

Canada Food Brand Project

Notes: “Quality Food: Safe & Nutritious” Lab, March 7, 2019, Ottawa

The Lab’s Intent //

Over 60 stakeholders participated in the 3rd Canada Food Brand lab on “quality food: safe & nutritious” and considered what, if anything, Canada should do to advance those brand attributes. While sustainability will be the topic of a later lab, the day included a discussion on healthy-sustainable food production and Canada’s role as a food producer. (The lab agenda is reproduced below.)

The Lab’s Outcome //

The lab prompted “three big potential conversation changers”:

Safe food: Canada’s food system is regarded as among the safest in the world – but benchmarking performance, improving surveillance of zoonotic diseases & adopting supply chain-wide traceability are three planks to build on Canada’s reputable food safety system.

Nutritious food: Improving food’s “nutritional quality” is creating new value-added processing opportunities & can improve health outcomes. The market is signalling interest but Canada is not systematically leveraging its potential & supporting the research relationships required to do so.

Sustainable food: The EAT-Lancet Commission report (*Food in the Anthropocene*, Jan. 2019) calls for a major shift in healthy and sustainable diet choices. It links “what” people should eat to “how” the planet produces its food. Another perspective was tabled: “where” should food be best produced – Canada has an advantage here, such as being a highly-sustainably red meat producer.

Canada 2020 thanks our project partners:

Food & Consumer Products of Canada, Genome Canada, GS1 Canada, National Research Council, Nutrien, Olds College, Protein Industries Canada, Syngenta, University of Guelph

(These notes do not imply endorsement by partners or participants.)

FOOD SAFETY: Current state or risk	Actions to protect the brand
Consumer confidence: How do we know Canada's food system is among the safest in the world? Some 54% of Canadians are concerned about food safety.	Benchmarking: Building on recent steps to modernize food safety rules, outcomes-based approaches can be benchmarked to ensure Canada keeps up with competitors.
Zoonotic diseases: About 75% of all infectious diseases are zoonotic-related. Risk of new diseases at home (e.g., chronic wasting disease).	Real-time surveillance: Responding to food safety threats from the incursion of foreign animal diseases requires effective real-time surveillance. Its efficacy depends on farm viability.
One-step forward/backward traceability: Current approach builds on responsible producer & supply chain initiatives; e.g., the audited Cdn. Pork Excellence program (which also includes animal care).	Real-time traceability: Full supply chain traceability is key to protect the brand. Making traceability work depends on providing more immediate ROI to producers: efficacy linked to farm viability. Link traceability w/ farm-food safety programs.
Reactive communication: Communications largely focuses on reacting to food contamination incidents.	Proactive: Governments & industry should proactively inform the public about Canada's risk-based assessment story.
Regulatory gaps: Food purchased abroad by consumers via e-commerce. Distribution centres within Canada not covered. Food fraud/misrepresentation.	Regulatory change: Safe Foods for Cdn. Act apply same standards to Cdn. food for domestic consumption as what is exported, a brand advantage. Action on some gaps underway.
NUTRITIONAL QUALITY: Current state	Actions to enhance Canada's position
Market signals: Taste drives most consumer repurchase decisions but nutrient quality is an competitiveness driver. Processors worldwide are responding to expectations for minimal processing, healthier ingredients, cleaner, "free-from" labels.	Technology benefits: Canadian processors must compete against real/perceived high quality (healthy) food imports. New processing technologies (e.g., non-thermal pasteurization) are needed to improve quality. Competitors abroad are early adopters of such technologies & their innovations.
Demonstrating nutritional improvements: Advancing nutritional quality requires more research but it shows promise; e.g., adding pulse flour to pasta & other foods boosts protein & nutritional profiles.	Functional health benefits: Much attention goes to promote foods by their source of nutrient value; little is being done to understand the functional benefits of healthy ingredients to reduce chronic disease – a potential value-added driver.
Suspensions: While the sectors work together to improve food safety, industry-health research collaboration is treated with suspicion – inhibiting adding value to food.	Food-health sector relationships: It was noted that supporting the food brand would benefit from greater food-health integration & investment.
Climate advantage: It is well known that Canada's climate confers production benefits (i.e., winters reduce pests, disease).	Soil-nutrition link: Uncertain whether stressed environments & soil reduces nutritional quality. Interest in regenerative agriculture & soil microbiome might prompt more research.
SUSTAINABILITY:	
Contributing to the global conversation: The dialogue is largely focused on what constitutes a sustainable healthy diet. Producing food in the right place also deserves profile. In Canada, by taking a landscape approach, grazing cattle benefit fragile grasslands & native species. Making it profitable to produce food sustainably is also a global imperative. Canadian certified sustainable beef benefits ranchers. Plus, Cdn. beef's GHG footprint is half the world average & this will be reduced further. The question now: what else can the agri-food sector do for society & eco-systems?	

Policy Lab “Quality Food: Safe & Nutritious”

Agenda | March 7, 2019 | 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Canada 2020, 35 O’Connor Street, Suite 302, Ottawa

9:30 a.m.	Registration, coffee	
10:00 a.m.	Welcome & introducing the <i>Canada Food Brand Project</i>	David McInnes , Senior Fellow, Canada 2020
10:20 a.m.	<p>Safe food: Canada is recognized as having one of the world’s safest food systems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>How should we best respond to major emerging risks to Canada’s safe food supply in order to retain consumer confidence, remain competitive & protect Canada’s reputation?</i> 	<p>Panel:</p> <p>Arnie Strub, Chief Operating Officer, Canadian Centre for Food Integrity</p> <p>Tim Nelson, CEO, Livestock Research Innovation Corporation</p> <p>Albert Chambers, Executive Director, Canadian Supply Chain Food Safety Coalition</p> <p>Lyzette Lamondin, Executive Director, Food Safety & Consumer Protection Directorate, CFIA</p>
12:15 p.m.	Lunch	
12:45 p.m.	<p>Nutritious food: Many countries claim that they produce high quality food, including Canada. Worldwide, industry & innovators are seeking to produce ingredients & foods which are more nutritious.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>How could the Canadian agri-food sector more fully leverage & validate “nutritional quality” as a differentiator for the marketplace?</i> 	<p>Panel:</p> <p>Harvey Anderson, Director, Program in Food Safety, Nutrition & Regulatory Affairs, Professor, Nutritional Sciences & Physiology, Department of Nutritional Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto</p> <p>Susan Tosh, Director, School of Nutrition Sciences, Associate Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Ottawa</p> <p>David Kitts, Associate Dean Research, University of British Columbia</p>
2:15 p.m.	Break	
2:30 p.m.	<p>Health/food/sustainability link:</p> <p>The EAT-<i>Lancet</i> Commission recently declared that: “Civilisation is in crisis. We can no longer feed our population a healthy diet while balancing planetary resources...”. (EAT-<i>Lancet</i> Commission report 2019)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Is it in the planet’s interest that Canada should be one of the preeminent places to increase production of red meat because it can be done most sustainably?</i> <i>Can Canada become the global model for sustainable protein (red meat, plant, fish/ seafood) production?</i> 	<p>Panel:</p> <p>Evan Fraser, Director, Arrell Food Institute, University of Guelph (session moderator)</p> <p>Brent Loken, Director of Science Translation, EAT (co-author of the recent EAT-<i>Lancet</i> report)</p> <p>Fawn Jackson, Senior Manager, Government & International Relations, Canadian Cattlemen’s Association</p>
3:50 p.m.	Conclusion	David McInnes