

Three strategic pillars for a National Food Security Strategy

Food security is a critical component of environmental sustainability, community resilience and national security. A National Food Security Strategy could set an audacious yet achievable vision for our country, such as: **Within the next 10 years, Canada should be the world's primary food producing nation while reducing food insecurity and greenhouse gas emissions domestically.**

This should be pursued through three strategic pillars: resilience, equity and productivity.



PILLAR 3: PRODUCTIVITY

Putting Canada on a path to be the world's primary food-producing region.

The problem

- Our position in global agriculture and agri-food trade [has slipped from 5th to 7th](#) and could drop to 9th by 2035.
- Smaller countries such as the Netherlands (in agri-food) and Norway (in aquaculture) out-compete us in terms of exports, innovation and productivity.
- Canada's agri-food sector faces both a labour and skills shortage, and too few Canadians are aware of the innovation opportunities in agri-food.
- Many talented young people do not consider agri-food as a valid and attractive career path.

The opportunity

Given Canada's endowment of land, fresh water and skilled labour, our relatively untapped coastal and marine resources, and climate trends that are lengthening the growing season in some areas, we have the potential to be the world's top food producing country. Canada's greenhouse boom means we are already a world leader in controlled environmental agriculture, which creates economic opportunities and builds resilience. Investing in Canadian ingenuity can create jobs and provide more sustainable food. If we also create incentives for climate smart farming, then agri-food has the potential to help Canada meet international climate goals.

Recommended actions for productivity

1. **Create a \$500M Grand Challenge Innovation fund that aims to double the productivity and carbon efficiency of Canada's agri-food system.**
 - This "double-double" challenge should aim to inspire interest in agri-food innovation and bring new people into the sector.
 - The challenge could be run on an [XPRIZE model](#) and build on lessons learned by several large-scale agri-food challenges.
 - Based on data collected by [XPRIZE Foundation](#), every dollar invested in creating these challenge funds results in a further >\$30 raised by teams through matching funds in the pursuit of solving the challenge.

2. **Offer tax relief or incentives and government matching funds for people and investors who take equity in Canadian agri-food startups, and farmers using environmentally sustainable practices.**
 - Tax relief or incentives to investors willing to bet on Canadian-grown innovations could help drive the domestic innovation agenda.
 - Domestic investment means Canadian business ownership and Canadian-made IP is more likely to stay in Canada.
 - Offer financial incentives, such as tax relief, for farmers who meet agreed-to practices associated with climate smart and regenerative farming practices.
3. **Develop targeted supports, including a national co-op program for agri-food to create more pathways into agri-food careers, thus addressing major skills or labour shortages.**
 - Canada should aspire to be the world leader in training the next generation of agri-food leaders who will understand that the future of agri-food is linked to innovation and entrepreneurship.
 - Work with universities, colleges and training programs to create a “national innovation in agri-food” co-op program aimed at attracting and training the best minds of the next generation.



“Sustained productivity depends on sustained investment in research capacity; weakening one ultimately undermines the other.”

Alison Sunstrum, Nya Ventures

Further reading

- [The Next Green Revolution by RBC, BCG and the Arrell Food Institute](#)
- [The Next Course by the Council of Canadian Academies](#)
- [Feeding the Future with Canadian Technology by the Arrell Food Institute](#)



This project is supported in part by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.