



Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada

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DMC 276181

John Williamson, MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Public Accounts
c/o Angela Crandall
131 Queen Street, 6th Floor
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Dear John Williamson:

Please find attached, in both official languages, the progress report for recommendations 1 and 2 requested by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts following my appearance on March 1, 2022.

I trust that the members will find this information useful.

Sincerely,

Forbes
, Chris

Digitally signed
by Forbes, Chris
Date: 2022.12.23
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Chris Forbes

Attachments

Canada

**A Report to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on the Development of a Comprehensive
Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan Affecting Canada’s Entire Food System**

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, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC).

Subsequently, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts studied the Auditor General’s report, and in May 2022 presented its 14th report, *Protecting Canada’s Food System*. As indicated in the Management Report Action Plan, submitted in Spring 2022, AAFC responded to the Committee’s recommendation as follows:

	Committee Recommendation	Government Response and Status
Recommendation 1	That, by 31 December 2022, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada provide the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a progress report on working with its federal, provincial, and territorial partners and stakeholders, including First Nations, Inuit, and Metis groups, to complete a national emergency preparedness and response plan for a crisis affecting Canada’s entire food system, taking into consideration the food security of Canadians. A final report should also be provided by 31 March 2023.	<p>The Government supports this recommendation, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) is on track to provide a progress report by 31 December 2022 detailing work with federal, provincial, and territorial (FPT) partners and stakeholders, including First Nations, Inuit, and the Métis Nation, on a national emergency preparedness and response plan.</p> <p>AAFC will develop a final action plan that will outline a path forward for federal, provincial, and territorial governments and stakeholders by 31 March 2023. The action plan will include a gap analysis and will put forward a feasible federal, provincial and territorial and stakeholder approach for developing a completed plan by 2024 that will consider food security implications for all Canadians.</p> <p>AAFC has begun the first of two phases of work in response to this. Phase 1 is to work with FPT governments, as well as industry and Indigenous partners, to identify action plan options and agree on</p>

		<p>an implementation approach. This is to be completed by March 2023.</p> <p>Phase 2 is to implement the path forward with FPTs and stakeholders for which the outcome will be the implementation of a national emergency preparedness and response plan for a crisis affecting Canada's entire food system. The estimated completion date for this is 2024.</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of protecting Canada's food systems from crises. AAFC is committed to forward planning to mitigate future disruptions to the production, distribution and consumption of food.</p> <p>To date, AAFC has begun its first phase of work bringing together stakeholders from across the food supply chain to develop a comprehensive national emergency preparedness and response plan. The purpose of the first phase of work is currently underway to collaborate with provincial and territorial governments, First Nations, Inuit, and the Métis Nation and stakeholders including industry, on how best to support the supply chain's preparedness and response efforts in Canada. A successful national emergency preparedness and response plan must be inclusive of the unique interests, circumstances, and perspectives of First Nations, Inuit, and the Métis Nation through engagement and co-development, in support of reconciliation, self-determination, and food sovereignty. The first phase has four key outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Raise awareness on the importance of developing a comprehensive emergency
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		<p>response plan for the agriculture and agri-food sector [ONGOING];</p> <p>2. Establish a Federal, Provincial, and Territorial (FPT) working group to contribute to defining the parameters for an FPT/industry response plan and supporting plans [ONGOING];</p> <p>3. Engage in outreach to Indigenous Peoples, industry partners, and stakeholders to elicit advice on an approach to improving FPT and industry emergency responses [ONGOING];</p> <p>4. Outline a path forward for federal, provincial, and territorial governments, Indigenous Peoples, and stakeholders to identify action plan options and agree on an implementation approach. This phase of work will culminate with agreement on emergency plan options, and an implementation approach. AAFC continues to ensure that the action plan proposed during this phase links with the Federal Emergency Response Plan, so as to improve Federal Emergency Management cohesiveness, and coordination between federal institutions.</p>
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Key measures taken to respond to the Standing Committee’s report

In its response to the Committee’s report, AAFC committed to engage with other relevant federal departments; federal, provincial, and territorial agriculture counterparts; industry stakeholders; and First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Nation partners to raise awareness on the importance of developing a comprehensive emergency response framework for the agriculture and agri-food sector that considers the importance of food security.

