

Canadian Food System INSIGHTS

SUSTAINABILITY

We all want to make safe and informed decisions about the food we eat, but what information is credible? This report uses academic, government and industry research to provide a breakdown of complex information, as well as resources, if you wish to dive into additional research. It's Good, Canada's goal is to enable Canadians to make their own choices and feel confident about the food on their plates.

IMPORTANT FACTS:

1. Sustainability is a complex topic that encompasses three different pillars - environment, economy, and society. Simply - the word sustainability means something different to everyone.
2. There is no end-point for sustainable production practices - sustainability is a moving target and continuous improvement is an expectation.
3. Canadian agricultural products are grown and raised using up to date, responsible and sustainable production practices.
4. Companies, organizations and farms share their stories to improve environmental, social, and economic outcomes to build trust in the Canadian agriculture and agri-food sector. Activities such as sustainability certifications (i.e. CRSB, VB+, ProAction, etc.), implementing an Environmental Farm Plan Action Plan, and continuous learning are all ways agri-business' are communication and contributing to a sustainable and resilient food system for Canada.

Let's Talk Sustainability

There are more than 100 definitions of 'sustainability'.⁴ The most widely cited definition comes from the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) report, "Our Common Future". Also known as the Brundtland definition, the WCED report defines sustainability or sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Inspired by the Brundtland report, the 'triple bottom line' approach to sustainability was coined by John Elkington.¹ That is, environment, economy, and society (also known as the three pillars of sustainability).

Despite being a vast topic with many meanings and considerations, it is important to understand the ways agriculture contributes to each of these three pillars of sustainability. When working in sustainability, no action is relevant for just one of the three pillars, in fact, most sustainable production practices have benefits for all three pillars. There is increasing pressure for businesses, including farms and food and beverage producers, to perform against these three pillars.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Canadian agriculture and agri-food products are known to be the most safe, sustainable, and affordable globally. From hog producers to floral greenhouse growers and everything in between, the Canadian food system is implementing a range of practices to improve sustainable outcomes. Canada's agriculture sector has taken a leadership role in enhancing sustainable agricultural practices. This leadership is reflected by the many current initiatives across the sector to enhance environmental, social and economic outcomes on Canadian food businesses. As international markets continue to implement sustainable sourcing requirements, the Canadian food system must be equipped to respond to these demands which come in the form of all three pillars of sustainability.

Sustainability & SOCIETY

Canadian producers contribute to both Canada's food system and the global markets, supplying high quality food products for a growing population. Practices such as food safety, employment, labour practices, as well as animal health and welfare, are all ways that company's or organization's contributions to society may be assessed.

Sustainability & THE ENVIRONMENT

The viability of business' is tied to the well-being of the environment, and vice versa. Many producers contribute to positive environmental outcomes through activities such as nutrient management planning, carbon sequestration, habitat and biodiversity conservation, water management, integrated pest management, decreased carbon footprint, and soil health. Canadians continue to assess and demand business contribution and positive impacts on environmental sustainability.

Sustainability & THE ECONOMY

No matter where you are, or what you do - your business contributes to the local economy. Whether you employ people directly, purchase services from other employers, or any combination of the two, your business supports jobs in the community and beyond. Economic sustainability can be assessed by the supply chain in terms of income diversification, financial planning, supply chain traceability, and business conduct.



References:

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