

July 29, 2020

Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

VIA EMAIL

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

As chairs of Ontario farm organizations, we represent family farms throughout the Ontario agriculture sector. The COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns have had a dramatic impact on operations resulting extreme price volatility, massive supply chain disruptions, and exposed cracks in our food system. As we move through this pandemic, prices have been erratic, settling in many cases at significantly lower levels, and significant underlying risks and pressures related to COVID-19 remain.

It is concerning that we are seeing family farms being forced out of their businesses, and if this continues there will be serious impact on rural communities, on our entire economy, and even on our national food security.

In a global market, we are competing with farmers whose governments have already recognized and responded to the extreme hurt and the role that agriculture can play in rebuilding their economies. The United States has already made \$19 Billion dollars available to their farmers and there is an active push for more support. This makes our situation even more untenable.

AgriStability exists to help farmers deal with extreme losses and only generates payments when there is a real need on farm, but after drastic cuts to the program in 2013, the program has become less responsive and is unable to address the current crisis on many farms. Your party presciently identified the need to address the program's short comings when it stated:

To ensure that farmers have access to the help they need when they need it, we will move forward with a collaborative review of Canada's business risk management programs, with a special focus on Agri-Stability, and are prepared to increase federal support to farmers to help them manage risks beyond their control.

We also commend your commitment to help farmers deal with the pandemic during your announcement in May when you said, "We know that farmers still have concerns for what this pandemic means for their industry long term. We are working with farmers, stake holders, provinces and territories to find lasting solutions."

Now is the time for you to fulfill that commitment. We are united in endorsing the solutions outlined in the February 11 letter from the Ag Growth Coalition, and we must emphasize the urgent need for support to our sectors.

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We ask you to immediately deliver the federal 60% share of an AgriStability enhancement, including raising the coverage level to 85% of historical reference margins and removing the reference margin limit. Both of these enhancements are essential. There is no time to allow the process to be bogged down by the FPT consensus process. Provinces that are able to match federal funding for this enhancement should be able to offer the enhancement to Canadian farms in their province without having to wait for decisions from unresponsive provinces.

Sincerely,



Robert Lipsett
President
Beef Farmers of Ontario



Markus Haerle
Chair
Grain Farmers of Ontario



Bill George Jr.
Chair
Ontario Fruit and Vegetable
Growers' Association



Eric Schwindt
Chair
Ontario Pork



Marc Carere
Chair
Ontario Sheep Farmers



Pascal Bouilly
Chair
Veal Farmers of Ontario



cc: Minister of Agriculture and Agriculture Canada, Marie Claude Bibeau
Ontario Premier Doug Ford
Ontario Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Ernie Hardeman
Members of Parliament in Ontario
John Barlow, Member of Parliament and Conservative Party of Canada Agriculture Critic
Alistair MacGregor, Member of Parliament and New Democratic Party of Canada Agriculture Critic