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National Food Policy Framework (NFPF)

OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This overview is intended to outline the elements of a proposed NFPF. This document is a living document until such time as it receives formal F/P/T approval. The document is subject to change based on F/P/T discussions.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Highlights

The NFPF is intended to provide common policy direction to F/P/T governments who are interested in coordinating their food policy efforts and undertaking joint, cross-portfolio courses of action that will proactively respond to the need for:

- A multidisciplinary approach to the full range of policy issues linked to the safety and quality of Canada’s food supply and to the social and economic issues which are connected to or associated with that food supply.

- An F/P/T policy framework that supports improvements in the overall management of Canada’s food system by developing a common F/P/T vision, goals, and guiding principles.

- Increased and more effective inter-governmental coordination by establishing collaborative decision-making mechanisms that will create national priorities that will facilitate the optimal use of public funds across departments, jurisdictions and sectors, as well as segments of the industry - in relation to food policy issues.

- National / “System-wide” policy direction that will guide all levels of government in the development of programming and policies linked to food and will also lead to more effective risk management interventions.

- A predictable and reliable domestic policy and regulatory environment relating to food commerce and trade that will facilitate the food sector remaining competitive. Linkages between policy communities in Canada with respect to food – including health protection, health promotion, agriculture, fisheries, and food inspection in particular.

B. Where Did the NFPF Come From?

The NFPF was the product of exploratory discussions between the federal agriculture and health portfolios about new and improved ways of approaching the full range of policy challenges related to Canada’s food supply and its many dimensions.

F/P/T Health and Agriculture Ministers discussed the NFPF at their Annual Conferences (Agriculture: September 21-22, 2004 and Health: October 16-17, 2004). During these
meetings, F/P/T Health and Agriculture Ministers agreed that officials should continue the development of a NFPF working towards a draft Framework Agreement which would include a vision, goals, guiding principles and priority areas for action, following consultations with stakeholders and Canadians. The NFPF was noted in both Ministerial communiqués for both of the conferences noted above.

**Agriculture Ministers’ Communiqué:**
“Ministers also discussed the development of a comprehensive approach to coordinating policy direction and decision-making on food issues to further strengthen the existing foundation for consumer confidence, health protection and economic growth. Ministers committed to working with their Health colleagues on a possible National Food Policy Framework that would benefit all Canadians. Further discussions on the development of a possible Framework will be engaged in the coming months. Ministers requested to see a draft of a possible Framework for their consideration at the 2005 Annual Conference.”

**Health Ministers’ Communiqué:**
“Ministers also committed to continue working with their colleagues in Agriculture on a National Food Policy Framework. Ministers discussed the development of a comprehensive approach to coordinating policy direction and decision-making on food issues to further strengthen consumer confidence, health protection and economic growth. Further discussions on the development of a framework will take place in the coming months.”

The NFPF has been discussed at length at a variety of fora since its initial conceptualization in 2004. The level of these fora ranges, as does the depth to which the NFPF (and its substance) were discussed at each of these various fora.

**Senior Level Committees:**
- F/P/T Health DMs
- F/P/T Health Ministers [info item only]
- F/P/T Agriculture DMs
- F/P/T Agriculture Ministers [info item only]
- F/P/T Committee of Agricultural Policy ADMs
- Advisory Committee on Population Health and Health Security (ACPHHS)
- Healthy Living Task Group (a sub-group of ACPHHS)

**Technical and Policy Committees:**
- F/P/T Group on Nutrition (FPTGN)
- Canadian Food Inspection System Implementation Group (CFISIG)
- F/P/T Committee on Food Safety Policy (FPTCFSP)
- F/P/T Agri-Food Inspection Committee (AFIC)
- F/P/T Agricultural Policy Framework Food Safety and Quality Committee (APF FSQ)
- F/P/T NFPF Workshop I and II (the Workshop II is planned for Nov. 2005)
Federal Interdepartmental Discussions (outside of the HC-AAFC-CFIA-PHAC core group):

- Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) [supporting party to the NFPF]
- International Trade Canada (ITCan)
- Environment Canada (EC)
- Natural Resources Canada (NRCan)

C. High-Level Characterization: The NFPF from 50,000 feet

The NFPF is intended to provide a coordinated, national, robust, and proactive policy response to key pressures related to Canada’s food supply.

The Goals of the NFPF are:
1. Improving food system management.
2. Strengthening food safety.
3. Enhancing the contribution of Canada’s food system to healthy eating and improved access to healthy eating.
4. Fostering an innovative, sustainable, and prosperous food sector.
5. Protecting and promoting the interests of consumers.

The Guiding Principles of the NFPF are:
1. Promote governmental partnership, including partnership across portfolios, and support appropriate collaboration with all stakeholders along the food continuum including consumers.
2. Consider the full range of food policy “impacts” in the evaluation of “costs” and “benefits” and promote an appropriate attribution of costs and benefits along the food continuum.
3. Respect constitutionally established responsibilities.
4. Respect Canada’s rights and obligations with regard to international trade.
5. Promote sustainable development.

Demonstrating excellence and leadership in food policy requires that the output of the policy development process balances the social and economic dimensions of food. Food policy must consider how food is produced, who produces Canada’s food, the safety, quality, and availability of Canadian food, the population health impact of food and the impact of obstacles to food access, international trade in Canadian food, the food regulatory system, as well as the state of “food knowledge” amongst consumers, and the meaningfulness, reliability, and availability of “food information”. The NFPF is intended to be a tool with which to arm government to meet the challenges facing it, and the challenges facing stakeholders and the Canadian public.
2. FOOD POLICY: CHALLENGES AND RATIONALE FOR ACTION

A. Policy Drivers

I) The increasing importance of “food as a determinant of health” to Canadians, to the food sector, and to government.

*Points of Interest:*¹

Foods that are safe and nutritious are increasingly in demand, and there are rising demands for “enhanced” food products that will have “health improving” qualities and not just “health maintaining” properties. Consumers are being encouraged to make healthy choices, and industry is looking for ways to meet the demand -- government is interested in building on the synergies that exist between population health goals and the growth imperative of the food sector.

F/P/T governments are looking to advance a broad public health agenda that includes healthy eating as a critical element but there is a need for the food supply to meet the healthy eating demand.

ii) The need to “maintain consumer confidence and trust in Canadian Food and the Canadian food system” in an increasingly complex food information environment where consumers are often more sophisticated and more demanding of industry and government.

*Points of Interest:*

Consumer confidence in the food supply is closely tied to both industry and governments’ ability to provide guarantees about its safety and quality. Consumers expect a high level of industrial and governmental due diligence, as well as transparency and information from across the food continuum including assurances around environmentally responsible production and harvesting practices, ethical issues surrounding how food is produced (e.g. the humane handling of animals, genetically modified organisms), and accurate information about nutrition and health.

Canadians are exposed to an ever increasing volume of information about the safety, nutritional quality, and health benefits of the food they eat from an ever widening range of information sources (government, media, industry / advertising, academia, non-governmental groups) with each varying in scientific validity. Often this information is contradictory and/or inconclusive. And yet in spite of this complicated food information environment (or perhaps as a result of it) Canadian consumers are becoming more discerning and sophisticated in their food purchasing choices and eating habits.

¹ “Points of Interest” are illustrative and are not exhaustive; a more detailed description of these issues is contained in other separate analyses.
iii) Challenges of “Rapidly Evolving Science, Technology and Innovation” with regards to food science, research, and food product development.

**Points of Interest:**

Advances in science and technology have opened up an array of possibilities in the area of agriculture, food and health. Scientific developments have improved our ability to detect contaminants, better protect the food supply, and reduce the impacts of food production and harvesting methods on the environment. They have allowed the private sector to produce medicinal/nutraceutical products from conventional crops, as well as to enhance nutritional qualities in commonplace foods.

