



Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada

Agriculture et
Agroalimentaire Canada

2018-2019 Strategic Issues Focus Groups of Producers (Wave VI)

Qualitative Research Report

Prepared for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Supplier Name: Earnscliffe Strategy Group

Contract Number: 01B68-190331/001/CY

Contract Value: \$244,259.77 (including HST)

Contract Award Date: August 13, 2018

Date of Delivery: March 4, 2019

Registration Number: POR 031-18

For more information on this report, please contact Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada at: aafc.por-rop.aac@canada.ca

Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.

Canada 

2018-2019 Strategic Issues Focus Groups of Producers (Wave VI)

Qualitative Research Report

Prepared for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Supplier name: **Earncliffe Strategy Group**

Date: March 2019

This public opinion research report presents the results of focus groups conducted by Earncliffe Strategy Group on behalf of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. The research was conducted in February 2019.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : **Groupes de discussion 2018-2019 sur les enjeux stratégiques des producteurs (Vague VI) - Rapport de recherche qualitative**

This publication may be reproduced for non-commercial purposes only. Prior written permission must be obtained from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. For more information on this report, please contact Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada at: aafc.por-rop.aac@canada.ca

Agriculture & Agri-food Canada

1341 Baseline Road

Ottawa Ontario K1A 0C5

Catalogue Number:

A22-623/2-2019E-PDF

International Standard Book Number (ISBN):

978-0-660-30866-1

AAFC Number:

12905E

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2019

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 1

Introduction 4

Detailed Findings 5

 Views on Trade Agreements..... 6

 Views on Federal Government Programs and Services 8

 Public Trust..... 11

 Environmental Sustainability..... 12

 Communication..... 13

Conclusions and Recommendations..... 15

Appendix A: Discussion guide..... 18

Appendix B: Recruitment Screener..... 24

Executive Summary

Earnscliffe Strategy Group (Earnscliffe) is pleased to present this report to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) summarizing the results of the qualitative phase of the Strategic Issues research with food producers.

AAFC regularly conducts public opinion research with producers to track key data points over time and to provide insight on new and evolving areas of interest related to farming and agriculture. AAFC contracted Earnscliffe in 2018 to conduct the sixth wave of the department's survey of producers and the second iteration of focus groups with producers. This report outlines solely the qualitative research process and findings. The quantitative phase is presented under a separate cover.

The findings of this research will be used to monitor any changes in the public opinion environment among producers, and to gather data on a variety of new areas of interest for AAFC. More specifically, the focus groups were used to validate the findings of the quantitative survey, probe key themes that emerged from the data and seek reasons or clarification about survey responses. The total cost to conduct this research was \$244,259.77 including HST.

The research included a series of ten in-person focus groups across five locations – Chatham, ON (February 4); Charlottetown, PEI (February 6); Winkler, MB (February 6); Saint-Jérôme, QC (February 7); and, Lethbridge, AB (February 7). The audience for the groups was Canadian producers (18+) with a mix of different operation sizes, products farmed, and, gender (to the extent possible). In each location, the focus groups began at 3:00 pm and 5:30pm. The sessions were approximately two hours in length. The qualitative research also included two (2) online sessions with official language minority community (OLMC) residents (February 5). The first online session was conducted in English with producers residing in Quebec; the second with French-speaking producers residing outside Quebec. The online sessions were also two hours in length.

It is important to note that qualitative research is a form of scientific, social, policy and public opinion research. Focus group research is not designed to help a group reach a consensus or to make decisions, but rather to elicit the full range of ideas, attitudes, experiences and opinions of a selected sample of participants on a defined topic. Because of the small numbers involved the participants cannot be expected to be thoroughly representative in a statistical sense of the larger population from which they are drawn and findings cannot reliably be generalized beyond their number.

The key findings from the research are presented below.

