part of our discussions. Do you have organizations like that, which we should make sure we include as we go forward?

**Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg:** When we are talking about bodies like CAHC, for example, those are nationwide bodies. As a national industry association, we are already connected with them. When we're talking about certified livestock transport, we are connected there as well. Interestingly enough, it was the Alberta cattle feeders that got that started back in the day.

Across the agricultural industry there is a lot of that interconnectivity already in play, and I think we could use that to build on some of these things. With the increased government support and initiatives that come behind us, maybe we'll be able to do a much better job of educating Canadians about their food and even promoting best practices within industry as well, in conjunction with the industry standards and protocols that are being developed.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Thank you.

I was so impressed with the reach, as you said, nationally, but also across the whole sector. At this committee we have studied the emergency management problems that we have had with different outbreaks. We have looked at safe transport of animals. We really could have just gone to them, and they could have provided the whole background for our studies.

**Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg:** One of the interesting things we did was develop an emergency plan two years ago for feedlots in Canada. That material exists.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Right. We need to make sure that we're tied in, and I really appreciate your being online with us.

On the fairs and exhibitions, I was also out to the Ontario Plowmen's Association show, organized out of Guelph but located around Ontario, and I was at Ag in Motion in Saskatoon this summer.

I went to the plowmen's match looking specifically at soil management, because we have a study coming up on soil management. I wanted to know which businesses were involved and what the current state of technology was.

In your fairs and exhibitions, do you do a lot of business to business, or is it mostly business to public? Is there an opportunity for more business-to-business work that the federal government could help with?

**Ms. Christina Franc:** Currently, it is more business to public, but there is definitely an opportunity to do business to business. I think it happens on a bit of an ad hoc basis, because you have all those businesses vending and exhibiting and they're going to talk and network while they're there.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** I found that when I came back from Ag in Motion, I was telling people at the plowmen's match that they should have seen the tractor I saw out west. It would be nice to get them all together somehow.

**Ms. Christina Franc:** Absolutely, and hopefully that's something that CAFE is looking to develop, the national component of how we can get across from Saskatchewan to Guelph and share that information.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** It would be interesting to see how we could help with that. Thank you.

Finally, going out to Turkey, thank you, Ms. Elver, for staying up and staying online with us. That's tremendous. It shows how the ag industry has volunteers everywhere in the world who help us to develop policy.

We had a few witnesses in previous meetings who talked about governance. When I think of the United Nations, I always think of governance. I wonder whether you know of any governance models

for food policy. Once it has been introduced, how is it maintained? What types of committees exist at the United Nations or in other countries that we might draw from for our report?

• (1625)

**Ms. Hilal Elver:** Thank you for this question. It's important, because there is global governance around food security. It is very recent. Maybe you remember in 2008 there was a big food prices crisis around the world and there was lots of rioting.

It happened in the developing countries, and suddenly the United Nations Security Council decided it should do something about it. The food system is very important and especially connected with our security. Under the FAO, the Food and Agriculture Organization, a United Nations body in Rome....

Actually, Rome is a very important city. We have four different UN organizations. There is the FAO, the World Food Programme, and IFAD, which includes financial activities across the agriculture process, and they established the Committee on World Food Security.

The Committee on World Food Security is a very interesting global governance model. It's the only UN model that includes private sector and civil society mechanisms, which is very interesting.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Thank you, Ms. Elver.

[English]

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Could you send us a link on that?

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Mr. Longfield, unfortunately, you are out of time.

Thank you, Ms. Elver.

Ms. Boucher, you have time for a short question.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Mr. Vander Ploeg, earlier, you mentioned a program to facilitate self-sufficiency in farming.

Could you kindly explain what that program entails?

[English]

**Mr. Casey Vander Ploeg:** The program I was referring to was one that we developed at the National Cattle Feeders' Association that sets the standard for caring for animals on Canadian feedlots so that consumers can be confident when they're eating beef products from Canada that the animals have been treated well and properly cared for on farming operations in Canada. That's the program we've been involved in developing in conjunction with the federal government.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Thank you very much, Mr. Vander Ploeg.