Scientific and technological developments have also led to an increased ability to examine the relationship between certain food production and processing techniques and their associated byproducts, like trans fatty acids (‘trans fats’) or acrylamide, and the potential impact these products have on human health.

Rapidly evolving science presents policy and risk communication challenges to government and industry in the context of an increasingly complex information environment and an increasingly competitive food sector.

iv) The “Effects of the Globalization as they relate to Food”

**Points of Interest:**

Modern consumers are increasingly sophisticated and want access to a variety of foods year-round. Modern shipping and storage techniques, as well as growing levels of global trade means that food often comes from a greater number of countries around the globe and frequently crosses borders. While the “globalization of the food supply” has provided new opportunities for the agri-food industry seeking to respond to new or evolving consumer demands, it also presents unique challenges to governments seeking to safeguard the safety of our food supply.

Whereas a few decades ago food safety and quality issues and animal health emergencies could be contained within national borders, this is no longer the case. This puts additional demands on both governments and the agri-food industry to coordinate their efforts so that Canadians’ safety is maintained while also providing flexibility to the industry.

The “globalization of the food supply” also means that emerging agricultural and economic powers are beginning to compete with Canadian agriculture to meet domestic and international demand for commodities as well as finished food. This places unique stresses on the Canadian agriculture, agri-food, and fish and seafood sectors.

v) Challenges of “Interdependent Food Issues and Stakeholders” within the food system


Points of Interest:

Accountability for food in Canada is shared across many departments, levels of government, NGOs and industry, while many of the issues are interrelated. Accountability is also spread throughout the food continuum from producers to retailers. For food safety alone, it is estimated that there are 90 statutes and 37 agencies across the country whose mandate, in some way, encompasses food.

For the most part this system has served Canadians well. There is a long history of formal and informal cooperation between departments and levels of governments and a variety of mechanisms have emerged over the years to overcome inefficiencies, clarify roles and responsibilities and protocols to deal with cross-cutting issues that may be under the jurisdiction of more than one department or government.

However, the pace of change and the growing complexity of the issues facing governments, industry and consumers require a re-evaluation of traditional ‘compartmental’ approaches to food policy making. Addressing emerging challenges in a meaningful way will require the careful consideration of a range of social, economic and environmental factors.

Many Canadians conceive of “food” independently of the elements which constitute the “food system” and which spans policy, marketing, production, processing, retailing, and regulation. The food system in Canada is a devolved system, but there is sometimes an expectation that the food system should be able to respond as if it were organized vertically – especially in times of crisis or emergency.

As food issues are interrelated (e.g. the relationship of food to human health), new approaches and structures are needed that will formalize government / industry / citizen collaboration when developing food related policy, regulations or programs.

B. Why A National Framework for Food Policy?

There are compelling reasons for a cross-portfolio (and F/P/T) approach to food policy:

There is an increasing competitive global economy, where the Canadian food sector is competing for existing markets (as well as new and emerging markets) against traditional trade rivals in the United States and Europe, but also against new trading powers (e.g. Brazil, India) and increasingly regionalized trading blocs (such as the European Union). the trade environment for food is changing. Canada is a net food-exporting country and needs to adapt to the changing environment if it wants to retain its share of the global market.

The emergence of new foodborne pathogens and emerging infectious diseases, and the threat of bioterrorism have all had a significant impact on consumer expectations for food. Whether it be safety considerations linked to BSE or Avian...
Influenza or verotoxic E.coli, fears of food bioterrorism linked to botulism, anthrax, or ricin, or whether it be nutritional quality of food and the long-term health impacts of dietary patterns of trans fatty acids or sodium in the diet and their relationship to chronic cardiovascular and metabolic disease….food is central to these concerns.

Many Canadians do not understand the division of responsibilities linked to food, whether that division is defined by portfolio (e.g. health vs. agriculture vs. fisheries), by jurisdiction (e.g. federal, provincial/territorial, municipal), by legal parameters (e.g. criminal law vs. commerce law), or by activity type (e.g. standards development, policy, enforcement, compliance, evaluation, research and surveillance, etc.). Many Canadians believe that governments can and do have a shared policy understanding and common understanding of how to manage Canada’s “food system”…particularly where food safety is concerned.

In the context of an ever growing body of scientific and non-scientific media focus on these issues, there is clearly a need for governments and the food sector to demonstrate a commitment to evidence-based decision-making; there is a need to provide Canadians with meaningful information about the food they purchase and consume, and there is a need to demonstrate that risk management is based on best available science.

Governments across Canada are also faced with the challenge of protecting the publicly-funded health care system that is increasingly under stress. Governments and the Canadian public are becoming more aware of the growing socio-economic cost of preventable diet-related chronic cardiovascular and metabolic diseases.

Given the state of the global market for food products, the Canadian food sector will be increasingly reliant on innovation and research to provide increased value to consumers. Whether this food quality implies food that will enhance human health, or whether this means “organic”, “free range”, “hormone-free”, or “GM-free”, food quality policy will be important to the food sector and Canadians.

If Canada wants to maintain its national and international leadership role, it must maximize the synergies that exist between Canada’s food sectors and different government portfolios and jurisdictions. Canada must capitalize on the opportunities that exist to harness the national intellectual capital of government, academia, and industry to formulate effective policies to promote health and trade and also meet the expectations that Canadians have for the food they eat.

The National Food Policy Framework (NFPF) represents just such an opportunity.
3. KEY ELEMENTS OF A NATIONAL FOOD POLICY FRAMEWORK (NFPF)

A. NFPF VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

Vision:

“An innovative and sustainable food system that helps make Canadians healthier and fosters a dynamic food sector”

Mission:

“The NFPF will promote more effective F/P/T governmental collaboration through reformed governance and improved food policy linkages, and will facilitate multi-sectoral cooperation in order to provide Canadians with pro-active and demonstrable outcome-focused action on priority food policy issues”

B. NFPF GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The National Food Policy Framework (NFPF) establishes the following guiding principles for F/P/T food policy development and related programming:

1) Promote governmental partnership, including partnership across portfolios, and support appropriate collaboration with all stakeholders along the food continuum including consumers.

2) Consider the full range of food policy “impacts” in the evaluation of “costs” and “benefits” and promote an appropriate attribution of costs and benefits along the food continuum.

3) Respect constitutionally established responsibilities.

4) Respect Canada’s rights and obligations with regard to international trade.

5) Promote sustainable development.

C. NFPF GOALS

1) “Improving Food System Management”

a) Goal Description

The NFPF is intended to facilitate “system-wide” improvements and efficiencies in regulating, inspecting, and engaging with the various components of the Canadian food system to facilitate a more effective and responsive relationship. This goal is intended to help F/P/T governments to:

Define the appropriate accountabilities and intervention points for government and industry related to food production and risk management.
Support the allocation of public resources and investments where they can provide the greatest positive impact for:
< The health of Canadians and for their quality of life; and
< The robustness/resilience of the Canadian food system.

Support innovative and effective approaches to:
< inter-governmental coordination and collaborative decision-making mechanisms; and
< the policy and regulatory environment linked to food.

Strengthen the security and integrity of Canada’s food system and food supply through improved emergency management coordination, and through enhanced emergency preparedness and response capabilities in the context of food/agriculture-related crises.

Improve governmental and industry understanding of consumer interests and needs, while providing a clearer articulation of consumer roles related to food safety and healthy eating choices.

Canada’s “food system”\(^2\) is a “system of systems” with an operating environment that is characterized by overlapping and sometimes conflicting interests -- The NFPF is intended to help F/P/T governments, the food sector, and consumers to more effectively interact with each other’s interests in order to maximize both the social and economic dimensions of the “public good” as it relates to food.

b) Rationale

Recent experiences with Avian Influenza (AI), Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), Specified Risk Materials (SRM) removal from the food supply, acrylamide and trans-fatty acids in food, and Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) and heavy metals in fish all serve to demonstrate that there is a need for a more responsive and effective government/food sector relationship.

