



Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2026 Federal Budget

By: Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada (FVGC) – August 2025

The Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada (FVGC) represents growers across the country involved in the production of over 120 different types of crops on over 14,000 farms, with a farm gate value of approximately \$8 billion. FVGC is an Ottawa-based not-for-profit association, and, since 1922, has advocated on important issues that impact Canada's fresh produce sector, promoting healthy, safe, and sustainable food, ensuring the continued success and growth of the industry.

Recommendation 1:

Modernize business risk management (BRM) programs and provide immediate support:

- Provide immediate, direct support for growers hit by extreme weather such as floods, wildfires, and droughts.
- Accelerate the 2028 review of federal/provincial BRM programs to ensure they respond quickly to severe weather losses.
- Transition toward a Business Risk Management and Mitigation (BRMM) system with expanded insurance options and proactive resilience tools.

Recommendation 2:

Secure Trade Competitiveness and Resilient Markets:

- Ensure horticulture is explicitly considered in trade policy and agreements.
- Improve monitoring and safeguards against import surges and dumping.
- Offset rising domestic compliance costs by creating targeted competitiveness programs so growers can compete fairly.
- Invest in domestic processing capacity and a sector specific market stabilization fund to manage oversupply during trade disruptions.
- Secure trade competitiveness and resilient markets.

Recommendation 3:

Ensure labour stability for fruit and vegetable production:

- Preserve and strengthen the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP).
- Recalibrate inspection practices to protect workers while ensuring fair, timely treatment for compliant employers.
- Invest in rural infrastructure to support worker recruitment and retention.

Recommendation 4:

Increase Access to Effective Crop Protection Tools:

- Invest immediately in the Minor Use Pesticide Program (MUPP) to restore its capacity and output to levels observed under Growing Forward between 2008-2013 (~\$7.2 M annual budget increase).
- Apply a food lens to the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) decision-making to prioritize registrations that support domestic food security. The PMRA must allocate and prioritize resources towards activities that directly support the

timely delivery of new crop protection tools: (1) New registrations; (2) Real-world data; and (3) Re-evaluations and special reviews.

Recommendation 5:

Apply a food lens to federal policymaking.

Introduction

The Speech from the Throne (SFT) recognized that “the world is a more dangerous and uncertain place than at any point since the Second World War [and that] Canada [was] facing challenges ... unprecedented in our lifetimes.” It also recognized that Canadians are “anxious and worried”.

In these unsettled times, Parliament and the Government must focus on measures that grow economic and social resiliency and maintain confidence in our institutions.

With one in four Canadian households facing food insecurity, and more turbulence ahead, it is imperative that the government make growing Canadian agricultural resiliency a national priority.

This is why we applauded the Government’s SFT commitment to protect “the people who give us access to fresh, healthy, and quality food: agricultural producers.”

The recommendations below are a roadmap to a more resilient fruit and vegetable sector and greater food security for Canadians. Note that the FVGC Greenhouse Vegetable Working Group has submitted its own detailed recommendations for strengthening Canada’s greenhouse sector to grow food security.

Recommendation 1:

Modernize Business-Risk Management Programs and Provide Immediate Support

Issue

Canada’s suite of five Business Risk Management (BRM) programs was designed to protect farmers from factors beyond their control, yet these programs are poorly suited to the economic reality of horticultural production. They are slow and inconsistent and do not respond effectively to extreme weather, sudden cost spikes or trade disruptions. Inadequate BRM programs threaten both growers and consumers.

