

April 18, 2022

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson  
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs  
1 Stone Road West  
Guelph, Ontario  
N1G 4Y2

Dear Minister Thompson,

**RE: Appreciation for Feeding Your Future labour project support**

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) proudly represents more than 38,000 farm family members across the province, supporting our members and the agri-food industry on issues, legislation and regulations governed by all levels of government. OFA works to ensure the agri-food sector and our rural communities are included, consulted and considered in any new and changing legislation that impacts the sustainability of our farm businesses. We are the leading agricultural advocate for Ontario farmers, their businesses and their communities.

On behalf of OFA and our collaborating partners, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the extensive support provided for OFA's Feeding Your Future labour initiative. As a longstanding challenge, labour and workforce development is an OFA priority and we continue to support our farm members that rely on a secure workforce to achieve success within their farm businesses, providing food, fuel and fibre for people in Ontario and beyond. The financial contributions to Feeding Your Future made by both the provincial and federal government through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership have positively impacted thousands of farm employers and job seekers across the province.

This financial support allowed OFA to collaborate with many organizations working in the agri-food labour space to implement both immediate and longer-term solutions. Our delivery partners, AgCareers.com and CareersInFood.com, generated extensive engagement through the delivery of a job matching service, virtual career fairs and webinars. These services provided short-term solutions that addressed employers' immediate needs at the onset of the pandemic. Through the job-matching service, more than 1000 agri-food jobs were posted, saving farmers more than \$400,000 while facilitating improved advertising, hiring and employee on-boarding practices. Over the project term, 22 virtual career fair events engaged more than 4,000 job seekers and over 600 employers, sharing thousands of job opportunities.

In total, 24 webinars were hosted, providing valuable skills and training to more than 400 employers and close to 600 job seekers. This includes three webinars delivered in French engaging a francophone audience, delivered in partnership with the Union Des Cultivateurs Franco-Ontariens (UCFO). All webinar recordings are live on the [Feeding Your Future website](#), providing ongoing training opportunities, and have received more than 1,500 views. Director of AgCareers.com, Kathryn Doan shared "The Ontario government has provided much needed support and through this, we have seen results firsthand and gained momentum in filling the employment gap in the agriculture and food industry that affects the full value chain."

Through additional engagement with commodity partners including Ontario Pork, Beef Farmers of Ontario, Ontario Apple Growers, Berry Growers of Ontario and the South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Centre (SCOR EDC), the Focus on Food and Focus on Livestock videos were developed. These video training clips have engaged over 1,500 individuals, building knowledge capacity about working in food and farming. The Ontario Apple Growers Chair, Cathy McKay, shared “partnering with OFA has supported the goal to increase awareness of practical management strategies on Ontario apple orchards and the type of skilled work needed to support these operations with the hope of inspiring new workers to join this sector.” Engaging with commodity partners has been an excellent opportunity to share the services of this project while representing many agriculture commodities in Ontario.

Through a strong partnership with the University of Guelph Ridgetown Campus, OFA was able to deliver long-term training opportunities. The *Ontario Agriculture Worker Safety & Awareness Training certificate* was re-launched in January 2022 with updated content, including a brand-new module on mental wellness in agriculture. Since the relaunch, there has been a notable increase in engagement - in just the first three months we have seen an increase of almost 1.5 times the past years’ enrollment. Rene Van Acker shared “We were very pleased to be able to partner with OFA to put together practical training modules that serve our farms and people working on farms as a foundation to capacity in the agriculture sector.” To date, the certificate has engaged almost 300 participants, including more than 125 from secondary and post-secondary education institutions.

The Feeding Your Future project specifically wanted to encourage people outside of the agri-food sector to consider the many rewarding careers and opportunities available and worked hard to achieve these through engagement across social media platforms. Feeding Your Future is on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#) with more than 1,000 followers and audience engagements in the tens of thousands. A social media campaign called [#FeatureYourFuture](#) was also developed to profile various career opportunities in agri-food, and the diversity of the sector.

We are proud of what we have achieved through the project and thank you for this support once again. There is more work to do, and we look forward to building upon the partnerships we have established and the resources we have developed to achieve more in developing the workforce and addressing the labour gap for the Ontario agri-food sector. We look forward to future conversations about continuing our work together to address this common goal.

Sincerely,



Peggy Brekveld  
President

cc: AgCareers.com  
Beef Farmers of Ontario  
Berry Growers of Ontario  
Grain Farmers of Ontario  
Ontario Agricultural College  
Ontario Apple Growers  
Ontario Pork  
South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Centre  
Union Des Cultivateurs Franco-Ontariens  
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