Both the governmental and private sector elements of the food system need to be able to demonstrate to Canadians that food producers and F/P/T governments can effectively manage threats to human health and the integrity and safety of the food supply.

c) Strategic Policy Linkages

This NFPF Goal links to and interacts with existing and emerging work through:
< Efforts to review food system / policy governance in Canada;
< Canada’s Strategy for a Safe and Nutritious Food Supply (CSSNFS);
< Food Quality Policy

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2 Notes: Notwithstanding the prominent and important role of the food sector in considering issues linked to the production of safe and nutritious food, decisions relating to “food” and the management of the “food system” must reflect a wide range of interests and concerns that are inter-sectoral, cross-portfolio, multi-jurisdictional, and multi-disciplinary in nature.
2) “Strengthening Food Safety”

a) Goal Description

The NFPF is intended to help F/P/T governments to provide a consistent “national” level of food safety across the country regardless of where food is produced, purchased, or consumed, through increased and more effective collaboration. The NFPF is intended to:

- Promote equivalent and more integrated risk management strategies.
- Promote a risk-based approach to determine appropriate government, industry and consumer interventions along the food continuum.
- Promote consistent, outcome based food safety programs and risk management strategies for both domestic and imported products.
- Improve the detection, analysis, and control of existing and emerging hazards in the food supply, including those originating from the environment, using best available science and technology.
- Increase understanding of the links between human and animal health and ensure that such linkages are reflected in policy, programs and risk management strategies.

This goal should explicitly recognize the primacy of health in considering food and recognizing the pre-eminent role of science in supporting appropriate risk management and education efforts related to food safety and nutrition;

b) Rationale

Given the compartmentalized operating environment, governments and the food sector are not maximizing the investments that are already being made in food safety. By placing a focus on “strengthening food safety” the NFPF is not seeking to change existing Constitutional roles and responsibilities. The NFPF is simply trying to establish the policy framework that will support an operating environment in which all players know and understand the responsibilities of the other constituent parts of the food system, and work towards improved results for Canadians (irrespective of portfolio) where it is possible (and appropriate) to cooperate and leverage synergies.
c) **Strategic Policy Linkages**

This NFPF Goal links to and interacts with existing and emerging work through:

- Federal and F/P/T food safety policy work, including:
  - Canada’s Strategy for a Safe and Nutritious Food Supply (CSSNFS) and Public Health Outcomes Performance Measurements
  - Health Goals for Canada;
  - Pesticide Risk Reduction Policy;
  - Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) policy;
  - Northern Contaminants Program (NCP);
  - Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education.
- Smart Regulation;
- Strategies to improve emergency management coordination;
- National Security Policy (NSP);
- Agricultural Policy Framework (APF);
- Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) of North America.

3) **“Enhancing the Contribution of Canada’s Food System to Healthy Eating and Access to Healthy Food”**

a) **Goal Description**

The NFPF recognizes the role of food as a fundamental determinant of health. The NFPF has also been developed fully understanding the importance of meaningful information and education in supporting informed food/diet choices by Canadians, and supports the assumption that “healthy eating” is part of healthy living - which necessarily includes physical activity and healthy lifestyles. In support of ‘health eating’, and with specific regard to the food supply itself, the NFPF is intended to provide a supportive policy environment for the development of policies, programs, and investments that promote market-based solutions to the development of a food supply that:

- Improves Canadians’ access to safe and nutritious food.
- Provides Canadians with dietary choices that help them to maintain and improve their health.
- Helps to reduce the incidence of chronic diet-related diseases and the associated burden on the publicly-funded health care system.

The NFPF is intended to build understanding of the relationship between the nutritional quality of the food supply, the ability of the consumer to make healthy food choices, and access and availability of healthy food.

**Enhancing the Contribution of the Food System to Healthy Eating**

Consumers and governments are increasingly concerned with the nutritional quality of the food supply and with the impacts that dietary choices have on the health of Canadians over time. As the recognition of the link between nutrition and health grows amongst Canadians, the food sector is becoming aware of its own need to replace
“unhealthy” food ingredients / components and “unhealthy” food processing and production techniques.

The food sector is also increasingly interested in producing foods with health benefits in order to meet the demands of consumers to embrace healthy eating as part of an overall healthy lifestyle that includes physical activity.

After smoking, food and dietary patterns constitute one of the most important modifiable determinants of health. Governments need to examine ways to minimize the role that diet plays in contributing to foodborne illness and diet-related chronic disease in order to reduce the mounting pressure on Canada’s healthcare system.

The NFPF is intended to provide a supportive policy environment for the development of policies, programs, and investments that enable Canadians to make dietary choices that help maintain and improve their health. Additionally, the NFPF aims to build inter-sectoral collaboration that facilitates improved access and availability of a safe and nutritious food supply. This support for “healthy eating” is intended:

Foster greater recognition of the role of food as a determinant of health by providing Canadians with meaningful information about the nutritional value of the food that they eat to allow informed choices.

Support government-industry collaboration to enhance the nutritional quality of the food supply, promote the availability of these foods, and effectively market associated benefits.

_English the Contribution of the Food System to Access to Healthy Food_

Strategies aimed at encouraging Canadians to develop healthy dietary habits can only have a very limited population health impact if Canadians do not have physical and economic access to safe and nutritious food.

The NFPF is intended to facilitate Canadians’ access to an available supply of safe and nutritious food, consistent with commitments made under “Canada’s Action Plan for Food Security” by providing a supportive policy environment for government interventions aimed at improving Canadians’ access to healthy food while supporting agricultural development. Physical and economic access to safe and nutritious food is an important component of food security. This goal is intended to provide policy support for governmental efforts to:

Incorporate the “food access and availability” lens into agricultural and food policy considerations.

Enhance the capacity to monitor Canadians’ access to healthy food.

Support F/P/T ministers and ministries with responsibilities for social development and social services, labour, economic development, aboriginal affairs, trade and industry where their activities may improve Canadians’ access to healthy food –
and creating linkages between these portfolios and F/P/T health, agriculture and rural affairs, and fisheries and aquaculture where appropriate.

Support intersectoral collaboration and cooperation on food access issues.

Examining potential opportunities for expanded linkages with other horizontal F/P/T policy initiatives where Canadians’ access to healthy food may be addressed or advanced (e.g. connecting with the “Cities Agenda” and the “Northern Strategy”).

b) Rationale

The NFPF needs to provide a policy basis for an inter-departmental, inter-governmental, and inter-sectoral collaboration on:

i) Promoting the production of foods that will maintain and improve the health of Canadians beyond basic safety considerations;

ii) Promoting the availability of these foods in order to allow Canadians to have and make healthy eating choices;

iii) Ensuring that production of these types of foods is sustainable; and

iv) Working to reduce the barriers to Canadians’ physical and economic access to those safe and nutritious foods that are available in the marketplace with those organizations and departments with relevant mandates and experience.

c) Strategic Policy Linkages

This NFPF Goal links to and interacts with existing and emerging work through:

< Integrated Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy (particularly Healthy Eating);
< Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating;
< Health Goals for Canada;
< Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP);
< Community Action Program for Children (CAPC);
< Aboriginal Health Start Program in Urban and Northern Communities;
< Canada’s Action Plan for Food Security;
< Trans Fat Task Force;
< Canada’s Strategy for a Safe and Nutritious Food Supply (CSSNFS) (nutritional safety dimension);
< Nutrition labelling regulation;
< Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) Food Mail Program;
< F/T food security initiatives and programs;
< F/P/T social policy and income security programming;
< F/P/T economic development and employment policy;
< F/P/T agricultural policy.

4) “Fostering an Innovative, Sustainable, and Prosperous Food Sector”

a) Goal Description
This goal explicitly recognizes the importance of innovation in the context of the food sector’s long term sustainability and competitiveness. In supporting the food sector’s need to be innovative and sustainable, the NFPF seeks to:

Enable the food sector to offer Canadians greater access to a variety of new, higher value, safe and nutritious food products, while fostering economic opportunities for the sector.

