



CASI
Canadian Agri-food
Sustainability Initiative

IDAC
Initiative de durabilité
agroalimentaire canadienne

What We Heard: Sustainability Standards: Expectations for Canadian Agriculture and the Way Forward Workshop

February 1, 2022



Workshop at a Glance

On February 1, 2022, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) welcomed a variety of agri-food stakeholders from across Canada to participate in the first workshop hosted for the Canadian Agri-Food Sustainability Initiative (CASI). The Sustainability Standards – Expectations for Canadian Agriculture and the Way Forward workshop was the kick-off of a series of CASI workshops planned between February 2022 and March 2023. For more information about the Workshop format and speakers, please download the [Information Package](#).

Workshop attendees included:

- National and provincial commodity organizations
- Private sector agri-businesses
- Canadian agri-food sector accelerators and innovation hubs
- Federal and provincial governments

The workshop touched upon a variety of challenges in communicating sustainability progress faced by the agri-food system spanning from the farm level through the supply chain. Workshop participants explored solutions to these challenges and discussed the best options for providing sustainability assurance in the agri-food sector.

The “bar” for sustainable agri-food practices is rising, and it’s more important now than ever to collectively enable Canada’s agri-food sector to better communicate its sustainability efforts and progress, spanning from farm to fork.

Enabling the Canadian agri-food sector to provide high-quality, impactful, and timely information on sustainability assurance is no easy task. Workshop participants identified two key solutions to this challenge:

- 1) Implementing a systems approach to adopt sustainable practices on-farm and throughout the supply chain. Considering the farm as a system with various factors that intertwine and impact each other, enables growers to look at on-farm issues requiring more holistic solutions to ensure that all aspects of the farm are included.
- 2) Prioritizing collaboration and mutual learning within and between commodity groups and supply chain actors

What is CASI?

CASI will be developing an online platform to serve as a hub for sustainability programming in the Canadian agri-food sector. CASI will coordinate knowledge sharing on agriculture and agri-food sustainability and identify linkages between the current work happening in Canadian agriculture and agri-food to international sustainability standards. CASI will facilitate sharing Canadian successes globally by crediting farmers for existing management practices through benchmarking standard and program equivalencies on the online platform. CASI is hosted by the CFA and oversight for the project is provided by a broad representation of industry and sustainability leaders through a governance committee.



What We Heard from the Nadia Theodore

Nadia Theodore is the Senior Vice President of Global Government and Industry Relations for Maple Leaf Foods and launched CASI's first workshop as Keynote Speaker.

Maple Leaf Foods seeks to become the world's most sustainable protein company. Maple Leaf Foods is doing its part to ensure a strong, sustainable Canadian agricultural sector continues to be seen as world class and at "the front of the pack". By progressing towards sustainability goals, the Canadian agri-food sector can be globally competitive and on the leading edge of production and product innovation.

The conversation around sustainability will only continue to grow. Maple Leaf Foods believes sustainability is about creating shared value across the value chain; from CEOs, to community food security and right to the farm.

Nadia encouraged participants to "find their why" when it comes to sustainability programming and initiatives, adding that private companies too can tap into their purpose – focusing on solutions to health, environment and societal challenges.



"It is possible to make the world a better place and generate shared value."

- Nadia Theodore



What We Heard From our Panelists

Work must happen now

- The global narrative of the agri-food system is that it is not sustainable
- The public is increasingly insistent on the need for change in the agri-food industry and supply chain stakeholders are urgently trying to meet expectations
- Investors are driving much of the demand for sustainability assurance, and their role in this space is growing as the key definers of risk

“The food system is the biggest source of greenhouse gas emission at 33%, the biggest cost of biodiversity loss at 80% and the biggest user of water at 70%, and yet the food system is the most vulnerable to all these issues. And so that’s been, from our perspective, the big driver here.”

