

***Steering Committee for the
Call to Create a National Strategy for Agri-Food Research and Innovation***

April 8, 2022

The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, PC, MP
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
1341 Baseline Road, Tower 7, Floor 9, Room 149
Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0C5

Dear Minister Bibeau,

In November, the Agri-Food Innovation Council (AIC) issued a call for Canada to develop a National Strategy on Agri-food Research and Innovation. Since then, dozens of stakeholders from across the agri-food sector have echoed the call. A steering committee was formed to lead the advocacy for the development of the national strategy. The signatories of this letter represent the members of the steering committee.

As highlighted by the Barton report, the agri-food sector holds enormous potential for the Canadian economy both in terms of job creation and economic growth. The sector enjoys a competitive advantage internationally and a strong innovation ecosystem. Canada is one of the very few countries in the world that can achieve both production intensity and environmental sustainability as well as being a reliable and trusted supplier of agriculture and agri-food products to a world that needs food.

However, there are also many challenges. The climate crisis is putting pressure on the sector to innovate to achieve sustainability, resiliency and environmental stewardship expectations. Labour shortages impact existing capacity, limiting our growth and preventing the industry from innovating. Slowing productivity gains, rising prices, growing barriers to trade, and ongoing disruptions to the supply chains continue to be formidable obstacles.

Since the Barton report, the government has developed numerous plans, instituted new programs and set up new venues for continued engagement with the sector, a good example being the Agri-Food Economic Strategy Table. The steering committee would like to commend the government for their commitment to the agri-food sector and Canadian research and innovation.

To fully unlock the agri-food sector's potential, seize global opportunities and overcome key challenges, Canada must streamline investments in agri-food research and innovation. We believe there is a need to ensure policies and programs are coordinated, strategic and focused on realizing market and societal impacts. All points along the agri-food innovation process, from primary research to adoption, should be reviewed to ensure alignment with priorities and address capacity gaps.

Furthermore, we recognize that we are operating in a time of fiscal restraint. With limited resources, it is crucial that efforts to strengthen the agri-food research and innovation ecosystem are efficient, non-duplicative and able to achieve tangible results. We believe that a national strategy is instrumental for addressing many of these issues.

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The development of this strategy should be co-led by government and industry, in close collaboration with the provinces and territories, and with academia and others. Together, we can ensure Canada capitalizes on our competitive advantage in agri-food for the next generation.

But we must act now. The organizations that have joined AIC's call for a National Strategy on Agri-Food Research and Innovation agree – now is the time to start work on this important initiative.

Our primary request is for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to agree to take a leadership role, in partnership with industry, in the development of such a strategy as well as to coordinate efforts across government departments and with our provincial and territorial partners.

As a first step, we would like to meet with you, Honourable Minister, to discuss our objectives and the next steps for further engagement on this critical issue.

Yours truly,

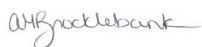
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Ian Affleck
Vice President, Plant Biotechnology
CropLife Canada



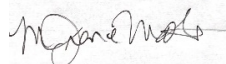
Andrea Brocklebank
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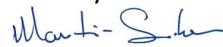
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C.C.

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Prime Minister of Canada

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry

Members of the House of Commons

Members of the Senate