



Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada

Agriculture et
Agroalimentaire Canada

Canada



Sustainable Agriculture Strategy

Ontario Federation of Agriculture – September 6, 2023

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE STRATEGY

CHALLENGE: Producing healthy food for consumers at home and abroad, ensuring a secure livelihood for farmers, and keeping our agriculture sector competitive, in an environmentally sustainable manner.

A SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY WILL:

- Set a shared direction for collective action to improve environmental performance in the sector over the long-term, supporting farmer livelihoods and the long-term business vitality of the sector.
- Bring together, under one umbrella, action needed on environmental issues in the agriculture sector and will seek alignment and coordination with other initiatives.
- Help proactively manage climate change impacts.

CONSULTATION:

- Ran from December 2022 to March 2023.
- Sustainable Agriculture Strategy (SAS) Advisory Committee meetings, provincial/territorial engagement and Indigenous engagement.



OVERVIEW OF ENGAGEMENT



Online Survey

420 | completed web-based surveys



Written Submissions

124 | written submissions



Sustainable Agriculture Strategy Advisory Committee

- Launched in December 2022
- Bi-weekly meetings throughout 2023



Engagement with Indigenous Peoples (ongoing)

98 | producers

- Self-led session by Manitoba Metis Federation
- 4 regional focus groups with First Nations producers



Engagement with Provinces / Territories

- Bi-lateral discussions
- Engagement through existing federal-provincial-territorial committees



Regional Producer Engagement Sessions

480 | participants

- February 24** - BC, AB, SK
- March 10** - MB, ON, YK, NWT, NU
- March 20** - QC, NB, PEI, NS, NFLD
- March 24** - National French



Workshops with Engagement Tables

- Sustainability Sector Engagement Table
- Canadian Agricultural Youth Council
- Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council



Stakeholders Workshops 2023

291 | participants

- January 26** - Goals & Outcomes
- February 8** - Data
- March 9** - Approaches 1
- March 28** - Approaches 2

KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM CONSULTATIONS

1. Producers are business owners first:

- Adopting environmental practices and technology needs to make economic sense for producers – “You can’t farm green if you’re working in the red”.
- Producers want government to share in the risks of sustainability, and want economic incentives to support producing public goods or public data on farms, e.g.,:
 - Incentive programming
 - BMP adoption “insurance”
 - Credits from offset systems, from participating in assurance systems

2. SAS needs to be developed with an economic and social lens, not just environment

- SAS Advisory Committee keen to ensure that SAS applies a social and economic lens.
- Livelihoods and the viability of a farm remain core concerns of producers.



KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM CONSULTATIONS

3. Regionality needs to be reflected in the SAS – a one size approach will not work

- Some regions are doing better/worse in different environmental areas; some regions may not be able to apply the same practices to improve environmental performance or lower GHG emissions, for example:
 - Cover crops in the Prairies are not possible in the same way they are in Ontario
 - Loss of agricultural lands due to urban sprawl, low soil organic matter, irrigation and water management issues in Ontario
 - Irrigation is a concern in Alberta
 - Territories are concerned with temperature warming and adaptation to climate change
- Small and medium sized farms require different supports and can offer different solutions.

4. Producers who are early adopters of BMPs and technology want to be recognized and rewarded

- Current programming requires additionality.
- Examples of how early adopters can be recognized that were mentioned included:
 - Rewards/prizes for early adoption of diverse producers and farm types/scales
 - Public communication campaigns that feature early adopters
 - Early adopters supported as mentors for other producers to encourage adoption
 - Pairing good data with producers' stories



KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM CONSULTATIONS

5. Producers want more information and knowledge transfer to scale up adoption of BMPs and technology

- Need for more agronomic support across the country universally expressed.
- Producers want unbiased information to choose the right options for their farms.
- Peer-to-peer networks are key and require support. Suggestions included:
 - Knowledge information hubs
 - Paid peer-to-peer mentorship program
 - Climate champions program

6. Improvements to current AAFC programming

- Applications place a high administrative burden and are generally difficult to understand.
- Eligibility is not always clear (e.g., some producers have already implemented many BMPs under OFCAF, unclear whether they can still apply).
- Cost-share ratios are too high for small scale and new entrants.
- Many producers lack access to broadband and/or are not tech savvy, unable to apply.
- Efforts to apply and comply are greater than the benefits – some producers opt to fund their own
- BMP packages should be funded, as opposed to one at a time.
- BRM programming could be an opportunity to support adoption of BMPs that reduce climate risks.



KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM CONSULTATIONS

7. Climate and environment data challenges

- Lack of consistency across data collection and analysis.
- Fragmented data.
- Cannot use farm level data due to privacy concerns.
- Sufficient agri-environmental data available, but not effectively integrated, and shared.
- Need standardization of measurement and benchmarking.
- Data and measurement challenges are specific at different levels and need different solutions:
 - **National level** – revisions to the National Inventory Report to capture currently used BMPs that contribute to GHG emission reduction
 - **Farm level** – producer-friendly data tools to identify sustainability successes and areas of improvement on the farm; econometrics; GHG accounting for decision making
 - **Aggregating data** – standardized data measurements needed for GHG accounting, biodiversity data, soil health, etc.; improved sharing of data across government, industry, NGOs



NEXT STEPS

Ongoing Engagement and Consultations



- Continue provincial/territorial engagement and Indigenous engagement
- “What We Heard” Report released this Fall
- SAS Advisory Committee
 - Continue bi-monthly meetings to advance work
 - 2nd in-person meeting planned for in September 2023
- Analysis of consultation feedback and promising policy approaches and tools
- Develop Strategy matching policy approaches and actions with shared goals and outcomes
- Strategy released publicly in Spring 2024