Ms. Franc and Ms. Elver, thank you very much for appearing before the committee today.

We are going to take a quick break, because we have a very full second hour.

The committee will resume in a few moments.

• (1630)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Order, please.

We will now continue this meeting of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

In our next panel of witnesses, we are pleased to have joining us Tia Loftsgard, executive director, Canada Organic Trade Association, and Dag Falck, organic program manager, Nature's Path Organic Foods. We will also be hearing from Marc Allain, chief executive officer, Co-operation Agri-Food New Brunswick, and Natan Obed, president, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.

I would remind you that each group has seven minutes for their presentation.

I will now ask Ms. Loftsgard to begin this round of presentations.

[English]

**Ms. Tia Loftsgard (Executive Director, Canada Organic Trade Association):** Thank you very much.

Good afternoon, honourable members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me and my colleague Dag Falck from Nature's Path Foods to present today.

The Canada Organic Trade Association is a membership-based trade association for the organic sector in Canada. We do support the development of a food policy for Canada and applaud the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food for leading this important initiative.

• (1635)

**Mr. Dag Falck (Organic Program Manager, Nature's Path Foods, Canada Organic Trade Association):** I am Dag Falck. I represent Nature's Path, a privately held, family-owned producer of all-certified organic foods. We are North America's largest organic breakfast and snack food company and are committed to triple bottom-line social enterprise. Our company is regularly named one of Canada's best employers, and we export to over 40 countries. We own 6,500 acres of organic farmland in Saskatchewan and Montana. Nature's Path also serves as an outlet processor for many independent organic family farmers, representing approximately 100,000 organic acres.

Food plays a critical role in the health and well-being of Canadians, while also having a direct impact on our environment, economy, and communities. A food policy that incorporates organic principles is a way to address issues related to production, processing, distribution, and consumption of food. A food policy that mimics our ethics at Nature's Path, which means always leaving the earth better than we found it, would help Canada advance the cause of people on the planet along the path to sustainability.

Canada's organic food market share has grown to 2.6% of the overall food and beverage category in mainstream retail, up from 1.7% in 2012. Also, 66% of Canadians purchase organic food weekly, and 88% say they will continue to maintain or increase their purchases in the coming year. As a producer and importer of organic raw ingredients and the company that sells domestically and abroad,

Canada organics' 8.7% market share growth since 2012 is only going to grow as Canadians continue to demand food that meets their values and lifestyles, and as it becomes increasingly available in all communities across the country.

Canada has an opportunity to be a leader by embracing organic production and creating domestic and international opportunities with a triple bottom-line return to the environment, the economy, and health, as part of the food policy for Canada.

Global hunger is rising for the first time in more than a decade, according to FAO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Some 815 million people, 11% of the world population—mainly children—are still food insecure, and that difficulty arises from limited access, poor infrastructure, and climate change. The macro-economy and political stability are a big challenge in the achievement of hunger reduction. The increase in food-related diseases, obesity, diabetes, and growing resistance to antibiotics are putting serious pressures on health care systems in developed countries like Canada.

Despite the unpredictability of factors such as climate change, crop losses, and price volatility in agricultural commodities, all of which cannot yet be controlled by any production model, organic farming represents one of the key innovations in the domain of food and agriculture over the last century. It is based on a socially inclusive, economically and ecologically resilient systems approach for the production of foodstuffs and renewable raw materials. Its global success is demonstrated by about 2.4 million operators in 2015 in 179 countries who contribute to food production by using local resources, thus reducing their dependence on external inputs and increasing their own resilience to external shocks, currency fluctuations, oil prices, and natural calamities.

It is time to recognize the organic farming model as an efficient and effective approach to combat climate change, as well as to preserve biodiversity, soil fertility, and public health in our Canadian food system.