Rationale

1. **Modernize the BRM framework into a BRMM system:** The government should transition from a traditional BRM paradigm to a business risk management and mitigation system by incorporating:
 - a. Enhanced funding for pest management;
 - b. Weather-indexed insurance tools;
 - c. Support for on-farm risk reduction infrastructure; and

- d. Incentives for market diversification. These measures would encourage growers to invest in resilience while reducing exposure to climate and market shocks.
2. **Accelerate the review of BRM programs:** The next BRM review is slated for 2028—too late for a sector facing urgent challenges. A horticulture-specific working group should be convened to deliver recommendations within 90 days, focusing on AgriRecovery responsiveness and federal-provincial coordination.
 3. **Provide immediate support during trade disruptions:** Perishable crops can't wait out trade barriers. The government should offer direct, short-term support, including:
 - A federally led surplus removal program tied to the school food program and food banks;
 - Targeted AgriInvest top-ups for fruit and vegetable producers; and
 - A higher interest-free limit under the Advance Payments Program.
 4. **Expand AgriInsurance to include greenhouse crops:** Exclusion of greenhouse production leaves major gaps in risk coverage. Including greenhouse crops would ensure year-round protection and equitable treatment.
 5. **Establish compensation mechanisms for plant health quarantines.** When government quarantine orders require destruction of crops or plant materials, growers should receive compensation. This mirrors compensation frameworks in livestock sectors and encourages early reporting of pests and diseases.
 6. **Restore AgriStability program parameters and explore revenue-based insurance.** Reinstate the AgriStability trigger and compensation rate to 85 %, reflecting high costs and volatile margins.
 7. **Invest in plant health and biosecurity.** Funding national and on-farm plant-health strategies, including integrated pest management tools, preventative biosecurity measures and physical barriers like insect screens, would reduce risks and support resilience. A federal catastrophic loss coverage program and enabling legislation to extend financial compensation for plant-health emergencies would further mitigate the sector's risk profile.

Recommendation 2:

Secure Trade Competitiveness and Resilient Markets

Issue

Perishable fruits and vegetables cannot be warehoused indefinitely; when delays or tariffs occur, crops spoil and markets are lost. Canadian growers must compete against imports produced under different regulatory, labour and environmental conditions while facing rising domestic compliance costs. Without strong trade protections and competitiveness policies, Canada risks losing domestic shelf space, undermining its ability to feed itself.

Rationale

1. **Reflect horticulture in trade policy development and negotiations:** Horticulture is often excluded from trade negotiations and frameworks. Canada must involve horticultural experts in trade negotiations strategy and policy development
2. **Improve monitoring and safeguards against import surges.** Fresh produce is highly perishable and especially vulnerable to dumping, where foreign products are sold below market value to gain unfair advantage. This remains a real and ongoing threat. Canada must maintain protections for fresh produce, including improved monitoring of import volumes and pricing, early warning systems, and swift enforcement to ensure imported goods meet Canadian food safety, labour, and environmental standards
3. **Offset rising domestic costs through targeted competitiveness programs.** Horticultural producers face growing costs from regulatory compliance, including new environmental reporting requirements like ECCC's Plastics Registry and complex labour policies. Targeted programs—such as tax credits for on-farm efficiency, support for digital agriculture, and modernization grants for greenhouses—would help offset these pressures and support growers' ability to compete in both domestic and international markets.
4. **Invest in domestic processing and create a sector-specific market-stabilization fund.** Canada lacks sufficient domestic processing capacity for fresh produce, leaving growers vulnerable to trade disruptions. Strategic investments in processing facilities that convert perishable produce into shelf-stable products would provide alternative markets, reduce food waste and support rural economies. A dedicated emergency fund with tailored support mechanisms for different horticultural subsectors would help offset price collapses during trade crises.

Recommendation 3:

Ensure Labour Stability for the Fresh Produce Sector

Issue

Horticulture is the most labour-intensive agricultural sector. Peak-season vacancy rates reached 12 % in 2022—about 6,300 unfilled jobs—and growers lost an estimated \$260 million in sales. Many crops must be harvested manually and repeatedly, and cannot be mechanically picked without damage.