To facilitate this process, AAFC will consider renewing the FPT Emergency Management Framework for Agriculture in Canada (the Framework). The Framework sets the strategic direction for FPT partners to collaboratively prepare for and manage emergencies facing the agriculture sector in a predictable,

cohesive, practical and forward-thinking manner. The current Framework was created at time of heightened concern with plant and animal diseases, and was never designed to address current emergency events, such as cybersecurity, civil unrest, and global geo-political events (Black Sea grain shipping crisis). As well, it does not consider the entire food supply chain, such as processing and retail distribution, which directly impacts the food security concerns of Canadians when shortages of food, hoarding, and escalating prices occur during times of emergencies.

Identification of relevant authorities, developing a governance model, recognizing international aspects of emergency events, and exercising emergency scenarios will be considered. A review of the Framework will help inform the development a national emergency preparedness and response plan.

With this in mind, key actions that AAFC has taken to date include:

- The establishment of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Food System Emergency Management Working Group. As of December 2022, this Group has held two meetings with more scheduled for early 2023. The Group has a mandate to:
 - strengthen the resiliency and collective capacity of government and industry to prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disruptions affecting Canada’s food sector;
 - contribute to the development of a national emergency preparedness and response plan for a crisis affecting Canada’s entire food system, taking into consideration the food security of Canadians; and
 - support broader governmental aims to improve the resiliency of each of Canada’s critical infrastructure areas and to complement the additional effort and resources currently focussed on federal emergency planning efforts.
- Consultation with the Food Sector Network (FSN), an AAFC-led standing forum for discussion and information sharing among food system specific industry stakeholders that has a mandate to strengthen the resiliency and collective capacity of government and industry to prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disruptions affecting Canada’s food sector. Discussions in this forum center on supply chain disruptions and how they can be mitigated. AAFC will present options for response plan elements to the FSN in early 2023 and will work with the group to refine.
- Engagement session with the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples in December 2022. AAFC is working with the department’s subject matter experts and those in other government departments to set up further engagement sessions with other Inuit, Metis, and First Nations groups.
- AAFC representatives have consulted with other government departments, including Indigenous Services Canada, CIRNAC, Public Safety Canada, and Transport Canada, on the response plan’s development and how it can link with work being done at these departments (for instance, the development of the renewed Federal Emergency Response Plan and Action Plan for Critical

Infrastructure at Public Safety, and the recent release of the Supply Chain Task Force Report via Transport Canada). AAFC understands the importance of these collaborative efforts and will continue to link with other departments for their input as the response plan develops.

- AAFC representatives met with the Canadian Agriculture Youth Council (CAYC) on December 13, 2022. A consultative body to AAFC, the CAYC is a group of young Canadians providing advice, enabling on-going dialogue on food-related challenges and opportunities, sharing information and best practices, and advising on the strengths and weaknesses of policies and programs affecting the agriculture and agri-food sectors. This consultation session provided valuable feedback from a diverse group of under-represented stakeholders across Canada's food supply chain.

In anticipation of the delivery of the final report to this committee on March 31, 2023, AAFC will continue to develop a thorough gap analysis that examines the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as subsequent events that negatively affected Canada's food supply chain. This analysis will serve as foundational work to the development of the national emergency preparedness and response plan.

The final report to be completed by March 31, 2023, will provide further details on the action plan that AAFC committed to in its Management Response and Action Plan (MRAP), which was submitted to the Office of the Auditor General in Spring 2022. This action plan will outline AAFC's proposed course of action for developing the Emergency Response Plan (ERP), which the department will deliver in 2024. Stakeholder engagement and consultation will continue throughout the development of the ERP. This will help ensure a better understanding of the roles, responsibilities and opportunities for collaboration across stakeholders and improve emergency management outcomes for a crisis affecting Canada's entire food system.

The ERP will serve as a guiding document to inform how PT governments, industry stakeholders, and First Nations, Metis, and Inuit partners will respond to a crisis affecting Canada's entire food system that takes into consideration the food security of all Canadians.

It is recognized that the analysis and policy considerations developed for the national ERP will be informed and developed through an intersectional lens, including applying frameworks such as Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus).

Annex A: AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD CANADA (AAFC) MANAGEMENT RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN (MRAP)



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Annex B: Emergency Management Framework for Agriculture in Canada

<https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/canadas-agriculture-sectors/animal-industry/agriculture-emergency-management/emergency-management-framework-agriculture-canada>

A Report to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on Reporting Contributions Toward Sustainable Development Commitments and to Gender and Diversity for AAFC’s Food Support Programs

Introduction

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) administered three programs as part of the Government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic: the Emergency Processing Fund, the Emergency Food Security Fund, and the Surplus Food Rescue Program.

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, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, and AAFC.