**Ms. Tia Loftsgard:** A food policy for Canada must support the next generation, promoting a diversity of farming practices, production, and accessibility to healthy food. The national food policy should include and support the development of organic agriculture as a model of sustainable production, which favours resilience of local populations, especially young people and women, to face climate change and food insecurity. As public trust in organics is at an all-time high, 44% of Canadians trust that the Canadian organic standards deliver on their promises.

New farmer entrants—millennials and women in particular—and entrepreneurs are attracted to organic production at a time when we are seeing major labour shortages on conventional farms and in the manufacturing agri-food industry. This is due not only to the higher premiums associated with selling organics, but also to the demand for organics and organic methods often being in line with their ethics. Twenty-nine per cent of Canada's organic farmers make over \$500,000 in farm income, according to 2016 census data, offering a viable method to address rural poverty and bring the potential of new organic value-added manufacturing to rural landscapes.

Increasing access to and growing more affordable high-quality food must include organic food. A recent Ipsos study demonstrated that Canadians across all income levels are purchasing organics weekly, dispelling the common misperception that organic products are only available to those with higher incomes. Sixty-four per cent of consumers with less than \$40,000 in income buy organics weekly, compared to 70% of those with over \$100,000 in income. Across all regions of Canada, at least 60% of grocery shoppers are buying organic products weekly, yet organics are still not accessible to all, whether because of production method or unavailability for purchase in their region. Canada needs to adopt policies that ensure that consumers, despite their location or income level, have the option to access organic food.

In order to achieve all of the goals we have set forth today, we are joining our partners in calling for the establishment of a national food policy council to ensure that appropriate approaches and successful implementation of the national food policy occurs. The proposed national food policy council would be a para-governmental agency, where diverse stakeholders from across the food system can work together to oversee the implementation and ongoing evaluation of a food policy for Canada. Working in—

• (1640)

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Thank you, Ms. Loftsgard.

We'll have a chance to come back to that later, when my colleagues ask their questions.

We will now hear from Mr. Allain of Co-operation Agri-Food New Brunswick.

Mr. Allain, you have seven minutes. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Marc Allain (Chief Executive Officer, Co-operation Agri-food New Brunswick):** I would like to thank the committee members for the opportunity to share our initiative with you.

My name is Marc Allain, and I am the chief executive officer responsible for the implementation phase of the Co-operation Agri-

Food New Brunswick. My real job is as the executive director of Carrefour communautaire Beausoleil, in Miramichi. I mention that because it's relevant to the experience I'll be sharing with you.

I am going to tell you about something we did in New Brunswick, something that quickly permeated the borders with other provinces. The lessons learned are applicable on a broad scale.

The state of food security in New Brunswick is, to say the least, troubling, if not dire. We currently produce approximately 13% of our agri-food products. Some 40 years ago, we were producing nearly 75%. Clearly, we aren't headed in the right direction.

We face challenges when it comes to product availability, storage, and transportation. In fact, we experience challenges with the entire infrastructure system that transports the food where it needs to go. Collectively, these barriers are enormous, substantial, and difficult to overcome with a single initiative.

Now, I'm going to describe the opposite situation, one involving a number of initiatives that were put in place some time ago to increase consumption of New Brunswick products. These initiatives are focused around schools and are headed almost exclusively by non-profit organizations. The strengths of these experiences were combined to create the initiative I'm describing. It is the result of co-operation between all the partners you see here. I'll leave it to Google to help you become more familiar with our partners, because seven minutes isn't enough time. With a little bit of searching, you'll learn that New Brunswick's three largest farm organizations, together with three food service providers for schools, supply 32 of the province's schools. Thirty-two may not seem like very many, but it means that 10% of New Brunswick schools are members of the co-operative.

Co-operation Agri-Food New Brunswick's objective is to solve the problems I mentioned earlier. The organization is incorporated as a non-profit co-operative, and voting members are all non-profit organizations. Membership is not required in order to do business with the co-operative. The only privilege members enjoy is the right to pay dues and sit on the board of directors. Members and non-members dealing with the co-operative are treated the same.

