

Rural Canada Matters

Highlights of the Liberal plan for Canada's first National Food Policy

"This isn't just good rural policy, it's good public policy that will narrow the rural-urban divide. Buying local is good for our farmers – who grow the world's highest-quality foods – for our families, and for our environment."

– Michael Ignatieff

Food matters

Canada's food producers are a cornerstone of Canada's economy. Canada's farmers and agri-food sector provides 1 out of every 8 jobs and generates \$42 billion in economic activity each year.

Food is a vital link between rural and urban Canadians. Farmers produce the safest, highest quality foods in the world and can play a critical role in addressing Canada's looming healthcare challenge.

Canada's population is aging and healthcare costs are skyrocketing. By 2020, almost 1 in 5 Canadians will be seniors. At the end of the decade, it is estimated that Canada's provinces will spend 50 to 70 percent of their revenues on healthcare.

These challenges cannot be ignored.

The Liberal Party believes that tackling Canada's rising health costs requires a greater emphasis on the critical role that food plays in health promotion, disease prevention and our well-being.

We can save costs now, and in the future, by fighting obesity, diabetes and other health challenges through healthy eating, improved food safety and knowledge of where and how our food is produced.

Our priority is to put more healthy, high-quality, home-grown foods on Canadian tables. That's why ***a Liberal government will implement Canada's first comprehensive National Food Policy.***

5 principles for Canada's first National Food Policy

Beginning in 2009, the Liberal Party consulted with farmers, rural and urban Canadians across the country on food issues. The Canadians we heard from consistently called for a coordinated, strategic approach to food policy, centering on five key principles:

Healthy Living

A healthier Canada is founded on healthy eating, and understanding the role of food in our lives, our economy and our communities. Ensuring all Canadians - including low-income families - have access to affordable, healthy foods, will contribute significantly to addressing Canada's healthcare challenges.

Safe Food

A strong National Food Policy must be built on a reliable foundation of food safety. Institutions must be well-coordinated to monitor Canada's food system, and imported foods must meet our tough domestic standards to help minimize threats to food safety.

Sustainable Farm Incomes

Canadian farmers produce the safest, highest quality foods in the world. A National Food Policy must do more to build long-term, sustainable farm incomes, inform Canadians about the value of food and promote the high-quality foods made right here at home.

Environmental Farmland Stewardship

Canada must continue its efforts to improve the ties between our food production system and our environment and invest in clean energy and sustainable farm practices.

International Leadership

Canada must strengthen its international brand as a producer of the highest-quality foods in the world, and lead the global effort to foster food security in Africa and many of the world's poorest nations.

These principles are the beginning of a national conversation to develop a comprehensive National Food Policy.

A National Food Policy

Reflecting these principles, a future Liberal government will implement a National Food Policy beginning with 5 core areas for action:

I. Healthy Living: Health promotion and education

Eating right and having access to healthy, affordable food is one way Canada can prevent disease and foster healthy communities. To promote healthy living and better knowledge of the food we eat, a Liberal National Food Policy will include:

- A new **Healthy Choices** program to educate Canadians on healthy eating, how the food system works, and how to minimize threats to food safety.
- **New, progressive labelling regulations** that give clear and simple information to Canadians on the nutritional value of the foods they purchase, improves the regulatory process for new health claims, and clarifies Product of Canada labelling.
- Introduce strong new **regulatory standards on trans fats**.
- \$40 million over four years to implement a new federal **Healthy Start** program to support existing programs helping 250,000 children from low-income families access healthy, home-grown foods, in partnership with the provinces, territories and non-governmental organizations. A Liberal government will also commit to ongoing support for the **Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program** (CPNP) and **Aboriginal Head Start Program** (AHSP).
- \$80 million over four years to create a **Buy Local Fund**. The Fund will promote high-quality, home-grown foods produced by local farmers and support a **Farmers' Markets Development Program** to market and grow Canada's farmers' markets, in cooperation with the provinces and territories.

II. Safe Food: Strengthening inspection and enforcement

Canadians expect all foods within Canada to meet the same quality, safety and environmental sustainability standards, regardless of whether that food is produced domestically or internationally. A Liberal government will:

- Undertake a comprehensive review of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), to **ensure Canada's food safety system is effectively coordinated** to minimize risks and assure Canadians that the food on their dinner tables is safe.
- Invest an additional **\$50 million over four years to improve food inspection** by the CFIA and to ensure the same food safety standards set for Canadian producers are applied to foods imported into Canada.

III. Sustainable Farm Incomes: Supporting innovation and protecting against risk

Sustainable farm incomes, rural infrastructure and research and innovation are keys to ensuring Canada maintains a strong and vibrant food production system. *Unfortunately, Canada's farmers have for many years faced a maze of confusing and unpredictable programs.* A Liberal government will work in partnership with Canadian farmers to build farm programs from the farm up, not Ottawa down, through the following commitments:

- A **Clean Slate Commitment** to undertake a complete review of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada programming in partnership with farmers within the first year of a Liberal government, including business risk management programs, agricultural research, innovation and environmental programs.
- A commitment to **restore AgriFlex** to its original mission of offering regionally flexible programs including practical, bankable business risk management to help farmers meet their costs of production. This could include the Risk Management Program in Ontario, Assurance stabilization des revenus agricoles in Quebec, market price insurance and improved crop insurance in the West, or a Buy Atlantic program in the Atlantic provinces.

IV. Environmental Farmland Stewardship

Canadians know that our farms and our food are tied to our natural environment, and that a clean environmental future means investing in clean energy and farmland stewardship. As part of our Clean Slate Commitment, a Liberal government will:

- Work with Canada's farmers to **strengthen Canada's Environmental Farm Plans**, support improved **fertilizer and pesticide management**, and introduce new environmental goods and services programs that reward farmers for environmentally-sustainable initiatives such as **setting aside land for wildlife habitats** or **carbon sequestration**.
- Further, as part of the Liberal commitment to **quadruple Canada's clean energy production**, a Liberal government will invest significantly in the development of clean energy from Canadian farms – biomass, wind, solar and geothermal energy.

V. International Leadership: Opening new markets and building capacity

Canada's future competitiveness and opportunities for export growth rest on expanding our share of high-value markets where our reputation for quality puts us ahead. But we also have a role to play in ensuring that some of the world's poorest nations – particularly in Africa – have access to safe, healthy food. A Liberal government will:

- **Expand export opportunities** and **build Canada's international brand** as a producer of the highest-quality foods and beverages in the world by strengthening coordination between Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.
- Work to **build capacity in local food production and food security** among world's most vulnerable nations, particularly in Africa, by reassessing the Canadian International Development Agency's priority nations list, and focus on initiatives such as micro-lending, research, trade-related capacity building, and enhancing agricultural productivity and sustainability.



Rural Canada Matters

The Liberal Party of Canada believes in a nation where economic opportunity and quality of life can be achieved in all regions.

Too many rural Canadians have told us they cannot find jobs and struggle to get basic access to essential services like healthcare, internet, education, and basic services like banking and mail.

The National Food Policy is part of a series of Liberal Party initiatives aimed at tackling the rural-urban divide and building economic and social opportunity for rural Canadians.