- Cher Mereweather

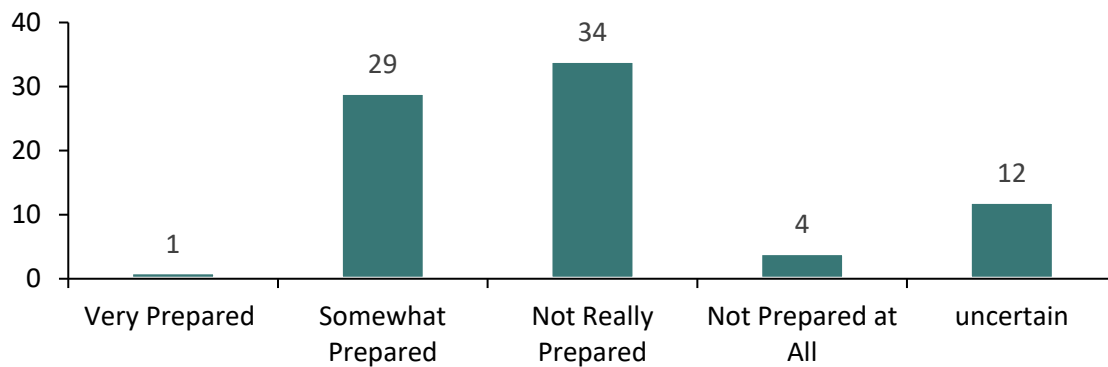


Figure 1. Answers to the live polling question “How prepared do you believe the Canadian agri-food system is to provide clear and quantifiable assurance data on sustainable production practices today?”



The sector strives for net-zero and net-positive targets

- Net positive¹ is increasingly seen as the gold standard for investment from investors with environment, social and governance (ESG)² criteria
- Science-based targets³ will help the agri-food sector reach these goals

“While net positive is where we want to be at, I think it’s so important that there’s so much private sector energy around net zero and moving towards these targets. And for us to succeed we need to be aligned and we’re in such a unique time in history right now in terms of being able to advance the sustainability agenda. Within the past 5-10 years sustainability has taken off.”

- Holly Jones

We don’t yet have all the answers

- A struggle exists between measuring outcomes vs. process, and there are benefits and drawbacks to each. For example, when considering soil health and agriculture outputs, an outcomes-based approach may rely more heavily on measuring the final outputs with less consideration on the process involved to get those results. And process-based management puts more emphasis on improving steps in the farming process to be able to deliver the intended outputs.
- Outcomes-based approaches resonate at the farm level
- Tools like the [Field to Market Canada’s](#) sustainability metrics enable members to consider trade-offs between sustainability outcomes by connecting farm practices with emissions data

“I think the key issue for us as a processor is to meet the needs of customers that are struggling with defining sustainable sourcing. They’re setting their own goals like emissions reduction and they’re turning to us to ask us how we are going to help them.”

- John MacQuarrie

¹ Net positive is the idea of putting more back into the environment, society or the global economy than taking out.

² ESG -- environmental, social and governance – criteria is used to ensure an organization is operating responsibly and allows them to consider the risks and opportunities that translate into the company sustainability and long-term success. ESG criteria ensures that an organization is conscious about their organizations environmental, social and governance impacts.

³ Science-based targets include a set of steps outlining ways for companies to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

Canada has a positive story to tell

- While we don't have all the data yet, a lot of positive work is happening at the farm level and throughout the supply chain
- Processors have the responsibility to build relationships with farmers to drive sustainability assurance projects and find new ways to share agriculture's "story"
- Processors and retailers can help channel funding to help farmers take on sustainability projects

"The global narrative on food and agriculture issues has this fundamental premise that despite our access to an incredible quantity of safe, high-quality food, the food system is not sustainable, inclusive, responsible or healthy and it requires urgent transformative change. So, Canada's opportunity is about how we define our sustainability space and account for what we say and do."