• (1645)

Co-operation Agri-Food New Brunswick's mandate is to supply local food products to meet market demand, grow existing and new markets, and ensure infrastructure development. In terms of schools, to paraphrase the song *New York, New York*,

[English]

"If you can make it there, you can make it anywhere".

[Translation]

Our meals sell for \$5 to \$5.50 a plate, but if we tried to sell them for \$6, we'd have a mob of angry parents after us. If we can do it in schools, we can do it anywhere. We are currently in 32 schools and will be supplying 60 more schools by the end of the fall. That means our co-operative will be supplying 92 of New Brunswick's schools while redefining the entire approach to agri-food products.

We started with schools, but we did not stop there. Our goal for the second year was to penetrate the restaurant, cafeteria, and catering market, but those businesses came knocking on our door the first year.

The other day, our manager and I realized that the co-operative had been in operation for 45,000 minutes. We received the funding on August 31, 2017, and two weeks later, the school year began. Right now, we're playing a bit of catch-up. Nevertheless, this week, we delivered food to 32 schools, and that food comes from New Brunswick.

Now, I'll put on my other hat, as executive director of Carrefour communautaire Beausoleil, in Miramichi. Last year, we purchased 1,500 pounds of tomatoes and around 500 pounds of mixed vegetables from Green Thumb Farm, about 30 kilometres away. This year, we bought 15,000 pounds of tomatoes and 5,000 pounds of mixed vegetables from the farm.

Last year, Mr. Richard, the owner, was very pleased with our order. This year, our order changed the scale of his production. Now, we are able to distribute those products, process them, and make them available to our partners, who are doing the exact same thing with the products they specialize in. We have a terrific chef whose specialty is preparing tomato sauce and frozen vegetables.

In September, everyone can buy products from New Brunswick, but it's a bit more challenging in January. To overcome that, we freeze the foods so that they are available in January. We are doing our part, just like the Early Childhood Community Development Centre, in Fredericton, which has four schools and one cafeteria, so five commercial kitchens in all.

One of our schools has 279 students, and last year, it made \$193,000. It wasn't the children who ate all that food. Cafeterias and restaurants in Miramichi served our food. During a single catering event in September of last year, we took in as much as the cafeteria makes all month long.

The markets exist, and they are accessible. It's simply a matter of removing the barriers, and Co-operation Agri-Food New Brunswick is there to do just that.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Thank you very much, Mr. Allain. You live in the riding of our committee chair, Mr. Finnigan. I am certain he would be very proud of the passion you demonstrated today. We'll tell him all about it.

**Mr. Marc Allain:** He's very familiar with it.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** I have no doubt.

Mr. Obed, you have the floor for seven minutes.

[English]

**Mr. Natan Obed (President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami):** *Nakurmik.* It's an honour to address you here as a national Inuit leader on this very important topic of food policy for Canada.

As Inuit, we often are seen as very exotic, whether it's where we live in Inuit Nunangat, the Canadian Arctic, or the foods that we eat: beluga, narwhal, bowhead whale, Arctic char. These capture the imaginations of Canadians and the world. Unfortunately, in the last generation, the last 20 and 30 years, we've had a number of challenges in continuing to eat our traditional foods, our country foods, and have huge inequity when it comes to food insecurity in our communities.

We have a whole host of different, sometimes conflicting sets of research findings around our food insecurity rates. Depending upon the type of study and where it happened and the different populations, it can range anywhere from 24% in Nunavik in northern Quebec, based on specific questions and different methodologies, to 70% in Nunavut, which is the Inuit health survey, children's survey. Broadly, for 2012 APS data, it's about 52% of Inuit in Canada who report regular household food insecurity. That is a massive difference in relation to food insecurity for non-Inuit Canadians.

Among the numbers that drive that are our median income gap. Our median income gap in Inuit Nunangat is \$60,000, \$18,000 for Inuit and \$78,000 for non-Inuit who live in Inuit Nunangat, which is the Inuit homeland, the combination of the four settlement areas of our modern treaties or comprehensive land claim agreements.

