



WHAT WE HEARD

Executive Summary



CASI
Canadian Agri-food
Sustainability Initiative

IDAC
Initiative de durabilité
agroalimentaire canadienne

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

The global marketplace is increasingly looking for evidence of sustainable production practices. For example, in 2020, 100% of General Mills' top ten priority ingredients were sustainably sourced and by 2030, Unilever will follow responsible and sustainable sourcing principles for 100% of all their key crops (e.g., soy and sugar).^{i,ii} Canadian agriculture and agri-food products are known to be some of the most safe, sustainable and affordable globally, demonstrated by great commodity-based efforts. However, no whole-farm solution exists, and the Canadian agri-food sector must be better enabled to respond to requests for evidence.

The Canadian Agri-food Sustainability Initiative is developing an online platform for Canadian producers to demonstrate participation in programs that provide evidence of sustainable production practices. In short, CASI will be a place for Canadian farm businesses to communicate the good work taking place on-farm.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report summarizes what we heard from 129 agri-food sector stakeholders from across Canada and provides clear, actionable next steps for the Canadian Agri-food Sustainability Initiative platform development and engagement activities from Fall 2021 to Spring of 2023.

KEY QUESTIONS ANSWERED

What does sustainability mean to stakeholders today?

- The three pillars of sustainability are recognized as equally important and interconnected
- Canada's current approach to demonstrating evidence of sustainable production practices is responsive to public demands, and there is a need to transition to a more proactive approach
- While individual commodity and program efforts are recognized as impressive, interviewees feel that the current approach puts the Canadian sector at risk of losing or missing out on market access opportunities
- Demands for sustainability indicators and reporting measures are constantly evolving, and so too, must the eventual CASI platform

What are the drivers for measuring and improving sustainability in Canadian agriculture?

- Along the supply chain it is especially important to measure and improve sustainability to demonstrate progress on corporate social responsibility targets and to meet consumer demands.
- At the farm-level there is pressure to improve on sustainability for the next generation, and to remain competitive in markets where there is a growing demand to measure sustainability progress.
- Government sees an increasing need for sustainability data to understand and improve program delivery and outcomes, and to justify new investments and interventions
- Sustainability is also driven through internal pressures in the sector across all three pillars. For example, environmental sustainability issues such as soil health, fish stocks and biodiversity are all important to maintain the sectors' capacity to continue to be productive.

What is the value proposition of CASI?

- CASI presents an opportunity to pull together a more complete view of the agricultural sector's sustainability status. Stakeholders hope to use CASI to put different sources of information together to tell coherent stories about sustainability in agriculture and agri-food.

CASI'S VALUE PROPOSITION FOR EACH SUBGROUP:

PRODUCERS AND PRODUCER GROUPS

- **Streamline reporting programs and reduce duplication across sustainability standards to alleviate administrative burden**
- **Potentially improve market access to supply chains requiring proof of sustainability**

GOVERNMENTS

- **Help inform program design**
- **Demonstrate value and outcomes of programs**
- **Enable provinces and different levels of government to “speak the same language”**

SUPPLY CHAINS

- **Improve access to data that can better inform communication on sustainability within supply chains and with consumers**
- **Aggregated sustainability data can be a useful resource to help measure company performance, better understand supply chains, and grow market access**

SUSTAINABILITY ENABLERS

- **CASI can organize the spectrum of sustainability initiatives**
- **Facilitate collaboration between sustainability enablers and initiatives**

What do stakeholders want to see with respect to collecting and sharing agri-food data?

- For wide acceptance, interviewees suggested that data needs to be transparently collected, objective and verified.
- The platform will need to strategically focus on certain types of data, such as those which support market access, or helps to drive improvements.

- The platform will also need to have the capacity to integrate information between different sustainability initiatives and share aggregated data between actors to maximize value.

FOR PRODUCERS TO INTERACT WITH THE PLATFORM, CASI WILL NEED TO:



Enable producers to feel comfortable about consenting to data sharing



Minimize time and administrative commitments to data collection and reporting



Provide an accessible interface that is usable by all producers



Ensure data and broadband demands from the platform are minimal



Enable producers to see who is using aggregated sustainability data and why

What topics should CASI incorporate into future research?

- Social sustainability is a priority for stakeholders, especially for building thriving rural communities, attracting and retaining talent and youth in the sector, and ensuring working conditions are safe and equitable. These topics are critical to explore to address social sustainability data gaps in Canada.
- There are complex animal care and husbandry topics that can be better communicated through a sustainability lens. Moving forward, CASI can work to ensure that animal care practices are incorporated into sustainability reporting and aggregate reports.
- Carbon markets and industry-led carbon programs are being developed at an unprecedented rate. One potential option is for CASI to better present the different carbon opportunities available to producers and their requirements

NEXT STEPS

To develop a CASI that is well informed and positioned to succeed, we plan to build upon the fulsome and informative interview process with further engagement steps. The next steps in the engagement process are to conduct two pilot projects and host 4-6 workshops with stakeholder groups across Canada.

- The two pilot projects will be conducted by [Provision Coalition](#) and [Anthesis](#)
- Potential workshop topics include:
 - Presenting the outcomes from the pilot projects
 - Showcasing a Canadian Brand: CASI and the National Index on Agri-food Performance
 - Integrating Sustainability Programs: Environmental Farm Plan and Opportunities for National Aggregation

RESOURCES

ⁱ General Mills. (2021). Sustainable Sourcing. Retrieved from <https://www.generalmills.com/en/Responsibility/Sustainability/sustainable-sourcing>

ⁱⁱ Unilever. (2021). Strategy and goals. Retrieved from <https://www.unilever.com/planet-and-society/protect-and-regenerate-nature/strategy-and-goals/>

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