Subsequently, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts studied the Auditor General’s report, and in May 2022, presented its 14th report, *Protecting Canada’s Food System*, which included the following recommendation directed to AAFC:

	Committee Recommendation	Government Response and Status
Recommendation 2	That, by 31 December 2022, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada provide the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts with reports outlining their progress on ensuring that their future food support programs measure and report on their contributions toward sustainable development commitments and to gender and diversity in order to improve program assessment and outcomes. Final reports should also be provided by 30 April 2023.	<p>The Government supports this recommendation, and suggests that Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), and AAFC provide a single final report by April 30, 2023, in lieu of providing two separate reports. The submission of a single report aligns with existing reporting commitments related to the OAG Report, the tabling of the 2022-2026 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy (FSDS) in November 2022, and subsequent development of a new AAFC Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy (DSDS).</p> <p>Both DFO and AAFC are committed to ensuring food support programs track progress on contributions toward sustainable development, and gender and diversity, in order to improve program assessment and outcomes.</p> <p>Once the 2022-2026 FSDS is tabled in November 2022, DFO and AAFC will develop their respective new DSDS to establish targets and indicators that best reflect departmental contributions to the FSDS and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.</p> <p>Both DFO and AAFC are committed to ensuring all</p>

		<p>programs take into account gender and diversity considerations. In response to the Management Response Action Plan response to the OAG Report, DFO developed guidance to assist programs to develop targets and indicators related to sustainability and Gender Based Analysis (GBA+) outcomes for relevant new initiatives. The guidance materials set out processes and supporting information to ensure, when relevant, that programs are demonstrating how their results link to Canada’s sustainable development commitments (both in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and DFO’s DSDS, as well as with GBA+). All new initiatives, including food support initiatives, are expected to apply this guidance as part of the results development process.</p>
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Key measures taken to respond to the Auditor General’s report

AAFC continues to be committed to ensuring food support programs track progress on contributions toward sustainable development, and gender and diversity, in order to improve program assessment and outcomes.

AAFC considers sustainable development commitments during the planning and development stage of all programs through the strategic environmental assessment process, as required by the *Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals*. AAFC has included examples of how programs contribute to sustainable development goals in its Departmental Plans and Departmental Results Reports since 2020-21, as required by the Treasury Board of Canada. As of 2022-23, an additional mandatory reporting table was added to the Departmental Plan template to further provide information on program alignment with sustainable development goals.

Now that the 2022-2026 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy (FSDS) has been tabled, AAFC will develop a new Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy (DSDS) to establish targets and indicators that best reflect departmental contributions to the FSDS and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This will be completed by November 2023.

AAFC incorporates gender and diversity considerations into the design, development and delivery of all programs. Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) assessments are mandatory for the Budget Proposal, Memoranda to Cabinet, and Treasury Board Submission processes. AAFC is committed to the ongoing collection of GBA Plus data that uses applicant data and connects to other databases (e.g., Statistics Canada Linkable data files) which will provide a dataset that can be used to create profiles on the demographics of program applicants, recipients and potential beneficiaries in order to better understand program reach and whether barriers exist. This data and analysis will also inform policies and programs including considerations for future design and delivery. The distribution of benefits and key diversity impacts by program are reported in the Departmental Results Report.

With respect to the contributions on specific groups of the food support programs examined as part of the Office of the Auditor General's Protecting Canada's Food System audit, analyses are currently being undertaken and will be completed in time to be included in the April report. Specifically:

- As part of their performance reporting requirements, recipients of the Emergency Food Security Fund (EFSF) were obligated to administer a survey to a sampling of their partner local food service organizations through which the program was delivered. This survey included a question asking the respondents to identify the communities that were served by the funding, specifically: isolated communities, northern communities, rural communities, and Indigenous communities. This information will enable an analysis of program impacts, for example, of the percent increase in the amount of food distributed by the funded local food service organizations in these communities. The results of these analyses will be included in the final report to be provided to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts by April 30, 2023.
- Similarly, under the Surplus Food Rescue Program (SFRP), the organizations responsible for the delivery of the surplus food (i.e. food banks and other food security organizations) were required to complete a performance report. The reporting template included a question asking the respondents to identify the communities that were served by the funding, specifically: rural communities, remote communities, Northern communities (defined as the three territories, plus Inuit Nunangat areas in northern Quebec and Labrador), and Indigenous peoples. As with EFSF, this information will enable an analysis of program impacts, for example, of the percent increase in the amount of food distributed by the funded local food service organizations in these communities. The results of these analyses will be included in the final report to be provided to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts by April 30, 2023.