The challenge that we have just to go to the store and buy food when we have a median income that is below the poverty level is striking. Also, there's the fact that we have a traditional diet that depends upon the environment and depends upon our interaction with the environment in the face of climate change, and also in the face of a changing social environment where we are more dependent now on Ski-Doos and boats, and all of the money that it takes to operate new ways of harvesting. Our traditional ways of living and our traditional links to the environment are being undercut. A Canada food policy doesn't necessarily mean that we're going to change all of that within the policy but I think we need to take the steps in the right direction.

There are billions of dollars of subsidies that happen in this country every year in relation to how food gets on the plate of Canadians, but there hasn't been, to date, a comprehensive discussion about how to ensure that Inuit have food security and that there's a food security that fits within our world view and our lens, and also our realities. We have certain subsidy programs, such as nutrition north Canada, that attempt to drive down some of the market food costs within our communities, but we still have massive infrastructure gaps.

Much of the food that arrives in our communities doesn't come fresh. A lot of the food is partially spoiled or is almost inedible by the time that it reaches our communities because of the staging and the way in which, due to the lack of infrastructure for getting produce from Ottawa to Rankin Inlet or to Pond Inlet, it has to go through multiple stages of airports without refrigeration units. The fact that some of our produce might end up on a komatik or in the back of a flatbed truck at -40°C just isn't something that many other Canadians and many other retailers have to ever deal with.

We also have a strong desire to keep our traditions alive. In the past, even in the present, there are subsidies that provinces and territories in which Inuit live provide for a new way of harvesting our traditional species to ensure that the sustainable resources we have in our lands can be then utilized to the greatest of our abilities.

• (1650)

We have had caribou harvests. We have seal and muskox harvests, and the char fisheries. But they all struggle, and they struggle largely because of the lack of a clear policy around how subsidies can work. It isn't as if we were ever going to have profitable country food markets across Inuit Nunangat considering the size and scope of our land, 3.3 million square kilometres, our small population, 60,000 for all our 53 communities, and the fact that it is very expensive for any operation, maintenance, or bricks and mortar facilities within our communities.

There are community-based solutions, but there also has to be imagination. To operate in Inuit Nunangat, you have to think differently about programs, terms and conditions, the funding and subsidies, and why they're there.

We don't have wheat-producing parts of Inuit Nunangat. We don't have a number of the different key crops that you are going to consider within your work, but we do have a homogenous space that constitutes 33% of our land mass, 50% of its coastline, and one indigenous group of people who are looking for this new path and want food that comes from the south but also want to protect our way of life, our society, and our culture.

*Nakurmiik.*

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Mr. Obed, your presentation was very enlightening. Thank you very much. It's good to hear the perspective you bring, as we don't often get that opportunity here.

I will now turn the floor over to Ms. Boucher for six minutes.

• (1655)

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Good afternoon everyone. Thank you all for being here.

Mr. Obed, thank you for giving us insight into what you face. Here, we are in our world, in our bubble, and very few people have had the opportunity to visit Nunavut. I was fortunate enough to go eight years ago, and I remember my surprise at how expensive food products were.

When we talk about making food affordable, numerous factors come into play, particularly distance, as Mr. Obed said. Organic products also pose a problem. More and more people are buying

organic foods, but the average person can't always afford them. Why do organic tomatoes cost four times more than regular tomatoes, for instance? People who don't have a lot of money are going to buy the non-organic tomatoes because, in their minds, they are still tomatoes.

I would like you to tell me why organic foods cost so much more than non-organic foods. What do we need to do to make organic products affordable for the average Canadian?

[English]

**Mr. Dag Falck:** There are several factors involved in the production of organic food that are a little different from conventional or non-organic food. One of the issues is around production costs because we don't have as convenient an arsenal of tools to deal with the challenges of agriculture. We have to use methods that may not be as cost-effective. There's more labour involved in many cases. That's one factor that plays into it.

Another factor that plays into it is the certification cost, the cost of being certified and keeping the paperwork up to date because it's a guarantee system. You have to guarantee that you're using a certain amount, the prescribed methods, and not methods that are not prescribed or not allowed. That takes an extra amount of commitment and cost as well.