- **Producers, particularly those with larger operations, supported diversifying trade**, particularly in the current context as they perceive the United States (U.S.) market to be more volatile.
 - Producers with smaller farms felt less strongly because they tend to focus on local markets and find international trade does not affect them as much.
- **Trade agreements were acknowledged as an important and valuable aspect of growth for the sector, but participants often raised concerns about the details of the trade agreements that the Government of Canada has recently negotiated.** Many feared the potential losses from these agreements more than they looked forward to any gains.
 - This tension was evident when it came to discussion of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA). Most producers were familiar with the agreement, but opinion differed depending on the type of farm operation they own. Dairy producers were outright dissatisfied with the agreement, while others were cautiously optimistic and relieved that a deal had been struck.
 - Producers were familiar with the broad strokes of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) but lacked specific knowledge. As with CUSMA, the few producers who felt they were more familiar with these agreements, typically dairy, hog and beef producers, felt that dairy producers had lost something.
- Many producers indicated that they were concerned with the quality of products being imported into Canada. A number spoke about their perception that imported products did not require the same level of certification as products produced in Canada, which allows foreign products to undercut domestic producers' prices.
- When asked about federal government programs and services in support of the agricultural sector, awareness was somewhat limited although a few programs were raised spontaneously in most groups: crop insurance, AgriInvest and AgriStability.
- **Most viewed government programs in general as tedious, requiring a lot of work to complete the paperwork, training, etc. without any guarantee of it paying off.**
 - Some were unhappy with how funds were allocated through different programs (particularly dairy producers).
 - Even those who successfully applied also described problems related to delays in obtaining funds, both in terms of cash flow and having the revenue count in a subsequent year when crops were performing well, resulting in adverse tax implications (this was particularly the case for AgriStability).

- Despite the challenges they have faced, most felt that it was important for the federal government to continue to provide support to those working in the agricultural sector.
- **Very few producers volunteered the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (the Partnership)**, although, there were a number of spontaneous mentions of the former programs, Growing Forward and Growing Forward 2.
 - When provided with a brief description of the Partnership, most reacted with skepticism. This was often linked to past experience with government programs (not always federal government programs) and a sense that this was simply a political move (rebranding an existing program). Despite their skepticism, most indicated that they would look into the program.
- **There was a virtually unanimous sense that public trust in the products and practices of Canadian producers is declining and that this decline is problematic and unwarranted.** Producers argued that if the public had a better understanding about farming practices and quality of products, trust would increase.
- While most felt they wanted to personally help increase public trust, many, particularly larger operations, pointed out that they did not have much direct contact with the public or retailers.
- The general sense was that everyone, including producers, producer groups, retailers, scientists, and governments (including the Government of Canada), has a role to play in maintaining the public's trust in Canadian agriculture.
- **Most producers saw themselves as stewards of the land and pointed out that it is beneficial to them to protect the environment, as their livelihood depends on its future sustainability.**
 - Many have implemented new practices and made investments in new technology to be more efficient with water and energy, to protect the soil, and to reduce waste, etc.
- Producers seemed to rely on more traditional forms of communication, namely word of mouth/peer-to-peer discussions. There was also a fairly heavy reliance (and trust) in producer groups for information that is relevant and tailored to their businesses.
 - For this reason, email newsletters seemed to be an effective way to communicate with them. A number mentioned receiving regular email updates from their producer associations, for example. That said, no one had heard of Agri-Info.
 - Few use social media, and those who do tend to be younger producers with smaller operations who have more direct public contact.

Research Firm:

Earnscliffe Strategy Group Inc. (Earnscliffe)

Contract Number: 01B68-190331/001/CY

Contract award date: August 13, 2018

I hereby certify as a Representative of Earnscliffe Strategy Group that the final deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Anderson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Doug Anderson
Principal, Earnscliffe

Date: March 4, 2019

Introduction

Earnscliffe Strategy Group (Earnscliffe) is pleased to present this report to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) summarizing the results of the qualitative phase of the Strategic Issues research with food producers.

AAFC regularly conducts public opinion research with producers to track key data points over time and to provide insight on new and evolving areas of interest related to farming and agriculture. AAFC contracted Earnscliffe in 2018 to conduct the sixth wave of the department's survey of producers and the second iteration of focus groups with producers. Feedback from the research will provide valuable insight to AAFC on the views of producers on agricultural issues, policies and priorities for the sector. This insight will be used by AAFC in the development of policies, programs and initiatives, to improve communications and to better serve clients.

The specific objectives of the research include, but are not limited to exploring producers' opinions about the following topics:

- Optimism in the sector, jobs and growth;
- Agricultural programming and the roles of governments and the agricultural industries;
- Perceptions of public trust in the sector;
- Emergency planning; and,
- Innovation.

The research included a series of ten in-person focus groups across five locations – Chatham, ON (February 4); Charlottetown, PEI (February 6); Winkler, MB (February 6); Saint-Jérôme, QC (February 7); and, Lethbridge, AB (February 7). The audience for the groups was Canadian producers (18+) with a mix of different operation sizes, products farmed, and, gender (to the extent possible). The groups in Saint-Jérôme were conducted in French. The qualitative research also included two (2) online sessions with official language minority community (OLMC) residents (February 5). The first online session was conducted in English with producers residing in Quebec; the second with French-speaking producers residing outside Quebec. Please refer to the Recruitment Screener in Appendix B of this report for all relevant screening and qualifications criteria.