- David McInnes

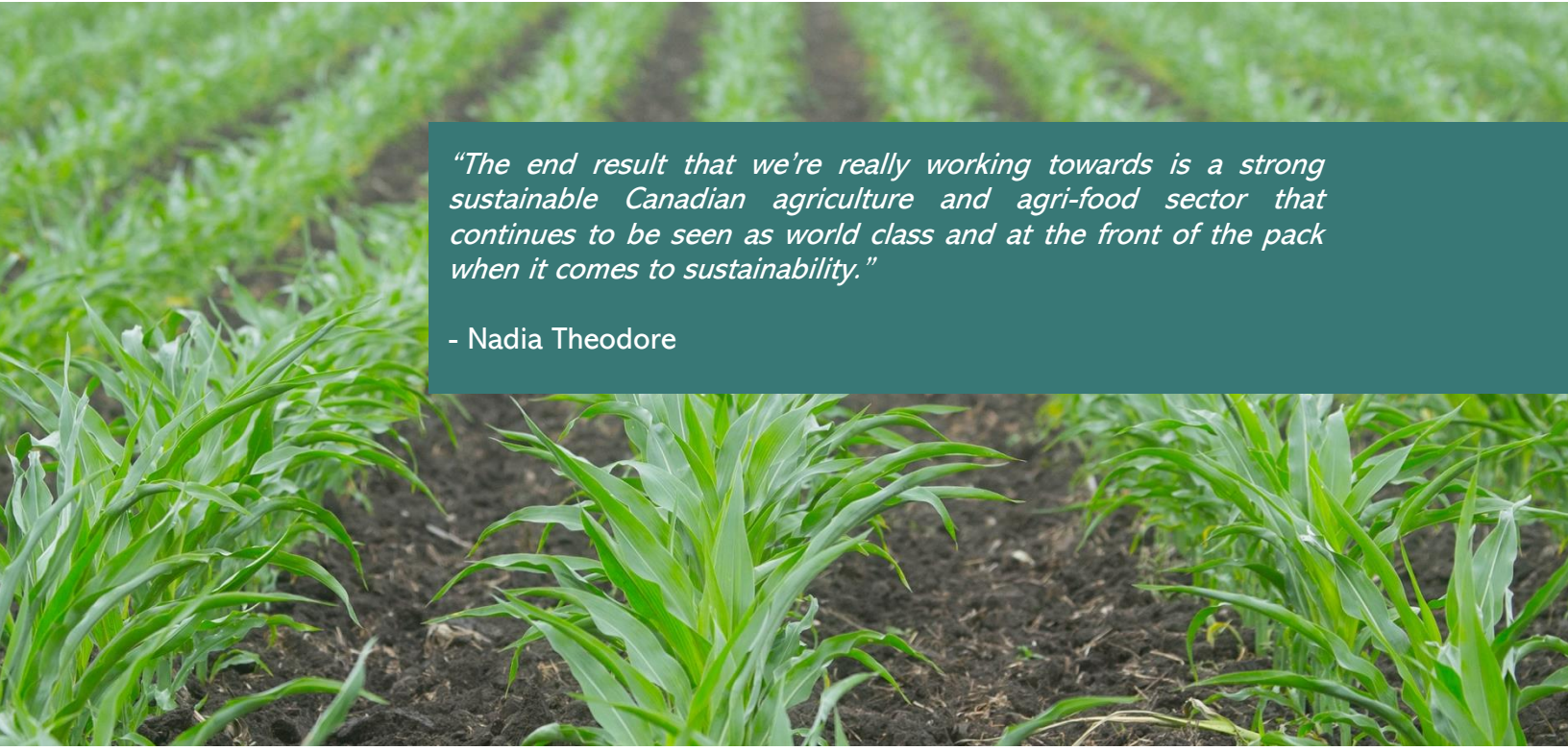
It starts with people

- Stakeholders within the agri-food sector have to be met "where they are at." For example, we can optimize the sustainability of the agri-food sector by building and strengthening relationship between farmers and researchers – both stakeholders have so much knowledge to share, but without collaboration, this knowledge can't be disseminated. We can translate scientific results to real-life on-farm applications by researchers showing growers, through real data, how on-farm challenges can be addressed with purpose and sustainability.
- Producers are "data fatigued" – supply chain actors should collaborate with farmers to clearly articulate their interests and come up with solutions to communicate meaningful data through existing or streamlined methods
- Change won't happen overnight, but efforts to share knowledge and work together to solve sustainability challenges can get us there faster
- We must continue to collaborate across commodities and throughout supply chains to define Canada's agri-food sustainability story