Provide a supportive environment where scientific research is conducted in priority areas around the agriculture-health interface and used strategically to inform policy development.

Foster greater collaboration and information sharing between private networks, federal and provincial/territorial governments and across the food continuum in the areas of targeted research and innovation, in order to support the development of food products that provide health benefits to Canadians and foster opportunities for the food sector.

Promote / increase the competitiveness of the Canadian food industry both domestically and internationally.

Provide a science-based policy and regulatory environment that fosters industry competitiveness and appropriately considers the economic impacts of government interventions on all segments of the food sector.

Support policies and programs related to Canadian food products that allow for:

i) Increased foreign and domestic market access;
ii) Increased foreign and domestic demand for Canadian product; and
iii) Increased recognition of the Canadian brand.

Support food sector competitiveness and the development of higher value food products and food products with consumer-desired attributes.

i) Define appropriate industry and government roles and accountabilities with respect to food quality;
ii) Develop appropriate mechanisms for the management of food quality issues, including the development of food quality policy and quality recognition systems.

b) Rationale

Canadians rely on the food sector to produce a safe and nutritious food supply which will contribute to maintaining and promoting human health.

The agriculture and agri-food sector, excluding the fish and seafood sector, provides employment to 1 in 8 Canadians. The sector also serves an important cultural and social role by providing a sense of community, particularly in rural Canada.
That being said, there are significant challenges facing the sector that require governmental attention if it is to continue producing Canada’s food basket and be an engine of rural economies. New agricultural powers are emerging such as Brazil and India driving basic commodity prices down. Barriers to certain markets persist. Agricultural subsidies in various national jurisdictions reduce the competitiveness of Canadian producers. Consumers are becoming more discerning and demanding, and expectations around food safety and nutritional quality are increasing – requiring additional investment by industry. The NFPF needs to establish a policy environment in which the needs of food producers are considered when food-related decisions are made so that food policy is approached in a truly comprehensive manner.

c) Strategic Policy Linkages

This NFPF Goal links to and interacts with existing and emerging work through:

- Agricultural Policy Framework (APF);
- Canada’s Strategy for a Safe and Nutritious Food Supply (CSSNFS);
- Animal health strategy;
- Food quality policy;
- National Agriculture and Food Traceability System;
- F/P/T marketing and branding initiatives;
- Pesticide Risk Reduction Policy;
- Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) policy;
- Smart Regulation;
- Strategies to improve emergency management coordination;
- National Security Policy (NSP) – food and agriculture critical infrastructure protection;
- Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) of North America;
- International standard-setting for food and animal health;
- International trade discussions related to agriculture and food.

5. “Protecting and Promoting the Interests of Consumers”

a) Goal Description

The NFPF recognizes that consumers are at the centre of the Canadian food system, they are both the “end-users” of food and the “originators” of the demands for safety, nutrition, and other food product attributes that the food sector and governments attempt to deliver.

By virtue of their unique position within the food system, consumers have particularly important food-related interests that must be advanced by the NFPF. In this context, the NFPF seeks to:

Protect consumers from fraud and deception, including (but not limited to) verifying the authenticity of health claims on food labels, and where necessary improving the “meaningfulness / usefulness”, “clarity”, and “intent” of food labelling and other forms of consumer information.
Work to be more reflective of consumer needs and interests in the overall management of the food system and the food supply, through more active involvement of consumers.

Identify and integrate consumer expectations for the food sector into food policy thinking so as to guide industry investments and activities in areas where consumers are supportive of food-related innovation and where consumers have particular demands relating to food product attributes.

b) Rationale

Governments have clearly outlined a role for themselves in protecting consumers from fraud and intentional deception in most areas of commercial activity in Canada. Food is no exception. Whether one is discussing the accuracy of food labels, the scientific merit of health benefit claims for food, or the quality grading of different foods, F/P/T governments play a role in ensuring a degree of “fair play” in the food economy between those that sell food and those that buy food. The NFPF seeks to accommodate this governmental responsibility as an essential part of a food policy framework.

c) Strategic Policy Linkages

This NFPF Goal links to and interacts with existing and emerging work through:
< Canada’s Strategy for a Safe and Nutritious Food Supply (CSSNFS);
< Diet-related and product-specific health claims and associated regulations;
< Nutrition labelling regulations and enforcement;
< Food quality policy;
< Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating;
< Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education;
< Smart Regulation.
4. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A NFPF

A. Benefits to the Health Portfolio

What are the Opportunities Represented by a NFPF?

- Opportunity to position government ahead of the curve in terms of addressing emerging food-related challenges in the health policy and agricultural policy domain;
- Opportunity to maximize the synergies that exist between Canada’s food sectors and various governments, jurisdictions, and policy communities;
- Opportunity to harness the national intellectual capital of government, academia, industry, and civil society to formulate effective policies to promote health and trade and to meet the expectations that Canadians have for the food they eat.
- Opportunity to establish policy coherence at the government level in the area of food policy.

What Will Acting on the Opportunity Mean? (OVERALL)

1. **Building a Policy Environment that Leverages the Health Potential of the Food Supply**: Canada’s food supply is a critically important factor to consider when assessing how Health Ministers (and ministries) can effectively, practically, and meaningfully help Canadians to maintain, improve, and prolong their health, well being, and quality of life. Through a coordinated F/P/T approach the NFPF is intended to:
   - Help reduce the burden of acute food-related illness.
   - Help reduce the burden of chronic diet-related disease.
   - Help improve the environmental health of Canadians.
   - Help address food-related health disparities of Canadians by improving access to healthy foods, with particular emphasis on Canada’s most vulnerable sub-populations.
   - Help to better manage health emergencies linked to food.

2. **More Effective and Efficient Government**: A policy focus on food will increase policy coherence, and help governments to attain tangibly improved health results for Canadians. The NFPF is an opportunity for F/P/T health ministries to act in concert on issues linked to the food supply – increasing governmental collaboration, effectiveness, and efficiency on issues which will have a direct bearing on the health of citizens across the country.

3. **Investing for a “Health Dividend”**: A policy framework that is based on an understanding of the central role that food and diet plays in reducing morbidity and mortality will contribute to a healthier population requiring less institutional medical care, and will improve government’s ability to stabilize health care spending thereby contributing to the fiscal capacity of all F/P/T governments.
More specifically, this opportunity will help to....

1. **Reduce the Burden of Acute Food-related Illness**

   How safely food is produced, transported, processed, packaged, stored, handled, and prepared are all factors that can contribute to preventing serious health complications and death, and can also help in reducing the burden of acute food-related illness on hospital emergency rooms and clinics.

   The consistent application of food safety standards is a critical consideration in developing a food system that will help to reduce the burden of acute food-related disease. In this context food inspection within the context of a national food safety strategy, in both the federal and non-federally registered sectors, is a major priority.

   As an example, microbial foodborne illness affects the health of an estimated 1,000,000 Canadians every year and costs $1,000,000,000 ($1B) annually in direct and indirect healthcare costs and lost productivity.

2. **Reduce the Burden of Chronic Diet-related Disease**

   The eating habits of Canadians, in conjunction with lifestyle and level of physical activity, have a major impact on the long-term health status of Canadians. In the same way that non-smoking reduces the risk of certain negative and terminal health outcomes, so too does a healthy lifestyle that includes healthy eating.

   Diet is a significant risk factor for a number of chronic diseases; chronic diet-related diseases are becoming increasingly problematic - negative health outcomes such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases related to diet and to obesity are major problems and affect millions of Canadians annually. It is estimated that diet-related chronic disease costs Canada $6,000,000,000 ($6 B) annually in direct and indirect healthcare costs and lost productivity.