The third factor is that there's less support because it's still a relatively niche market. It's a small segment of agriculture that's organic so the support system for this form of agriculture is not as developed. There are fewer, if any, subsidies and the infrastructure is not as well developed. There are fewer, say, seed cleaning plants for grains to be cleaned that are capable of segregating and so on. Because of all these kinds of reasons, there is added cost.

One of the claims we often make is on the quality. We pride ourselves on making the highest quality food. If our food is of a higher quality, it may have more benefits per weight than conventional food. If that's the case, or if the consumers choose to believe that or do believe that, they feel that's part of what they're getting, then the cost is not necessarily as high comparatively.

For our company, Nature's Path, we consider, as you say, that all people should have access to food and we shouldn't price ourselves out of making food available for everyone. For our products, our additional cost is usually 10% to 15% higher for cereals. If you look at the different food categories, you see there is a different premium depending on the production costs and all those other factors I mentioned. Meat is very much higher. Fruits and vegetables can be double, but not necessarily. Dairy is usually double or more. There's a wide range.

• (1700)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Given all that, what can we do to make organics affordable?

The consumer protection magazine *Protégez-vous* recently did a piece on the issue.

I know that, in 2012, when we were in power, the federal government injected \$13 million into the creation of the Platform for Innovation in Organic Agriculture.

Has anyone used the program?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** You have 30 seconds to answer.

[English]

**Ms. Tia Loftsgard:** Sorry, I'm not familiar with that one. I don't know all the details of that, but we do have representatives from Quebec who can give you the information on that.

Quebec has the most successful organic production systems, and they have cost subsidies for certification and many innovative programs. We have "The State of Organics" report that summarizes all the innovations that are happening at provincial levels. I would be happy to follow up with the clerk and provide a full report, because there is some progressive stuff happening at the provincial level, just not as much as we need at a federal level.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Thank you, Ms. Boucher.

It is now over to Mr. Breton for six minutes.

**Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. You're doing a great job. It's nice to have you as chair today.

I'd like to thank each of our witnesses, who gave very informative presentations in order to provide our government with food policy proposals.

After my questions, I'm going to give Ms. Dabrusin a minute of my speaking time.

I'll start with you, Mr. Obed. You talked about food access and food insecurity. Mr. Falck, you talked about food insecurity among children. Research shows that a large number of Canadians experience food insecurity, nearly four million people and one in six children. That's very sad, indeed, and clearly, the situation is even worse up north, such as in your region, Mr. Obed.

I'd like to resume the discussion about how northern communities, in co-operation with the Government of Canada, can put strategies in place. I think that's a crucial element.

How can we work together to come up with strategies, solutions, or alternative paths to fix the problem?

[English]

**Mr. Natan Obed:** I think it starts with the renewed relationship and the Inuit-crown partnership that the Prime Minister and the Inuit signed in February. The work that flows through that with the Inuit-crown partnership committee is a place where we create a shared work plan. In areas that are of common concern, whether they're issues related to an Inuit Nunangat policy space or whether they're things related to housing, infrastructure, or food insecurity, working together is the first step. Many of our Inuit Nunangat regions already have food insecurity strategies, ways in which to combat it. We already have solutions or paths that we want to take.

The challenge has been with the broader inequity, the fact that we have 45% overcrowding in our homes, the median income gap, the infrastructure gap, the lack of education attainment. We have the high cost of living and the high cost of food. Again, this work and this policy aren't going to fix everything at once, but it's putting one

step in front of the other. Anywhere that we can, we must figure out how to work in partnership, rather than having the old way of working of broad government policies that are not distinctions-based, that are not Inuit-specific, and that imagine solutions without ever thinking about our imagination as a people.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Breton:** You're right, we can always do better. Indeed, the policy won't fix everything, but what matters is improving the situation.

Mr. Allain, I will now turn to you.

