



July 22, 2021

The Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
1341 Baseline Road
Ottawa, ON K1A 0C5

Via email: aafc.minister-ministre.aac@canada.ca

Dear Minister Bibeau:

We are writing to you today to request urgent action regarding the drought conditions that are affecting farmers in parts of Ontario, and across Western Canada. We appreciate your attention to this matter and intend to participate in the press conference scheduled for later on this afternoon.

Above seasonal temperatures through May, June and into July and a lack of rainfall have combined to create a situation that has reached a crisis level. This weather has severely impacted hay crops, grain crops, pasture conditions and access to water. The Beef Farmers of Ontario is reporting that the 2021 hay crop in the northwestern region of Ontario is at about a quarter of what it should be by this time of the year.

The situation in Northwestern Ontario, particularly around Rainy River, persists and concerns and worry are escalating. Farmers are in crisis, reinforced by a roundtable we held with them yesterday afternoon but there are not a lot of solutions that they can apply on their own. Crops are burning off, pastures are drying out and, in some cases, there is little to no access for water for livestock causing immediate sell-off of livestock.

There are not a lot of places where these farmers can move their cattle or sheep, and there is not a lot of feed elsewhere that can be moved into the region.

With little to no access to feed supply and limited water availability, it is difficult for livestock farmers to maintain their herds. Grain farmers on our call yesterday reported in some cases there will be zero yield from their crops. It is an urgent situation that requires quick action and support from government.

It has reached the point where our collective organizations are calling for a state of emergency to be declared, and all actions expedited to ensure Canadian farmers impacted by the drought are supported to ensure they don't lose their livelihood, and that Canada's food supply is not disrupted.

We support the call from Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Lisa Thompson to initiate a formal AgriRecovery assessment to determine the scope and severity of the drought.



We ask that both the federal and provincial governments look at existing crop insurance programs and guidelines and work together to ensure flexibility and expediency in dealing with claims from our members experiencing drought conditions.

But farmers need help right now.

The Livestock Tax Deferral would help alleviate some of the financial pressures being felt by farmers in the affected regions, but this won't be enough. We strongly urge the government to consider emergency relief for farmers in the drought regions.

This is also an opportunity for the government to invest in water infrastructure for rural Canada, ensuring farms have the resources they need both for irrigation and for providing water to livestock.

We would be happy to meet with you to discuss this dire situation facing farmers in Ontario and across the Prairies. In the meantime, we look forward to continuing to work with you and your government to further the interests of Ontario agriculture.

Sincerely,

Rob Lipsett, President
Beef Farmers of Ontario

Don Ciparis, President
National Farmers Union - Ontario

Ed Scharringa, President
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario

Nadine Schwandt, President
Ontario Agri Business Association

Brendan Byrne
Grain Farmers of Ontario

Peggy Brekveld, President
Ontario Federation of Agriculture