



News Release

Initial funding announcement by federal government a positive step for sectors with immediate needs

For immediate release

Guelph ON, May 7, 2020 – The Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association (OFVGA) is encouraged by federal government's recent statements recognizing the importance of Canadian farmers and the domestic food system.

Yesterday's funding announcement by Prime Minister Trudeau and Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Bibeau included some support for segments of our sector, such as the Surplus Food Purchase Program, which will benefit potato growers facing market disruptions due to rapidly changing consumer consumption patterns.

"Although there is much more that needs to be done, yesterday's funding announcements demonstrate that the federal government is beginning to take steps in support of domestic food security," says Bill George, Chair of the OFVGA.

The federal government is encouraged to include fruit and vegetable sorting and packing facilities in the programs announced for processors. Packing houses operate like other food processing facilities and are necessary for ensuring quality fruits and vegetables are carefully packed and make it to retail shelves in a timely manner.

The federal announcement also mentioned the intention for the federal government to work with the provinces to expand production insurance to include labour shortages related to COVID-19 as an insurable risk.

"As a sector that heavily relies on labour to plant, maintain, harvest, sort and pack fruits and vegetables, having labour disruptions backstopped is something the OFVGA has been recommending to government since the pandemic arrived in Canada," George stated.

The OFVGA has been closely monitoring the impacts of COVID-19 on fruit and vegetable growers and the value chain since the pandemic began. An initial assessment and recommendations were provided to the Ontario and federal governments in early April, with more detailed recommendations submitted on May 5, 2020. The most recent assessment and recommendations can be [accessed here](#), and includes two measures that would make up an effective two-pronged compensation approach:

1. A COVID-19 rider on top of the current AgriStability programming, providing supplemental coverage to the base program.
2. A highly targeted standalone quarantine support program modeled after the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's Animal Health Compensation.



“The OFVGA urges the federal and provincial governments to ensure that fruit and vegetable farmers have the confidence now to continue making investments in planting and maintaining their crops, despite the unique and increased risks presented by COVID-19,” says George. “Our approach is to ensure that financial supports exist if the need arises.”

The Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association is the voice of Ontario's 3,500 fruit and vegetable producers on issues affecting the horticulture sector. Visit www.ofvga.org.

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