   Looking at the contribution that the food supply can make towards chronic disease reduction is a valuable long-term investment – when done in conjunction with existing “healthy eating” efforts as part of the Integrated Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy. Because of Canada’s aging population the rate of growth of chronic disease will continue to rise. This trend will (and already is) changing the nature of the pressures on the publicly-funded healthcare system (more chronic care and less acute care).

   That being said the diet-related chronic disease issue is multi-faceted; the diet Canadians consume reflects both their choices and the nutritional quality of the food supply (from which diet choices are made).

   A recent study conducted by the Institute of Clinical and Evaluative Sciences (ICES) found that areas with greater numbers of fast-food services had higher rates of hospital admissions and death for coronary problems. If a region had 10-19 fast food outlets per 100,000 people saw its mortality rate go up by 35 cases per 100,000 over the normal rate. If a region had 20 or more outlets, the
mortality rate went up, over the norm, by 62 cases per 100,000. While this is just one study, it points to a particular need to have “targeted health promotion and prevention strategies to communities with the poorest health profiles and the poorest lifestyle behaviours.”

Institute for Clinical and Evaluative Sciences (ICES) research in May 2005 has shown that in Ontario in areas with 10-19 fast food outlets per 100,000 people there was an increase in hospitalizations by 28 per 100,000. In areas with 20 or more fast food outlets saw their hospitalization rate jump by 47 cases per 100,000.

The study pointed to the need to have “targeted health promotion and prevention strategies to communities with the poorest health profiles and the poorest lifestyle behaviours and that there needs to be disincentives put in place to curtail fast-food demand and promote the consumption of healthier food in high-mortality regions”.

F/P/T Health Ministers have already declared their support for the development of a Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy which is founded in a population health approach. It calls on the use of strategies that address the entire range of factors that determine the health and well-being of the population. By focussing on the food supply and the role of industry, the NFPF aims to complement the Healthy Living Strategy and remain consistent with Speech From the Throne (SFT) [Oct. 5, 2004] and Federal Budget (2005) commitments linked to the “Promotion of Healthy Living...including nutrition...integrated disease strategies”.

Healthy Eating/Living has been identified by a number of P/T governments as a critical way to improve Canadians to maintain and improve their health and reduce the burden of preventable illness on the publicly-funded health care system. Taking a coordinated approach to those issues linked to the contribution of the food supply in conjunction with P/T healthy eating efforts will maximize positive health outcomes and reduce pressures on the health system on a national scale...consider:

British Columbia - announced in the Speech from the Throne (February 2005) that a new initiative “Act Now”, which includes a goal of increasing by 20% the proportion of British Columbians who eat the recommended daily level of fruit and vegetables.

New Brunswick – developed a Wellness Strategy (as part of its Provincial Health Plan 2004-2008), which will have new investments in prevention and the promotion of healthy living (including, development of New Brunswick Nutritious Food Basket (guide) that will help families select healthy food choices that all New Brunswickers can afford).

Saskatchewan has an extensive Population Health Promotion Strategy – Healthier Places to Live, Work and Play (April 2004) which is linked to the 2001 Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care
< Manitoba, in October 2004, appointed a Minister responsible for Healthy Living and has a Manitoba: Healthy Living strategy which includes activities to combat Chronic Disease and Promote Healthy Eating.

< In Alberta’s Speech from the Throne March 2, 2005, it was stated “the government will work with community partners to find new ways of encouraging Albertans to make health and wellness part of their daily lives. For 2004-2005, the Alberta government is focussing on three main objectives, including optimizing Albertans’ health by working collaboratively to address factors that influence health through their Framework for a Healthy Alberta.

< Newfoundland and Labrador’s Speech from the Throne (March 15, 2005) stated “My Government believes we can reduce the demands on our health care system by promoting health and wellness”, including through the development of new nutrition guidelines for schools to ensure students are provided with healthy food choices & given information about healthy eating

< Prince Edward Island (PEI)’s Speech from the Throne (November 2004) noted that “We must recognize the powerful impact that an active healthy lifestyle has on a child’s readiness to learn and the vital role that schools can play in helping students to develop healthy lifestyles. An Active Healthy School Communities Strategy will be introduced this year to encourage schools and communities to work together to promote healthy eating, physical activity…”

< Nova Scotia launched in March 2005 “Healthy Eating Nova Scotia”. A strategic plan to address nutrition related issues (including prevention of chronic diseases and growing food insecurity, etc.). The framework provides a comprehensive action on healthy eating – priority areas include: children and youth, fruit and vegetable consumption, food security (and breastfeeding).

< In 2004, Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer issued a report “Healthy Weights, Healthy Lives” calling for action – development of a comprehensive, multi-sectoral strategy to help the people of Ontario achieve and maintain healthy heights and enjoy healthy lives (including development of policies and programs that promote healthy eating).

3. **Improve the Environmental Health of Canadians**

$ By adopting a multi-disciplinary and intersectoral approach to food policy governments are better positioned to eliminate / reduce unacceptable levels of contaminants in the food supply by working with industry to ensure that food is appropriately considered in an environmental health context.

$ Also, a collaborative and intersectoral approach will improve public communications and the level of consumer understanding about contaminants in the food supply such as PCBs and dioxins influence. As has already been
observed in Canada, incorrect or inaccurate information and conclusions about the chemical safety of foods can have negative impacts on the diets of Canadians as well as on the agricultural and fishery-based economies. 
< Drop of 20% in sales of salmon related to misleading reports of levels of PCBs) leading to consumers avoiding beneficial foods such as fish for fear of eating chemicals

4. **Address Food-related Health Disparities of Canada’s Most Vulnerable Sub-Populations by Improving Access to Healthy Foods**

$ A nationally coordinated and multi-disciplinary approach to the policy and decision making related to the food supply can better position governments to address larger social development issues such as reasonable access to safe and nutritious food, something which has enormous importance for population health and for Northern communities and low income individuals/families in particular. Improving food access can also have implications for issues linked to country and game foods and locally grown food.

$ While Canada is a prosperous country, food insecurity continues to be a serious challenge facing governments and society. According to a survey done by the Canadian Association of Food Banks (CAFB) the number of different people using a food bank in one month of 2003 was 777,869 (N.B. for comparison, the population of New Brunswick is 756,650). Also consider:
< Increase in food bank use since 2002: 5.5%; since 1998: 9.01%; since 1989: 105.8%
< Number of food banks: 639 (482 in sample)
< Number of meal programs open in March 2003: 450
< Number of provinces & territories without a food bank: 0
< Years since Canada’s first food bank opened in Edmonton: 21

$ In this context, a collaborative approach to the full range of policy issues linked to the food supply will facilitate more effective governmental action on food-related health disparities, including issues linked to the unique food-related challenges of Canada’s First Nations and Inuit populations.
< For example, the incidence of Type 2 Diabetes amongst Aboriginal Canadians is a major health policy issue, with food and nutrition being an important consideration. The GoC is committed to responding to this particular challenge through the Speech from the Throne (SFT) [Oct. 5, 2004].
< The health and agricultural worlds need to build a meaningful policy-based linkage with other initiatives, such as Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC) Food Mail Program, which provide for safe and nutritious food to reach remote and isolated Northern communities.

$ In the context of the GoC’s commitment to children, through the National Children’s Agenda (NCA) and through the broader Social Union Framework Agreement, it is important to note that children are amongst the most likely to

have their access to safe and healthy food negatively impacted by socio-economic conditions. The Canadian Association of Food Banks (CAFB) states that 39% of food recipients are children and estimates suggest that 56% of households accessing food banks are families with children.¹

For a number of the provinces, the link between access and availability and Healthy Eating is very strong. There is a common understanding that ensuring food security is a necessary first step towards more general population health, the alleviation of poverty and sustainable economic growth…consider:

- **Nova Scotia** recently released its Healthy Eating Strategy. One of the four priority areas identified in the strategy is on Food Security. The objectives of this area are to:
  - To increase the proportion of Nova Scotians who have access to nutritious foods.
  - To increase the availability of nutritious, locally produced foods throughout the province.

