

Agriculture and food

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For centuries, family farms were the foundation of our society and economy. Over the last five decades, federal policies, subsidies and changing technologies have shifted food production from small ecologically-sustainable family farms to giant agribusinesses. This shift has given multinational corporations control over our food supply. Meanwhile, farmers increasingly rely on off-farm income to survive.

Our food security and safety are threatened directly by agribusiness, as factory farms crowd chickens, turkeys, cows and pigs into inhumane and unhygienic conditions, creating the risk of serious health threats from toxic spinach to mad cow disease and swine flu. Animals are often pumped full of chemicals and hormones, while many crops are now genetically modified and treated with pesticides. Meanwhile, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has a credibility problem. In the wake of its foot-dragging on the listeriosis outbreak, it is clear that lives were lost because the agency did not issue timely warnings. It has an inherent conflict of interest, mandated to regulate for food safety, while at the same time promoting Canadian food products in Canada and abroad.

1 Our Vision

The health of Canada's population today and in the future depends on the environmentally- sustainable production of wholesome food. We believe that local organic agriculture must play a role in mitigating and reversing climate change, providing food security, restoring soil health, improving human health, protecting water, and providing sustainable livelihoods for citizens. We must restructure our agricultural markets to sustain farming and provide farm families with a fair share of the consumer food dollar. We want to expand local small-scale agriculture and support a rapid transition to organic agriculture rather than subsidizing costly agro-chemicals, industrial food production and genetically modified crops.

People need healthy food and the healthiest food choices are local. With growing concerns over economic and climatic instability, a reliable domestic food supply is essential. Family- owned and operated farms of small to medium size constitute the most reliable, high quality and economical food production system, now and into our uncertain future. The infrastructure needed to support local agriculture is rapidly disappearing. Increasingly, large corporations and centralized operations are shutting down small community infrastructure from slaughter houses to grain elevators to canneries. The lack of local control over means of production is forcing more and more farmers to abandon agriculture. Greens support family farmers as environmental stewards and as efficient producers of nutritious food. The family farm is the primary unit of production. Agricultural policies must be designed to keep family farms economically viable. We support the active participation of Canadian farmers in export markets where this is consistent with achieving their most important role – servicing domestic markets for healthy food and sustaining Canada's agriculture resource base. We support education of Canadian consumers to value and prefer that which is grown locally.

2 Green Solutions

Green Party MPs will develop a National Agricultural and Food Policy which:

Improves Food Safety by:

- Amending the Canadian Food Inspection Agency mandate to remove any obligation to promote Canadian agri-business, ensuring the focus is on food safety and food safety only, with enhanced resources for inspection and monitoring.

- Ensuring the quality and wholesomeness of food by strengthening the monitoring of pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, growth hormones, non-therapeutic antibiotics and insecticides in food production, processing and storage, with the goal of an orderly reduction in detectable residues of these substances until they reach undetectable limits.
- Establishing federally funded, community-guided school lunch programs across Canada to ensure that our children have daily access to healthy local food and can learn about sustainable food production and healthy eating.
- Strengthening Plant Protection and Health of Animals Programs with measures to ensure the integrity of farm food products.
- Improving and strengthening the Canadian Organic Standard.
- Providing transitional assistance for those switching to certified organic farming practices.
- Ensuring that no animal by-products are used in ruminant animal feed.
- Introducing testing for BSE.

Provides Food Security by:

- Moving towards regional food self-sufficiency across Canada, as we begin the shift to organic agriculture as the dominant model of production.
- Supporting the “200 kilometre diet” and locally grown food through expansion of farmers’ markets and local culinary tourism activities.
- Promoting roof top gardens, cultivation of green urban space for agriculture, food production in cities and suburbs, and community gardens.
- Protecting the right of farmers to save their own seed.
- Promoting heritage seed banks and seed exchange programs.

Prevents Corporate Control of the Food supply by:

- Reforming agriculture regulations to challenge corporate concentration.
- Ensuring that farm support payments are farm-based (not production-based) to encourage more farms and more farmers.
- Encouraging organic farming methods to improve farm profitability and sustainability.

Supports Local Food markets by:

- Enabling local areas without industrial-scale agriculture to develop area-specific food safety regulations meeting national standards without placing undue financial burdens on local farmers and food processors.
- Encouraging and supporting the consumption of locally-grown food by promoting adequate shelf space in grocery chains for products from local farms and local food processors.

Improves Agricultural Research by:

- Ensuring that new plant cultivars and animal breeds remain in the public domain.
- Shifting government-supported research away from biotechnology and energy-intensive farming and towards organic food production.
- Increasing publicly-funded research into organic farming techniques.
- Establishing new policies for private research efforts to ensure that they are in the best interests of family farmers and consumers.
- Preventing the patenting of life forms.
- Ensuring that developers of genetically engineered crops are liable for any damage those crops cause.

Ensures Fair Trade by:

- Prioritizing fair trade in agricultural exports and imports.
- Ensuring that supply management systems provide stable domestic markets; provide viable farm income and permit unregulated production by smaller and family farms that sell to local markets.
- Supporting the Canadian Wheat Board to ensure the fair trading of high quality Canadian grains.
- Eliminating the dumping of food into the economies of developing countries.

Stops the Loss of Agricultural Land to development by:

- Calling for negotiated agreements with the provinces to secure the preservation of the prime agricultural land in Canada.
- Reinstating the Canada Land Inventory program with adequate funding to update and keep current a comprehensive record of land capability and land use as a vital ongoing aid to local planning.
- Providing sufficient fiscal incentives to other levels of government including municipalities, to preserve farmlands under their jurisdictions.

Supports Environmental Stewardship by:

- Protecting and improving the quality of water in our streams, lakes and aquifers.
- Working with provinces to ensure that all livestock waste is recycled safely and contamination by agricultural run-off is avoided.
- Introducing cost-shared programs to help farmers protect wildlife habitat areas and marginal lands, maintain water quality in streams, lakes and aquifers, and retain and improve soil quality.
- Creating a national Environmental Farm Plan Program to provide new funding sources for implementation at the farm level.

Assists farmers in climate change adaptation by:

- Encouraging farming methods that increase carbon sequestration and decrease water requirements.
- Establishing greenhouse gas emission targets for all components of the agri-food system, and collaborating with industry to meet targets.
- Restructuring Canada's Business Risk Management Programs to help farmers cope with climate risk, especially in disaster assistance.

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