

Office of the President and
Chief Executive Officer

Cabinet du président
et chef de la direction

December 5, 2014

Hon. Gerry Ritz, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
1341 Baseline Road Tower 7, Floor 9, Room 149
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0C5

Dear Minister:

In September, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce concluded its 85th Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Charlottetown, PEI. A highlight of the Canadian Chamber's AGM is the Policy Session, where the resolutions submitted by local chambers of commerce and boards of trade from across Canada are debated and voted on by accredited delegates. Once approved, these resolutions become policy of the Canadian Chamber for the following three years.

In 2014, our delegates issued a clear and decisive national policy mandate that we intend to pursue vigorously with the federal government over the coming months. Our renewed national policy mandate includes the following issues which fall within your portfolio:

Labelling of Agricultural Products

An increasing number of Canadians wish to "buy Canadian" when making their food purchases. Several stakeholders in the Canadian agri-food sector are demanding that the percentage of Canadian content required for use of the "Product of Canada" label be reduced to 85 per cent. The current 98 per cent standard is fine for products that undergo minimal processing, such as meats, but processed products that require the use of preservatives, for example jams, no longer meet the requirements of the current "Product of Canada" standard. Many Canadian products that are blended with small quantities of imported ingredients are no longer considered as Canadian products under the current standard. This is detrimental to Canadian food production and processing companies.

420 - 360, rue Albert St.
Ottawa, Ontario
K1R 7X7

613.238.4000
613.238.7643

Chamber.ca
info@chamber.ca

The Canadian Chamber recommends that the federal government modify the guidelines that apply to the labelling of agri-food products so as to authorize the use of the "Product of Canada" label on foods the ingredients and components, as well as the processing and labour costs used to manufacture the food, of which are 85 per cent Canadian.

Improving Regulatory Processes to Support the Growth of Agribusiness

Current legislation prevents a large number of agricultural products from crossing provincial/territorial borders or being exported from Canada without a federal licence. Current Canadian Food Inspection Agency regulations and licensing fees are cost prohibitive for small operators and present a barrier to growth for SME processors because the costs are out of step with jurisdictions like the U.S.

We urge collaboration to effect positive changes to food safety outcome inspections, enabling processors to compete more efficiently. We believe food safety regulations need to be reviewed for relevancy and that the implementation must be consistent and cost-effective throughout the food distribution chain, without compromising Canada's reputation for high food safety standards. We encourage the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and provincial/territorial agencies to shift away from a rules-based regulatory regime to an outcomes-based food safety discipline. Finally, we ask that inspection and regulatory costs be reassessed.

Copies of the complete texts of these resolutions are attached and we would be pleased to discuss them with you or your staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Perrin Beatty". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

Perrin Beatty
President and Chief Executive Officer

Attachments