- **Nova Scotia** is approaching food access from a number of dimensions. To the province, it means:
  - being able to get enough healthy food and not having to worry about where your next meal will come from;
  - that people involved in growing and handling food are able to make a decent living; and
  - growing and producing food in ways that protect the resources so that there will be healthy food for our children’s children.

- **Saskatchewan** has an accessible nutritious food section within its “Healthier Places to Live, Work and Play” program release by Saskatchewan Health in April 2004. The goals of the accessible nutritious food section are:
  - To increase opportunities for people to enjoy more nutritious food in homes and community settings
  - To reduce the economic, geographic, social and cultural barriers that limit healthy eating habits; and,
  - To advocate for food policies that promote and protect the health of Saskatchewan residents.

- Through Saskatchewan’s Department of Community Resources and Employment (DCRE) Child Nutrition Development Program (CNDP), funding is provided for community initiatives to support a continuum of food security initiatives ranging from children’s food programs to community development initiatives such as good food box programs.

- In **Prince Edward Island**, an intersectoral group called the Healthy Eating Alliance has been established to support the nutrition aspects of PEI’s Healthy Living Strategy. The Healthy Eating Alliance is a group of roughly 4

40 individuals, groups and agencies. A subgroup of the Healthy Eating Alliance is the Access to Healthy Foods Working Group. This group has indicated that it will take the lead in identifying a position and potential actions that the Alliance could take to support food security issues. They are currently finalizing the next 3 year strategy.

5. **Better Manage Health Emergencies Linked to Food**

$ As the experience of BSE and Avian Influenza demonstrated the risks of having economic and public health protection strategies not proceeding in a coordinated fashion, Canada needs to be prepared for emerging infectious disease, foreign animal disease, and zoonotic disease. The only means by which governments can effectively manage potential risks to human and animal health, as well as the secondary impact of disease outbreaks on Canada’s economy and on the prosperity of rural Canadians is to adopt a holistic and coordinated approach to food issues that encompass those factors affecting food and its production. The public needs to get consistent and coordinated messages in order for trust to be maintained in both the public health and food systems.

$ In a related vein, Canada’s new National Security Policy (NSP) identifies public health (including zoonosis and food safety) as emergency management and national security priorities. Additionally, Canadian commitments made under the Canada-USA Smart Border Declaration, and the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) of North America includes the protection of the Canadian food supply from deliberate attack (e.g. CBRN bioterrorism) as a priority consideration.

6. **Invest for a “Health Dividend”**

$ Canada’s publicly funded health care system plays a key role in building the society we value. It is vital to our quality of life and a reflection of the values we share as a nation. It is also at the leading edge where economic and social policies interact. It provides Canada with the distinct economic advantage of a healthy, productive workforce and provides security in retirement.

$ The Romanow Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada, the Kirby Senate Study on the State of the Health Care System in Canada and a number of provincial reports clearly indicated that Canadians want and expect improved access to quality services from our publicly funded health care system. Canadians have asked that their governments work together to strengthen the health care system and ensure its long-term sustainability. Both the Romanow and Kirby reports have highlighted the role of “prevention” (including health promotion) in supporting the sustainability of Canada’s publicly-funded healthcare system. In this context, “health promotion and prevention” can also include the role of food (in an acute and chronic sense) in reducing the burden of preventable disease on the health care system.

**B. Benefits to the Agriculture Portfolio**

The Opportunity

National Food Policy Framework (NFPF) OVERVIEW

DRAFT – WORK IN PROGRESS

November 21, 2005
Overall the NFPF offers an opportunity to improve the competitiveness, sustainability and overall management of Canada’s agriculture and food sector while ensuring a common, holistic government approach to food policy that enables a balance between economic, health, social and environmental considerations in decision-making.

What will acting on this opportunity mean?

A National Food Policy Framework (NFPF) will provide a basis for improvement in the overall management of Canada’s food system by developing a common vision and an integrated and coordinated approach to food policy that will optimize the use of public funds across departments, jurisdictions and sectors, as well as the industry. An NFPF will foster an increased level of cooperation between governments which will help support Canada’s agricultural sector, and enhance its sustainability so that it can better meet the needs and expectations of Canadians regarding the food they eat. Several other countries have already moved in this direction (see Box 1).

More specifically, this opportunity will help to:

1. **Promote efficiencies**

   It has been costly for governments to address emerging issues independently and on an ad-hoc basis. Various government departments and jurisdictions are involved in developing and implementing food related policies, strategies and initiatives across Canada (see Box 2).

   Though individually, these initiatives have merit, when these efforts are not well coordinated, it can result in costly duplication and overlap. A coordinated approach to food policy could improve communication and knowledge sharing between departments/jurisdictions, provide a forum to set common priorities and foster greater efficiencies through a better allocation of resources across the food system. This is one of the key features of the NFPF.

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Box 1: International Examples of coordinated food policy

The Intergovernmental Agreement on Food signed in 2002 in Australia brought together all national food standards under a single system and created an overarching decision-making body (Ministerial Council) to develop policy and set guidelines for food policy.


The UK Food Standards Agency was created in 1999 as an independent government body responsible for advising Ministers and developing policy and programs on all matters related to food safety, food standards, nutrition and public health.


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Box 2: Food is a Multi-jurisdictional Responsibility

For food safety alone, there are 90 statutes and 37 agencies across the country whose mandate, in some way, encompasses food (ref. CFISIG).

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5 Some examples include: AAFC – Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) and development of APF II; HC – Legislative Renewal, Smart Regulation Initiative, Integrated Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy (PHAC and HC), Canada’s Strategy for a Safe and Nutritious Food Supply (HC and CFIA) ; CFIA – Meat Inspection Reform (MIR), Proposed Enforcement Bill (C-27); DFO – National Aquatic Animal Health Strategy; P/T Agriculture (including Fisheries/Aquaculture) - APF, Haines Report (Ontario); P/T Health and Social Services – healthy eating as part of the Integrated Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy.
Up until now, policy decisions on food related issues have been made by various players, for instance in the health sector, that have had significant impacts on the agriculture sector. There is a need to ensure that all key players are brought together to make certain that policy decisions strike the right balance between health/social and agriculture/economic concerns. The NFPF would allow for better coordination and harmonization between government organizations throughout the policy development and implementation cycle (i.e. policy decision, transition plans for implementation, technical and financial support to industry players to facilitate transition, implementation).

2. **Bring social, economic and environmental policy priorities for the food system together and facilitating a coordinated approach to emerging issues**

Addressing emerging challenges in the food system (e.g. the effects of globalization on food, rapidly evolving science, the growing recognition of food as a determinant of health, and the need to maintain consumer confidence) in a meaningful way will require the careful consideration of a range of social, economic and environmental factors. A framework that allows governments to consider the various dimensions of food and emerging issues in a holistic way, that enables a balance between economic and health considerations in decision making, and that promotes a coordinated approach to solving issues linked to food will be quite beneficial to the agriculture and food sector and the Canadian public.

As food issues are interrelated (e.g. the relationship of food to human health), new approaches and structures are needed that formalize government/industry/citizen collaboration when developing food related policy, regulations or programs. For example, there are several F/P/T technical committees (health and agriculture) involved in advancing food safety and quality issues in Canada. Though very effective at the working level, at times these committees have difficulty in accessing health and agricultural decision makers. The NFPF could provide a governance mechanism and forum to quickly bring issues to F/P/T ADMs and Ministers on a regular basis.

In an environment that increasingly recognizes the link between food and human health, Canada is well-suited to assume an international leadership role in promoting health and wellness through sensible food policy. Many key stakeholders in the food system (i.e. academics, industry, policy makers) believe that the development of better food policy, through a coordinated approach that considers both agriculture and health outcomes, is one strategy that could potentially contribute to reduced health care costs and position Canada as an exporter of healthy foods and healthy food policies.