This isn't something that came up in the presentations, but I'd like to talk about child obesity. Children's weight and youth obesity are major concerns. We are hearing about it more and more. This health problem, which affects more boys than girls, has been brought to the attention of our governments.

Mr. Allain, I'd like to know whether you have an opinion on the matter. You may have some insight that could inform our food policy. Some foods are obviously not as healthy as others.

● (1705)

**Mr. Marc Allain:** It would be extremely hard for me not to have an opinion on the matter. New Brunswick actually has one of the worst childhood obesity rates in the country.

**Mr. Pierre Breton:** I see.

**Mr. Marc Allain:** What's more, the problem is most serious in the Miramichi region. It's prevalent in our community, and it's one of the reasons Carrefour communautaire Beausoleil exists and has made such a commitment.

The Carrefour played a predominant role in our initiative, and you just mentioned one of the main reasons it was developed. Yes, providing food and fostering economic and community development are important, but the health of our children comes first and foremost.

Two years ago, we made the choice to take back control of our food services, to say "no, thank you" to the then-provider. We hired a chef with 35 years of experience who had previously worked in a retirement home. We recruited him to reinvent how we fed our children. It doesn't end with what we put on the plate; that's not enough.

Children start coming to us at the age of two. We have not just a junior kindergarten program, but also a day care program for younger children. Our chef gave food workshops to the children in our day care, the youngest ones being two years old. He also gave workshops to high school students. That's where we need to start redefining our relationship with food. In order to tackle widespread and systemic problems like—

**Mr. Pierre Breton:** Do you mean education?

**Mr. Marc Allain:** It's about more than just education in the traditional sense.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Mr. Breton, I just wanted to let you know that you have 30 seconds left in case you still wanted to share your time with Ms. Dabrusin.



**Mr. Pierre Breton:** Thank you for your passion, Mr. Allain.

**Mr. Marc Allain:** It's my pleasure. What I mean is education with a capital "E". It transcends schools and extends into the community.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** You have 15 seconds, Ms. Dabrusin.

[*English*]

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.):** Mr. Obed, I think I'm just going to keep it to my 15 seconds and be quick.

You mentioned that there were several paths that had been identified as opportunities. I'm not going to have the time for you to tell us orally, but if you could provide maybe a list of the types of paths that you would see as already identified by the Inuit Tapiriit, that would be wonderful.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** That was an excellent question, Ms. Dabrusin. It will definitely be useful to get that information from Mr. Obed. Thank you.

Ms. Brosseau, you may go ahead for six minutes.

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

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for their contribution.

[*English*]

Mr. Obed, I was reading articles about Amazon Prime that say it has gotten really big in the States and that in Nunavut it's being used more and more. The cost of certain foods and daily necessities such as diapers and flour is insane. It seems that it's almost a national crisis, the insecurity and the situation. I'd appreciate your comments about Amazon Prime—how it's working, how it's being used by people.

Also, the government has tried multiple times... We had food mail and now we have nutrition north. I'd like to hear your comments. I'm really looking forward to seeing the recommendations that you're going to table before the committee.

**Mr. Natan Obed:** Shipping is something that anyone who lives in Inuit Nunangat knows the ins and outs of: how to shop online, what not to ship, and what to ship. Amazon Prime and others before it have offered free shipping in certain circumstances in certain locations, but it's a challenge for sustainability. Just a very small package, even from the capital of Nunavut, Iqaluit, to Ottawa can be as much as \$50 for something that's a kilogram or a kilogram and a half, and isn't more than a foot in diameter.

When there are companies like Amazon Prime that offer free shipping, it is something that people flock to and use in greater proportions than you'd see in the south. There's always a risk, however, that the service will be taken away at any moment.

The challenge is that we don't have equity in the way in which goods flow across this country, especially essential services and essential goods. For us in our 53 communities, only one is serviced by a year-round road. Our ports, our airstrips really are our essential infrastructure. We don't have rail systems. The fact that we don't have any of these components of our infrastructure drives the prices

up for all of the things that come into our communities, whether they're perishable or non-perishable.

