

## Standing Committee on Public Accounts Report 14: Protecting Canada’s Food System

### Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) Progress Report on Recommendation 4

#### Introduction

In December 2021, the Auditor General’s report on *Protecting Canada’s Food System* was tabled in Parliament, with recommendations directed to Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), Canada Economic Development of Quebec (CEDQ) and Pacific Economic Development (PacifiCan).

Subsequently, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (PACP) studied the Auditor General’s report, and in May 2022, presented its 14th report, *Protecting Canada’s Food System*, for which the Government tabled its Government Response in September 2022. The PACP recommendation specific to DFO, ACOA, CEDQ and PacifiCan was the following:

	<b>Committee Recommendation</b>	<b>Government Response and Status</b>
<b>Recommendation 4</b>	That, by 31 December 2022, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, and Pacific Economic Development Canada provide the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a joint report showing what progress has been made to standardize data collection, analysis, and reporting for future programs that are administered by more than one of these organizations.	<p>The Government of Canada supports this recommendation. The information provided below serves as the update on progress achieved by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions (CED), Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), and the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada (PacifiCan) that was requested by the PACP by 31 December 2022.</p> <p>DFO and the three implicated Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) recognize the importance of harmonized approaches to data collection, analysis, and reporting for initiatives that are jointly delivered by multiple organizations.</p>

	<p>Overall, DFO and the RDAs work to achieve and improve the consistency and accuracy of performance indicators, data collection, analysis and reporting. To this end, when designing new joint initiatives, implicated departments work together and consult stakeholders as necessary in developing common approaches, while taking into account their particular regional or local circumstances, needs, and realities. They work on results strategies that meet Treasury Board Secretariat requirements, reporting frameworks, and tools and activities that facilitate the reporting of outcomes consistently across departments, including GBA+, and sustainable development reporting.</p> <p>As standard practice for initiatives administered by more than one organization, all RDAs establish joint policy and program working groups to coordinate the design and delivery of new programs, the results of which are the basis for training, preparing program guides, and developing and monitoring results. This work involves identifying common base indicators and data for which information is collected and reported using common reporting templates. To support these efforts, all RDAs have started to develop and implement new grants and contributions systems, based on a common platform, which will enhance the capacity to collect data and report. This approach recognizes different regional priorities and realities, providing the flexibility that a completely standardized approach would not allow.</p> <p>RDAs have also developed a common data reporting strategy, including standardized templates, shared program indicators, and activities to enhance the accuracy and standardization of data gathered. This also includes regular meetings on performance measurement to develop and advance common reporting approaches, and collaboration with Statistics Canada to</p>
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	<p>explore different sources of data to track results in a way that complements administrative data systems. RDAs also train staff, develop tools for staff, and build quality assurance in data collection and reporting systems. When delivering joint national initiatives, RDAs consult and coordinate with other federal departments.</p> <p>DFO will also work to support a coordinated framework and approach with respect to data collection, analysis and reporting for any future initiatives involving program design and delivery by DFO and the RDAs referenced.</p> <p>As the recommendation was made in the context of the Canadian Seafood Stabilization Fund (CSSF), it is important to note that the initiative, led by DFO, was a special temporary emergency measure announced in April 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative was rapidly designed and implemented collaboratively to ensure the industry received timely support in an effective and efficient manner to help protect Canada's food systems during exceptional circumstances. Normally, from design until program launch, these activities can take four months or more, however the CSSF was implemented much quicker.</p> <p>The Government remains committed to continuing to pursue a structured approach to build on current practices to improve the consistency of measurement and reporting, and to use experience from previous programming, and information from audits and evaluations to inform the design of performance measurement strategies for future joint initiatives.</p>
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## **Request for additional information**

On June 13, 2023, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts requested additional information by 31 December 2023, on the response for recommendation 4, where it states that the regional development agencies “have started to develop and implement a new grants and contributions system based on a common platform, which will enhance the capacity to collect data and report”.

## **Additional Information on Recommendation 4**

The three regional development agencies (RDA) referenced, as well as Prairies Economic Development Canada (PrairiesCan) and the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev), have developed and implemented - while other RDAs are in the process of assessing - a grants and contributions system including ones based on the Microsoft Dynamics CRM platform. This allows for adaptability and scalability to ensure that the grants and contributions system is responsive to each RDA’s needs and processes. The platform is flexible and, to date, has offered the following efficiencies across RDAs: ability to respond more quickly to deliver special initiatives (i.e., can add to and modify the system faster) as well as the ability to respond and customize reporting more efficiently. In addition to using a common platform, RDAs have established joint working groups that review and standardize definitions, which has improved the quality of the data collected and reported.