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3. **Ensure a more competitive food sector**

Enhance Canada’s position as a trading country:

In Canada, almost 45% of the total value of agriculture production is exported. As BSE has demonstrated, when faced with negative shifts in market access, Canada’s domestic market cannot absorb food production surplus, unlike the United States and the European Union. Increasingly, issues related to food safety and quality attributes such as how a product is produced, can limit market access. Being able to respond quickly to emerging issues and showcase the safety and quality of Canada’s food supply requires effective tools, applied nationally (e.g. traceability), and a coordinated and national approach to food (see example in Box 3).

4. **Enable food sector innovation**

Continual scientific research and timely technological transfer is a key driver of food sector innovation. The public sector (federal/provincial/territorial) plays an important role in generating the types of research that provide direct benefits to producers and the agri-food industry. At times these research efforts are not well coordinated across departments and jurisdictions. A NFPF could provide a forum to develop a common national research agenda that supports the vision and goals of the NFPF. It could also facilitate the exchange of research information between departments and across jurisdictions, and ultimately the timely transfer of research results to the agriculture and agri-food community across the country.

5. **Helping to provide a strong foundation for consumer confidence in the safety and quality of Canadian agriculture and food**

Consumer confidence is the ultimate determinant of the economic health of the agriculture and food sector. This confidence in the food supply is closely tied to both industry and governments’ ability to show that measures are in place to mitigate the risks to food safety and quality. The current food policy landscape is complex and involves a multitude of federal, provincial and industry players. At times this results in uneven application and enforcement of standards across jurisdictions, which may threaten consumer confidence and the economic health of the sector. As a result, a national approach that coordinates the various aspects of food policy and its key players would facilitate the development of similar approaches that lead to similar results across the country, and improve the overall efficiency of the system.

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7. AAFC, *An Overview of the Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food System*, May 2004

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National Food Policy Framework (NFPF) OVERVIEW
DRAFT – WORK IN PROGRESS
November 21, 2005
As has already been observed in Canada, incorrect or inaccurate information and conclusions about the safety of foods (e.g. PCBs or dioxins in food) can have negative impacts on the health of the sector and the diets of Canadians (see Box 4). In this context, it is essential to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the various players involved in risk communication to ensure that appropriate spokespeople communicate the proper messages to various audiences. A collaborative approach to food would help clarify responsibilities, improve public communications and the level of consumer understanding about food safety risks.

6. **Advance Food Safety and Quality commitments under the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF)**

Though progress has been made under the Food Safety and Quality Chapter of the APF, a more sustained partnership with health and fisheries (and other OGDs), advanced through the NFPF, will contribute positively to the future health of the sector. It will also address gaps in the scope of the APF to include key areas such as animal health, as well as “fish and seafood” as food.

The APF has given us the opportunity to communicate national agriculture progress in the area of food safety and quality. The NFPF will broaden the scope of this tool by facilitating greater collaboration and data sharing between NFPF partners, the use of common tools and reporting methods to communicate with Canadians, and the development of common food system performance standards to track national progress made annually.

5. **IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS**

The NFPF Reference Guide is not only intended to consider the context for and the outline of a national policy framework, it is also intended to anticipate and provide guidance to officials in the post-development phase. This guidance is not intended to replace a workplan; it is intended to provide a cursory review of issues that officials will need to examine in order to operationalize the NFPF.

1) **Consideration of Reformed F/P/T Governance / Decision-Making Architecture for the NFPF**

Governance is a fundamental implementation consideration for any policy initiative; this is particularly true in the context of food policy where multiple portfolios and multiple jurisdictions may be dramatically implicated by a move towards a coordinated approach to policy priorities.

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**Box 4: Contaminants in Salmon**

In January 2004, a study by U.S. and Canadian researchers showed that salmon raised in fish farms have much higher levels of PCBs and certain other contaminants than wild salmon. The levels were extremely small - less than 50 parts per billion for PCBs, one-40th the allowable government standard. Both Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency said they saw no need for Canadians to take the researchers’ advice and limit consumption of farmed salmon to two meals a month. Despite the guidance, a health panic followed and sales of farmed fish fell by 20 per cent. In some cases, fish markets reported salmon sales down by half.

In this context it is useful to consider the range of expectations and/or needs that may arise from a discussion of food policy governance, these include, but are not limited to, the notions that “governance” would:

< Provide for a multi-jurisdictional decision-making mechanism, with appropriate powers, which would reflect a cross-portfolio perspective and which would guide policy and facilitate priority-setting at the national level so as to allow line departments to address existing and future challenges related to food in a coordinated manner.

< Provide for tangible action on NFPF goals (as expressed in Section (F)).

< Engage stakeholders and ensure that their views and concerns are taken into account in government decision-making.

< Facilitate complementary and cooperative action (implementation), as appropriate including requisite allocation of resources.

In order for the NFPF to most effectively examine governance for food policy in Canada and propose new models, officials must:

< Describe current F/P/T and local responsibilities regarding all aspects of food policy (e.g. food safety, health promotion linked to food, agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries, standards, enforcement and compliance, etc.).

< Develop models for an accountable, transparent and national approach to decision-making by F/P/T governments, across portfolios, based on an integrated approach to social and economic considerations with effective collaboration being the ultimate objective.

2) **Consideration of Performance Measurement / Management Criteria**

Effectiveness of programming and investment in NFPF-associated initiatives will need to be measured. Performance measurement criteria will need to be established to determine success in:

*Individual goal achievement:* Measurement of progress towards fulfilling a primary goal (e.g. Strengthening Food Safety, etc) achieved through a combination of programs, policies, regulations, etc.

*Integrated and consistent consideration of all goals:* A measurement of progress towards the fulfillment of overall goals and the process utilized to achieve them, e.g.:

< Integrated decision-making.

< Deliberate consideration of the social and economic impacts of an intervention.

< Consideration of the impacts of goal achievement (e.g. food safety) on other NFPF goals.

3) **Consideration of Resource Implications**

Officials will need to consider the cost implications of any significant changes in policy direction which may impact existing or committed government resources and/or existing F/P/T funding/cost-sharing arrangements. This is particularly important in the operational context, where a NFPF partner may be required to adjust or re-allocate resources to meet the objectives of a new policy direction.
4) **Securing Appropriate Approvals**

Officials will need to secure governmental commitment, at an appropriately elevated level and at an appropriate inter-governmental (F/P/T) forum, to implement programs and policy for food/agriculture/health that reflect the common vision, mission, guiding principles, goals, and revised food policy governance architecture as outlined by the NFPF.

6. **OTHER REFERENCE MATERIALS**

A. **NFPF Early Areas for Action**

The NFPF Assistant Deputy Minister Steering Group (NFPF ADM SG), which is composed of health and agriculture ADMs, has indicated that the following initiatives warrant "early action" under the NFPF. These "early areas for action" are to be supported by analysis that describes how each initiative supports (and is supported by) the NFPF and how each individual initiative (where applicable) creates synergies with other early areas of action. A basic description of the early areas for action is outlined below.

*Canada’s Strategy for a Safe and Nutritious Food Supply (CSSNFS)*

This strategy is currently under development and is intended to strengthen the Canadian food safety system through improved coordination of efforts by different levels of government, agreed priorities and approaches, and linkage of activities to public health outcomes. As well, it is intended to support industry efforts to produce safe and nutritious food, and enable consumers to make healthy choices and plan and prepare safe and nutritious meals for their families.

*National Animal Health and Welfare Policy*

In response to the ever-growing demands of consumers about their food and how it is produced, this policy will position the Canadian agriculture sector to better manage future animal disease outbreaks, including zoonotic diseases which threaten public health. Working closely with other jurisdictions, industry associations and other stakeholders, a key end-result of the policy will be agreed-upon decision criteria and policy tools for governments and industry to utilise in a coherent manner, which will allow the sector to remain competitive domestically and internationally.