I think we are still in a nation-building phase for the Canadian Arctic and Inuit Nunangat. This example of one particular online retailer and the free shipping that they offer is just a small part of a much larger picture that I think we need to fix.

• (1710)

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** As you said, it could end. They could just change their practices.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

I have a question for Mr. Allain.

Canada is one of the only G7 countries without a school breakfast strategy.

Could you speak to the importance of including such a component in a national food policy?

**Mr. Marc Allain:** I think it's essential.

Any food security policy that doesn't take children into account is flawed from the outset. They have to be included. Not only is that necessary, but it is also a golden opportunity. Feeding a child is more than just an obligation; feeding a child properly raises the likelihood that they will develop a healthy relationship with food for the rest of their life.

If we don't do that, the kinds of habits we were talking about develop and lead to problems we will have to deal with later on, at which point, they are much harder to break. Not only should a national food policy address that issue, but it is also that very path that holds the most potential. If we really want to change the world and how we feed people, we have to start with children.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** That's great. I'm going to take note of that as a recommendation.

During the 41st Parliament, my colleague Ms. Quach introduced a buy local bill. Unfortunately, the then-Conservative government voted against it. She is nevertheless going to reintroduce the bill.

Could you briefly comment on the importance that buying local would have on the next food policy?

[*English*]

If I have enough time, I'd like to ask another question about how this food strategy can support the organic sector. I think more and more Canadians are curious to know where their food comes from. When they have the financial means to do it, they will buy organic, they'll ask questions, and they'll ask for mandatory labelling of GMOs.

Can you maybe speak a bit to that?

I don't know how much time I have left.

[*Translation*]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** You have 20 seconds remaining.

[English]

**Ms. Tia Loftsgard:** I think that people are asking for organic or sustainable. Yes, we come from the organic sector, but we're hoping that everybody is looking to more sustainability and transparency in food labelling and food systems. Organic certainly has existed for many years, but I think when it comes to the regulatory side of things, we're seeing that people are on a path and a journey. We're seeing more producers being interested, and more consumers. As the market shifts, we're going to see more and more people becoming more interested in organic food and transparent labelling, and I think our government will persist on that.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Thank you very much.

I know you didn't mean to, but you used the speaking time of three people.

It is now Mr. Peschisolido's turn.

[English]

**Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.):** Thank you.

Tia, would you like to continue?

**Ms. Tia Loftsgard:** I will highlight the four pillars that I've seen put forth on the food policy. I think that organic really is an integrated, whole system and we need a food systems approach. I'm pleased to see the initiatives that are going forward because organic fits perfectly into every single one of those envelopes.

• (1715)

**Mr. Joe Peschisolido:** Tia and Mr. Falck, you mentioned that there isn't a support system for the organic system. What could we, through the national food policy, do to be helpful to you?

**Ms. Tia Loftsgard:** I will highlight that this isn't just for organic. We're creating this system for everybody. We've been participating in an ad hoc working group suggesting a governance council for the national food policy because we're not going to get this right the first time. We are going to have to continue to reflect on what the needs are of different sectors, of different people in different communities. We wholly support the idea of having a national food policy council that will help look at the different sectors and the different actors so that we are creating healthy food in conjunction with those who need access to it.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold):** Thank you very much, Ms. Loftsgard.

I'd like to thank the witnesses who joined us today. As you can see, lights have come on around us, indicating that the members are being called to the House for a vote. Thank you very much for being here and providing your input. If there's anything you weren't able to share with the committee members because we ran out of time, I encourage you to contact them. We'll have an opportunity to forward your recommendations to the analysts.

I'd like to remind the committee members that we had two matters to deal with. The first concerned the report, and we agreed to discuss that on Thursday. The other had to do with proposals for committee travel. I would ask you to think about that for Thursday's meeting, when we'll have a chance to discuss it. We received a letter from the liaison committee asking that we provide a response by Friday. If we don't have any proposals on the table Thursday, no committee travel will be possible in the winter.

We'll pick up on that Thursday.

Thank you very much.







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