In each in-person location, the began at 3:00 pm and 5:30 pm. Focus group participants in the in-person groups were given an honorarium of \$300 as a token of appreciation for their time. Participants in the online sessions received \$250. All of the sessions were approximately two hours in length.

It is important to note that qualitative research is a form of scientific, social, policy and public opinion research. Focus group research is not designed to help a group reach a consensus or to make decisions, but rather to elicit the full range of ideas, attitudes, experiences and opinions of a selected sample of participants on a defined topic. Because of the small numbers involved the participants cannot be expected to be thoroughly representative in a statistical sense of the larger population from which they are drawn and findings cannot reliably be generalized beyond their number.

Detailed Findings

The detailed findings of this qualitative report are divided into five sections based upon the sections laid out in the moderator's guide. The first explores views on trade agreements; the second is a section on the Canadian Agricultural Partnership and programs and services generally; the third investigates opinions on public trust; the fourth section is on environmental sustainability; and the fifth section deals with communications issues.

Except where specifically identified, the findings represent the combined results across the various audiences and for both English and French sessions.

Views on Trade Agreements

Focus groups began with a discussion on the importance of trade for the agricultural sector as well as the level of awareness and impressions of three specific trade agreements Canada has recently negotiated.

For most, export markets were recognized as vital to the agricultural sector in general and particularly for those with larger operations; vital to the value and viability of their operation. Producers with smaller operations generally felt that trade agreements did not impact them significantly, so for them, they could appreciate that the sector depends on trade, but many of these small producers pointed out they tend to focus on local markets and therefore export markets bear little relevance to the success of their own operations.

“We generally need extra market capacity. Access is so important.” – Charlottetown

Diversifying markets was seen as desirable at any time, but many pointed out it was particularly important given the sudden volatility regarding the U.S. market. Participants defined the volatility in terms of the unpredictable and unusual behaviour of the current President, rather than volatility such as the more natural fluctuations in market prices or demand. This recent behaviour has changed the context to such a degree that a number of participants expressed heightened or new concern over the dependence upon the U.S. export market, even as many still recognized it as the most important export market.

Although trade agreements were generally felt to be an important and potentially valuable aspect of growth for the sector, talking about each of the specific agreements revealed a tendency in each case to feel more fear of losses than hope for new opportunities. There was a sense among some that farming is often the bargaining chip that is traded in order to make gains for other economic sectors. Further, within the agricultural sector, some types of agricultural products were identified as gaining while others were identified as losing in any particular agreement. For example, many felt that dairy producers were somewhat sacrificed in recent trade agreements. Although opinion was mixed on whether this was appropriate or not, there was nevertheless recognition that the impact for some producers was likely to be negative even as it was positive for others.

This was most evident with respect to the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA). Most producers across the country were aware of the agreement. Impressions of the agreement ranged widely and were often product-specific and the level of positivity toward it was dependent upon the products farmed. Dairy producers were outright dissatisfied with the agreement, while some – particularly those with smaller operations – had neutral opinions and others were cautiously optimistic and relieved that a deal had been struck.

“The ink isn’t dry. Dairy keeps getting hit.” – Chatham

Although most producers were aware of both the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), they had limited knowledge of specifics. As with CUSMA, the few producers who felt they were more familiar with these agreements, typically dairy, hog and beef producers, felt that dairy producers had lost something.

With respect to CETA, most were of the view that more stringent regulatory requirements in Europe seemed to put Canadian products at a disadvantage. In fact, the pervasive view was that European imports have an easier time entering the Canadian market than Canadian products entering the European market. Producers also described the necessary certifications for products to be able to be shipped to European markets as onerous especially given there was no premium attached to the certification of these products. As a result, although some felt that in theory CETA represented opportunity for Canadian grain, it was often simultaneously coupled with a specific barrier or resistance that would get in the way of realizing that opportunity.

Relating to the CPTPP, China was often specifically identified on an unprompted basis as having more realistic potential for Canadian producers. Producers' reasoning seemed to have less to do with the size of the market than it did with the sense that the Chinese market was less stringent or restrictive due to their high-volume needs. For producers who mentioned products that would benefit from the CPTPP, grains, soy, beef and pork were generally the ones that came up. Unlike CETA and CUSMA, there was less sense that the CPTPP meant sacrifice of any specific Canadian agricultural sector.