*National Agriculture and Food Traceability System*

A National Agriculture and Food Traceability System could contribute to efforts to respond to growing consumer demands for improved information about the source of their food, how it is produced and handled. The benefits from such a system include: enhanced food safety and public health protection by providing information/ tools for more effective crisis planning and management; strengthened international confidence in the quality of the food produced in Canada because producers will be able to demonstrate quality of products to existing/emerging markets; and, industry profitability -- producers have access to information to assist in supply chain management/ business decision-making processes.
**Food Quality Policy**

Development of strategies that address *Food Quality Policy*: Strategies will articulate the appropriate role of F/P/T governments in the development of food quality policy, and will advance solutions to issues (including international market access) associated with quality recognition systems. Food quality policy also has the potential to facilitate the commercialization of food products that will not only maintain Canadians health, but that may also have the potential to improve health.

These initiatives are at various stages of development and government officials that are involved are closely connected to the NFPF. Thus the NFPF guiding principles and goals are helping to direct the work on these different initiatives by providing a broad socio-economic and food continuum “lens”.

It has been identified that these initiatives, which have potential horizontal implications for both health and agriculture, will require a cross-portfolio governance mechanism for implementation and success. It is foreseen that the NFPF would facilitate the development of such a cross-portfolio mechanism.

**B. NFPF Questions and Answers (Qs & As)**

**General: National Food Policy Framework**

**Q.1 Why do we need a food policy framework?**

While the current F/P/T decision making structure has been successful in addressing issues such as BSE and Avian Influenza, an improved structure will further support the convergence of health and agriculture issues. In an era of rising rates of chronic diseases associated with food, it is imperative that governments and departments open channels of communication and knowledge and effectively use resources to address emerging issues in the most effective and efficient manner. The development of a national decision-making mechanism will help coordinate initiatives and set common food and food-related priorities.

A National Food Policy Framework (NFPF) will provide an overarching umbrella so that F/P/T governments could set a common national vision, goals and objectives. The supporting governance structure would address the key issue of coordination of both existing and future food-related initiatives.

**Q.2 What is the National Food Policy Framework (NFPF)?**

The proposed NFPF will serve as the framework for the development of future food policies at the F/P/T levels, one that would bring together both health and agriculture aspects of food-related issues supporting the principles of sustainable development (social, economic and environment). It consists of a policy statement with a vision, guiding principles and goals, and will include a governance structure to ensure better coordination throughout the policy development and implementation cycle.
Q.3  What is the goal of the NFPF?

The overall goal of this policy framework is to provide a cross-portfolio governance mechanism to coordinate, prioritize and improve policy decisions related to Canada's food system. There are also five specific goals under the NFPF: to foster an innovative, sustainable and prosperous food sector, to improve the management of the food system, to strengthen food safety in Canada, to protect and promote the interests of consumers, and to strengthen the contribution of Canada's food system to healthy eating and improved access to healthy food.

Q.4  What will be the results/outcomes of the NFPF?

The NFPF will provide consistent and multifaceted guidance to policy dealing with emerging and existing food issues and would provide a forum for cross-portfolio priority setting. With new tools and governance in place the NFPF would lead to:

1. **Tangible health and safety benefits**

   A more effective and cross-portfolio approach to the food supply will help support culturally appropriate, affordable and accessible healthy food choices for Canadians, and can result in tangible health benefits including: potential reductions in the incidence of acute food-related illness (e.g. incidence of food-related acute disease and level of exposure to foodborne hazards); potential reductions in health disparities and improvements in the overall health of Canadians in part by addressing the risk factors that lead to chronic disease (e.g. through the development of measures to reduce the negative impact of certain parts of Canada's food supply on human health and by linking with ongoing health and nutrition promotion efforts on healthy eating, physical activity, healthy lifestyle, etc.); and, increased awareness and policy capacity to influence the social and economic determinants of health (as they relate to food) by adding these factors into other activities to ensure the safety and nutritional quality of Canada's food supply.

2. **A more competitive food sector**

   Approximately, 45% of Canada's agricultural production is exported, therefore, industry's ability to respond quickly to emerging issues and showcase the safety and quality of Canada’s food supply requires effective tools, applied nationally. A NFPF will support a more competitive food sector, through the development of nationally applied policies and programs.

3. **Food sector innovation**

   The public sector plays an important role in generating research that provides direct benefits to producers and the agri-food industry. A NFPF will support food sector innovation, by better coordinating public sector research efforts, for example, by facilitating the exchange of research information between...
departments and across jurisdictions and ultimately the timely transfer of knowledge to producers and the agri-food industry.

4. **Maintained consumer confidence**

Consistent consumer protection and sustained consumer confidence are essential components of a competitive food sector. Consumer confidence in the food supply is closely tied to both industry and governments’ ability to show that measures are in place to mitigate the risks to food safety and quality and to provide accurate and timely information to the Canadian public. The current food policy landscape is complex and involves a multitude of federal, provincial and industry players. A NFPF will coordinate the various aspects of food policy and its key players to develop consistent approaches to improving the overall efficiency of the food system and its application across Canada.

Q.5 **Who has been involved in the development of the NFPF?**

Officials from Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, as well as key representatives from the provinces and territories, including Quebec (Agriculture), British Columbia (Health and Agriculture), and Nova Scotia (Health) are involved in this initiative. An F/P/T working group has been established and meets on a regular basis to develop the NFPF. An Assistant Deputy Minister Steering Group has also been put in place to direct the work of this group.

Q.6 **What is the position of Ministers of Agriculture regarding the NFPF?**

The proposed framework was presented to F/P/T Agriculture Ministers at a meeting in April 2004 in September 2004 and then again in July 2005. They were supportive of the initiative and asked their officials to work with health and fisheries’ officials to further pursue the development of the NFPF.

Q.7 **What is the position of Health Ministers regarding the NFPF?**

The NFPF was presented to F/P/T Health Ministers on October 16, 2004. They were supportive of the initiative and asked their officials to work with their agriculture and fisheries colleagues on the development of a NFPF.

Q.8 **How will this framework link with other national initiatives, such as the Canada’s Strategy for a Safe and Nutritious Food Supply?**

A NFPF would serve as an overarching structure to support the development of national food-related strategies, initiatives, etc. such as Canada’s Strategy for a Safe and Nutritious Food Supply. The NFPF could also facilitate greater F/P/T collaboration between initiatives by providing a cross-portfolio mechanism for review, support and approval of initiatives, which have horizontal implications for both health and agriculture, by senior F/P/T officials with responsibilities for food.
Q.9 How will the NFPF link with the Smart Regulation Initiative?

The NFPF embraces the principles of Smart Regulations. The Smart Regulation Initiative highlights the need for a framework that will strengthen regulatory management, improve coordination and cooperation, and achieve results in thematic areas and sectors. The NFPF would provide a structure under which common, long-term strategic goals would be developed.

Q.10 How will the NFPF link with Health Goals for Canada?

The NFPF is consistent with the aspirational, overarching health goal of having every person as healthy as he or she can be. The framework’s focus on sustainability and a multidimensional approach helps facilitate the goal of having the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat and the places we work and play be safe and healthy – now and for generations to come.

Q.11 Have stakeholders been consulted in the development of the NFPF? If so, what is their response?

The concept of a national, coordinated approach to food policy has been presented to key stakeholders informally in several different venues, including at a Deputy Minister-CEO meeting on March 8, 2005 and a health stakeholders forum on February 1, 2005. The response has been supportive of better collaboration across governments. As the NFPF is still under development, we plan to consult more extensively with stakeholders as the project evolves.

Q.12 What are the next steps in the development of the NFPF?

F/P/T agriculture, health and fisheries officials will continue to work with their partners towards the development of a NFPF. The next steps will include the development of a F/P/T food governance structure as well as, a draft F/P/T policy statement. An update will be presented to F/P/T Ministers of Agriculture and to F/P/T Health Ministers in 2006.