

MEDIA RELEASE
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GOVERNMENTS MUST ACT NOW TO STRENGTHEN CANADA'S FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN: CHAMBER REPORT

Pandemic underscores the need to address pre-existing agri-food industry issues and put a spotlight on new ones

Chatham-Kent- April – During the COVID-19 crisis, Canada's food supply chain experienced numerous pressures, ranging from panic buying to temporary shortages to the rapid shift to e-commerce for grocery stores, farmers, and restaurants. The latest report, *Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario*, of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) with support of the Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce outlines why public policymakers need to take note and take action on issues such as rising food insecurity and food fraud as well as supporting the demand for local food and the shift to online sales to help grow a stronger agri-food sector.

“COVID-19 brought our agri-food system and supply chains to the forefront. We can all remember food flying off the shelves due to stockpiling and panic buying at the outset of the pandemic. Ultimately, while the pandemic caused parts of Ontario's food supply chain to bend, the chain itself did not break. The agricultural presence in Chatham-Kent, and beyond, continues to be an asset to all” said Gail Hundt, President and CEO of the Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce.

The report examines issues that emerged in the last 12 months and other longstanding ones that were exacerbated by COVID-19. It explains how Canada's food system continued to provide Canadians with uninterrupted access to food throughout the pandemic due to the strength of the many sub-sectors and businesses that make up the food supply chain. However, the pandemic put a spotlight on why we need to take action - so the system never gets to a breaking point.

“Addressing red tape and labour shortages among farmers, as well as tackling food fraud and food insecurity, will not only ensure Canada's agri-food sector is able to withstand future challenges, but it will also support agri-food businesses and an equitable recovery,” said Rocco Rossi, President and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

The recommendations outlined in *Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain* aim to strengthen the agri-food sector – a sector that is not only a significant economic driver in Ontario and Canada but also a competitive advantage. Specifically, the report makes a series of recommendations aimed at federal and provincial policymakers:

1. **Meet the demand for local food and shift to online sales** by continuing to invest in relevant programs that help producers transition to e-commerce;
2. **Improve the AgriStability program** by increasing the payment cap and payment trigger, and processing claims more quickly;

3. **Remove red tape facing farmers**, including inter-provincial trade barriers for meat and meat products;
4. **Support the next generation of farmers** by attracting youth to the sector and reducing other barriers to entry like access to land and capital;
5. **Curb food fraud** through improved seafood labelling and a pragmatic plan; and
6. **Eliminate food insecurity** by collecting data, setting targets, and investing in road development in Indigenous and remote communities.

Read the policy brief: [Growing a More Resilient Food Supply Chain in Ontario](#)

This policy brief was made possible by support from [Beef Farmers of Ontario](#), [Durham College](#), and the [Ontario Federation of Agriculture](#).

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About Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce

With the support of 340 members, the Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce is the visionary leader and recognized voice to municipal government for local business. While representing our members diverse needs, we work diligently to enhance the economic prosperity for business and quality of life for the Chatham-Kent community. With long standing memberships in the Ontario and Canadian Chambers of Commerce, we deliver a respected voice to provincial and federal matters that affect day to day and continued success of Chatham-Kent business.

Gail Hundt, President & CEO

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