Rationale

- 1. Preserve and strengthen the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP).** SAWP is uniquely structured around seasonality, bilateral agreements and government oversight, offering predictability for employers and strong safeguards for workers. Maintaining SAWP ensures that growers have timely access to labour, enabling them to meet harvest windows and keep Canadian-grown produce on store shelves.
- 2. Recalibrate oversight and enforcement practices.** Oversight of temporary foreign worker programs should protect workers' rights without undermining growers' ability to recruit. Reforms should include clearer compliance standards, consistent inspections and a collaborative approach with growers and worker advocates. Greater recognition of SAWP's unique bilateral agreements with source countries can reduce administrative burdens while maintaining protection.
- 3. Invest in rural infrastructure and domestic workforce development.** Housing, healthcare and rural transit are critical to attracting and retaining domestic and foreign workers in growing regions. The Greenhouse Investment Roadmap identified these areas as key to supporting sector growth. Investments in training and mechanization can also reduce labour demand over the long term.

Recommendation #4

Increase Access to Effective Crop Protection Tools

Issue

There is an urgent need for access to an increased range of crop protection tools. Many of the products once relied upon for combating pest pressures (weeds, insects and diseases) have been cancelled or have lost / reduced effectiveness in the field. Unlike major commodities (e.g. canola, wheat), fruit and vegetables are grown on a much smaller scale, and as a result, there is limited financial interest from pesticide manufacturers to bring

their products to Canada. Growers have relied heavily upon government research from AAFC's Pest Management Centre (PMC) to fill this void.

Rationale

1. **Invest immediately in the MUPP to restore its capacity and output to levels observed under Growing Forward between 2008-2013 (~\$7.2 M annual budget increase).** The PMC's MUPP has played a vital role for over 20 years in securing product registrations by facilitating the generation and regulatory review of efficacy, residue, and crop safety data. Unfortunately, the MUPP's budget has been frozen for more than a decade, and inflationary pressures have dramatically reduced its research capacity. Given this, FVGC urges government to take heed of calls to action for increased resourcing by [AAFC](#), [FPT WG on Pesticide Management](#), and [AGRI Report on Horticulture](#).
2. **The PMRA must allocate and prioritize resources towards activities that directly support the timely delivery of new crop protection tools: (1) New registrations; (2) Real-world data; and (3) Re-evaluations and special reviews.** FVGC welcomes the liberal platform's commitment to applying a food lens to PMRA decision-making. Policy decisions that do not consider their downstream impacts on food production leave growers without necessary tools for combating pest pressures and ultimately impact competitiveness and resiliency of the sector. For example, there has been poor availability and/or quality of real-world data on pesticide uses and their residues in Canadian waterbodies. This limitation has led to overly conservative decisions being made, leading to less tools for growers to rely upon

Recommendation #5

Apply a Food Lens to Federal Policymaking

- The Government should apply a food lens to all key policies to ensure food security, sector sustainability and public health; to encourage transparency and accountability, an annual report on its application should be tabled before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Issue

Global trade disruptions, extreme weather and rising production costs mean that policies not traditionally viewed as "agriculture" (e.g., tax changes, climate policies or infrastructure decisions) can have significant and sometimes unintended impacts on farmers.

Rationale

As Canada pursues economic growth and environmental objectives, it must also secure food availability and affordability for all Canadians. Without such a lens, policies can inadvertently exacerbate food insecurity, constrain farm profitability or hinder innovation. A food lens would ensure that cost–benefit analyses of policy initiatives examine their impacts on agricultural production and that any trade-offs are transparent.

A food lens would be a concrete step to achieving the goal set out in the last Speech from the Throne: to protect “the people who give us access to fresh, healthy, and quality food: agricultural producers.”

Conclusion

Canada’s fresh produce growers are the foundation of a secure, resilient food system. By modernizing risk management programs, securing trade competitiveness, ensuring labour stability, and investing in crop protection tools, the federal government can strengthen domestic food security and support rural economies. We urge the committee to ensure fiscal and other policies across departments are aligned with domestic food production and Canada’s fresh produce supply. Working together, we can ensure Canadians continue to enjoy affordable, locally grown fruits and vegetables.