Next Steps

CASI will continue to build and leverage partnerships throughout the supply chain in pursuit of its goal to facilitate knowledge sharing of agri-food sustainability standards within the Canadian agri-food sector. Conversations from this workshop enable key agri-food stakeholders to share ideas and collaboratively brainstorm ways to provide sustainability assurance across the agri-food sector. Drawing on key findings from this workshop, CASI will host 3-4 more targeted workshops through to March 2023.



“The end result that we’re really working towards is a strong sustainable Canadian agriculture and agri-food sector that continues to be seen as world class and at the front of the pack when it comes to sustainability.”

- Nadia Theodore



Appendix A. Panelist List



Nadia Theodore

Senior Vice President, Global Government and Industry Relations Maple Leaf Foods

Ms. Theodore leads Maple Leaf Foods' global government relations and public policy functions, collaborating across the organization in developing and implementing the company's government and industry relations strategy.



Cher Mereweather

CEO, Anthesis Provision

Cher is one of Canada's leaders in food and beverage industry sustainability. She has dedicated her 20-year career to enabling food and beverage companies to embrace sustainability, purpose and circularity in order to create a more resilient food system, one company at a time.



David McInnes

Coordinator, National Index on Agri-food Performance

As Principal of DMci Strategies, David is a strategic advisor, speaker and facilitator on change and opportunity facing the Canadian and global food system. As part of this role, he has initiated and is currently leading a private-public coalition of nearly 75 partners to develop Canada's first agri-food sustainability index, the National Index on Agri-Food Performance – a novel tool to affirm Canada's sustainability leadership and progress.



Paul Uys

Director, External, Ontario Agricultural College, University of Guelph

He is currently Co-Chair of Canada’s Agri-food Sustainability Initiative (CASI) and Past- Chair of Birds Canada, Canada’s national ornithological society. Internationally, he is a Trustee on the Board of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). He also sits on the “International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food” (iPES-Food).



Darlene McBain

Manager of Industry Relations, Farm Credit Canada

Darlene McBain is manager of industry relations at Farm Credit Canada (FCC). She works closely with various partners, associations and stakeholders to further help grow the agriculture and food industry across Canada.



Dennis Rogoza

Advisor, Sustainability Canola Council of Canada

Dennis is the President of Rogoza Consulting Group, which provides a variety of marketing, business strategy and program services to public agencies and private companies in Canada, the US, and the EU. The company has had a strong 20-year focus on low carbon projects and markets.



Harvey Bradford

President, Field to Market Canada

Harvey serves as the President of Field to Market Canada and has led the transition from its former role as the Canadian Field Print Initiative (CFPI) to its current collaboration with Field to Market (US).



Holly Jones

Director of Sustainability, Agropur

Holly Jones leads global sustainability strategy and implementation for Agropur's Canadian and US operations. Agropur is one of North America's largest dairy processing companies and top 20 in the world, delivering award-winning cheeses such as feta, cheddar and mozzarella, and innovative whey protein applications for the health and nutrition industry.



John MacQuarrie

Director of Environmental Sustainability, Cavendish Farms

Since 2017, John has been the Director of Environmental Sustainability for Cavendish Farms. In this position, John supports Cavendish Farms with the development of sustainability policies and enjoys working with organizations focused on bridging the sustainability gap between producers and consumers.



Appendix B. Registrants

Jurisdiction Represented	Registrants
National	77
Alberta	14
Ontario	33
Quebec	9
Saskatchewan	8
Manitoba	8
Nova Scotia	7
British Columbia	5
Total	161

Financial support was provided through the AgriAssurance Program under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership.