



Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada

Deputy Minister

Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0C5

Agriculture et
Agroalimentaire Canada

Sous-ministre

Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0C5

DMC 278064

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

Dear Mr. Williamson:

Please find attached, in both official languages, the final report that responds to Recommendation 2 from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts' Report 14, entitled "Protecting Canada's Food System."

I trust that the members will find this information useful.

Yours sincerely,

**Beck,
Stefanie**

Stefanie Beck

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Stefanie
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Attachments

Canada 

Final 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 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.

While the initial Government Response to PACP had indicated that a single progress report would be provided to update on Recommendation 2, AAFC and DFO have elected to provide separate reports in order to provide a more fulsome response.

AAFC considers sustainable development commitments during the planning and development stage of all program proposals 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 the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals in its Departmental Plans and Departmental Results Reports since 2020-21, as required by the Treasury Board of Canada. Now that the 2022-2026 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy (FSDS) has been tabled, AAFC is developing 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. AAFC works to advance diversity, equity and inclusion outcomes by applying a GBA Plus intersectional lens to assess the specific needs and circumstances of the people impacted, including underrepresented and marginalized groups, by our policies, programs and initiatives. Underrepresented and/or marginalized populations in the agriculture and agri-food sector include, but are not limited to Indigenous peoples, women, youth, racialized persons, persons with disabilities, 2SLGBTQI+ communities, and official language minority communities.

AAFC continues to develop and refine tools to guide analysts through the application of GBA Plus. For example, AAFC has an assessment tool to guide policy, program and initiative leads through mandatory GBA Plus processes for Cabinet documents (i.e., Budget proposal, Memorandum to Cabinet, Treasury Board submission). Through these mandatory processes, this tool helps guide analysts to identify direct and indirect beneficiaries, use statistics to understand the representation of the beneficiaries, and assess the impacts and explore solutions, all in an effort to mitigate barriers or unintended impacts.

AAFC is committed to improving the quality and availability of disaggregated data to better understand the range of diverse impacts of a policy, program or initiative. The Department uses data and analysis from a variety of sources depending on the initiative's focus to both understand the demographic representation of the affected populations as well as to assess the impacts on those populations. For example, AAFC uses Statistics Canada data (e.g., Census of Agriculture, Census of Population, Ag-Pop Linkage, Labour Force Survey, Linkable File Environment, Diversity and Skills Database, among others) to understand representation in the agriculture and agri-food sector specifically, and the economy as a whole, and AAFC program data (e.g. self-identification data provided by applicants on program applications, performance reports submitted by recipients, etc.) to understand the impact and reach of its programming. AAFC also uses qualitative data, such as client journey mapping exercises with AAFC program participants, targeted outreach and roundtables with diverse groups in the sector, external peer-reviewed research papers, internal white papers, and case studies and reports from industry organizations. The distribution of benefits and key diversity impacts by program are reported in the Departmental Results Report.

GBA Plus Analysis of Food Support Programs' Impacts – Summary

A detailed analysis of 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 can be found in the Annex below. The following presents a high-level summary of those analyses, which demonstrate that the emergency food programs launched in the wake of the pandemic successfully achieved their intended outcomes, and specifically reached a range of underrepresented and marginalized groups.

Emergency Processing Fund (EPF)

- 29% of recipients indicated that their organization's mandate focused on women, 27% on youth, 26% on visible minorities, 15% on persons with disabilities, and 11% on Indigenous peoples.
- With respect to the underrepresented groups who would directly benefit from the project's activities, 40% of recipients indicated that women would directly benefit, 38% visible minorities, 32% youth, 18% persons with disabilities, and 14% Indigenous peoples.

Emergency Food Security Fund (EFSF)

- Data showed a relatively proportional distribution of EFSF projects and funding across provinces, per capita.
- Since its launch in April 2020, a total of 1,911 projects (23% of all projects) directly supporting Indigenous organizations and communities were supported, representing 28% of AAFC funding.
- 74% of projects (representing 56% of funding) served communities where 50% or more of the population belonged to one of the following marginalized groups: disabled persons, seniors, visible minorities, women, youth, and official language minorities.
- EFSF investments were made in 41% of all regions identified as being at Very High Risk based on the vulnerable populations index, in 33% of areas denoted as High Risk, and in 45% of areas designated as Moderate Risk.
- Overall, projects resulted in average percent increases in the quantity of food produced / distributed (129% increase in volume, 194% increase in value, 230% increase in number of meals and 128% increase in number of clients).
- 89% of partner local food service organizations surveyed indicated that EFSF either significantly or considerably increased their capacity to provide healthy and nutritious food during the COVID-19 pandemic. 85% indicated that the funding significantly or considerably increased the availability of healthy and nutritious food in their community during the COVID-19 pandemic. With respect to the funding's contribution to reducing household food insecurity in the community served, 76% of respondents indicated that it had done so to a significant or considerable degree.

Surplus Food Rescue Program (SFRP)

- The 9 SFRP recipients distributed, on average, 13.9% of their food to the North.
- 104 unique Northern communities were served by SFRP projects.

- The program target of 10% of food reaching vulnerable, remote, and Northern communities was achieved.
- Across all projects, there was an average increase of 51% in volume of food distributed.
- Projects serving rural, remote and Indigenous communities tended to be relatively smaller-scale, but had a relatively larger proportional impact.

Annex A: Analysis of Food Support Programs' Reach and Impact

Emergency Processing Fund (EPF)

As part of their project application, recipients of the federally-delivered component of EPF were asked to indicate whether the mandate of their organization focused on certain underrepresented groups.

Based on data gathered at the time of application, of the 187 recipients representing the projects funded¹, 29% indicated that their organization's mandate focused on women, 27% on youth, 26% on visible minorities, 15% on persons with disabilities, and 11% on Indigenous peoples. A total of 59% of recipients did not identify an underrepresented group as being a focus of their mandate.

With respect to the underrepresented groups who would directly benefit from the intent of their project's activities², 40% of recipients indicated that women would directly benefit, 38% visible minorities, 32% youth, 18% persons with disabilities, and 14% Indigenous peoples. A total of 50% of recipients did not identify an underrepresented group as being a direct beneficiary of their project's activities.

Emergency Food Security Fund (EFSF)

Information regarding project location and primary underrepresented group served was collected through EFSF administrative reporting. In addition, as part of their performance reporting requirements, recipients of EFSF were obligated to administer a survey to a sampling (10-20%) of their partner local food service organizations through which the program was delivered, to collect project impact information.

In a regional analysis of project impacts, there was a relatively proportional distribution of projects and funding across provinces, per capita.

Of the 8,314 projects funded over the course of the program, 1,911 (23%) directly supported Indigenous organizations and/or populations, accounting for 28% of the total amount of funding distributed.

Beginning in the second stream of the program, the primary vulnerable population group served by each project was determined.³ Overall, 74% of projects supported one of the identified underrepresented and marginalized groups (disabled persons, seniors, visible minorities, women, youth, and official language minorities). Table 1 below shows the specific breakdown – for instance, 17% of total projects

¹ Note that recipients could select more than one group, so percentages do not add up to 100%.

² Explanations of how the projects would specifically benefit these underrepresented groups were not requested, since the primary focus of the program was to assist in putting in place measures to ensure all employees were safer, and to limit the impacts of the pandemic on the operations of the funded organizations.

³ It is recognized that the majority of EFSF funding supported vulnerable populations; the intent of this information was to capture data about underrepresented population groups that were specifically targeted by some of the projects.

(representing 14% of total funding) served populations consisting of 50% or more Black and people of colour.⁴

Table 1: Percent of EFSF Projects/Funding for which 50% or More of the Population Served Belonged to One of the Identified Underrepresented and Marginalized Groups		
Marginalized Group	% of Total Projects	% of Total \$ Distributed
Women	13%	9%
Youth	35%	27%
Seniors	7%	4%
Black and People of Colour	17%	14%
Disabled Persons	2%	1%
Official Language Minority Communities	1%	1%
Total for all underrepresented and marginalized groups identified	74%	56%

Finally, surveys of a sampling (10-20%) of partner local food service organizations that received EFSF funds showed that on average, nearly half of the projects for which demographic information was available served Indigenous and rural communities (47% and 42% respectively), with a smaller number serving isolated and Northern communities (35% and 17% respectively).⁵ Another third of the projects (32%) did not serve any of the listed marginalized communities.

EFSF was also found to result in increased volumes and values of food produced/distributed, and in number of meals and clients served, in marginalized communities. For these communities, project results were comparable to (and in many cases better than) overall program results. For example, on average, projects resulted in a 128% increase in number of clients, however among isolated communities there was a 234% increase; among Northern communities, 152%; among rural communities, 174%; and among Indigenous communities, 204%.

EFSF funding was also found to contribute to organizational capacity (89% indicated significantly or considerably), increased food availability (85% indicated significantly or considerably), and reduced household food insecurity in the community served (76% indicated significantly or considerably). There was no substantial or consistent relationship between responses for any of the specific marginalized communities compared to the overall average.

The GBA Plus analyses undertaken do not point to any overarching relationship between community group served and project results. No consistent themes emerged when applying a demographic lens to the analysis of percent changes in the quantity of food produced/distributed, or regarding the project's

⁴ Beginning in EFSF-3, "Black and People of Colour" replaced "visible minorities".

⁵ Respondents could select more than one community as having been served by the project, and could select a community even if the project did not exclusively serve that group.

impact. That is, projects serving the underrepresented and marginalized groups identified did not tend to be more or less successful than the average EFSF project.

Surplus Food Rescue Program (SFRP)

Demographic information regarding SFRP projects and impacts was provided both through administrative data collection processes, and through performance reports completed by the organizations responsible for the delivery of the surplus food (i.e. food banks and other food security organizations).

An analysis of demographics and communities served by the SFRP shows that the program target of 10% of food reaching vulnerable, remote, and Northern communities was met. More specifically:

- The 9 SFRP recipients distributed, on average, 13.9% of their food to the North.
- 104 unique Northern communities were served by SFRP projects.⁶
- More than 10% of projects served each of the following demographic groups: rural, remote, Indigenous, Northern, urban, LGBTQ2+, seniors, and other marginalized peoples (including low-income, Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC), children, and new Canadians).

There was a positive percent increase in the volume of food distributed after project implementation (Table 2). Across all projects, there was an average increase of 51% in volume of food distributed, suggesting that the program was able to spur an increase in the availability of food. The highest increases were seen with projects which served Northern and rural communities, and the lowest increases were with projects which served seniors and other marginalized communities.

Table 2: Average Percent Increases in Before/After Food Volumes (in % and kg)		
	Average Percent Increase	Average Increase in kg
Across all projects	51%	408,609
Northern communities	62%	201,659
Indigenous peoples	49%	453,747
Rural communities	61%	509,064
Remote communities	59%	160,181
Northern communities	109%	172,417
Urban communities	45%	436,386
LGBTQ2+	45%	258,099
Seniors	27%	62,884
Other marginalized individuals (Low income, BIPOC, children, new Canadians)	16%	227,890

⁶ In some instances, the same community received food from more than one of the projects; in these instances, the community was only counted once.

All categories of projects saw a positive average difference in food volumes throughout the course of the project – with those projects serving Northern and remote communities seeing the highest average differences as a percentage.