Many producers indicated that they were concerned with the quality of products being imported into Canada. A number spoke about their perception that imported products did not require the same level of certification that products produced in Canada. They also explained that imported products put them at a price disadvantage, as similar products can be produced at lower price points in countries with more lax regulations.

“The problem with international trade is that we have lax controls in Canada around what we're importing but we have to adhere to higher standards on what we produce which has a big impact on Canadian agriculture.” – Chatham

When it comes to learning about trade agreements, producers would like targeted information from the government that explains how an agreement will affect their type of operation – they described not having time to parse through the dense text of an agreement themselves. The sense was that although information might be out there, it was hard to access and interpret. Producers described relying primarily on media, trade publications and producer groups to become informed on the relevance and impact of trade agreements. Some described hearing about them from producer groups to which they do not belong, but who have communicated their views on the agreements, with the Dairy Farmers of Canada as the one most commonly mentioned.

When thinking about what they would like in terms of communications on trade agreements, in addition to user-targeted, understandable summaries, some suggested that receiving updates during the course of negotiations would be beneficial and help them understand how things were progressing and what they should expect. In fact, some producers felt that producers should be more directly consulted to inform the negotiations.

Views on Federal Government Programs and Services

Discussions investigated awareness, usage and impressions of federal government programs and services.

When asked about federal government programs and services in support of the agricultural sector, top-of-mind recall, and awareness was often limited. In many groups, the immediate reaction was ponderous until someone mentioned crop insurance which was often the first program recalled. Typically, this tended to stimulate broad recall, suggesting that while awareness of crop insurance was nearly universal, it was not necessarily strongly branded in producers' minds as being a federal government program. In addition to crop insurance, two other programs were raised spontaneously in most groups: AgriInvest and AgriStability.

“Some programs are working all right; some aren't.” – Charlottetown

Impressions of AgriInvest were generally positive. Most producers, outside of Quebec, currently participate in the program and seemed to encourage those less familiar to look into it. It was regarded as an effective, if modest, “rainy day” savings program.

“It's free money. It might not be much, but you might as well get it.” – Lethbridge

Producers described the process for participating in AgriInvest as relatively easy and the ability to access funds was not seen to be particularly difficult or onerous. The modesty of the program was the only element that was discussed with any sort of criticism and that was basically constructive. Some, particularly larger producers, felt the maximum amount of money involved was not terribly meaningful if one was suffering significant loss. Nevertheless, they described following their accountant's advice and not pass up the offer to accept whatever available government funding was available to them.

Impressions of AgriStability, on the other hand, were not terribly positive. Many felt that, as with other programs, small operations would not be able to benefit. Some were also unhappy with program application criteria and process. There were two criticisms of the program that were mentioned in multiple groups:

- Producers who take steps to protect against catastrophic failure by diversifying their operations do not benefit from the program. As a result, the program was seen as serving only those who did not take actions to mitigate risks and effectively penalizes those who are behaving more prudently by not providing them with compensation when some fraction of their operation has an exceptionally bad year; and,
- The delayed payment of compensation has negative consequences. Some producers pointed out that payments for a bad year were logically only going to be determined, and therefore received, in a subsequent year. However, producers said the compensation is treated as revenue of the subsequent (more successful) year rather than as revenue of the low-income year. As a result, it is taxed at a higher rate than it would have been had the revenue been earned during the bad year.
- Participants felt the net effect was that the compensation provided is taxed more than is sensible and means the compensation does not make producers as whole as the program intends.

Concerning programs more generally, most described the process as tedious, requiring a lot of work to complete the paperwork, training, etc. Some were unhappy with how funds were allocated through different programs (particularly dairy producers). Those who successfully applied described similar issues as reported above with respect to AgriStability. There was also confusion from some about which programs were federal or provincial which often impacted negatively on views of federal programs, particularly in Saint-Jérôme.

“There is a lot of red tape with government programs. I had to attend two days of seminars, fill out a bunch of forms, etc. It’s daunting.” – Chatham

“We spend a lot of time filling out applications and forms – it’s a full-time job. Then the application comes back declined; they need more information and at the end of the day, no money coming my way.” – Chatham

Very few producers voluntarily named the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (the Partnership), although, there were a number of spontaneous mentions of its predecessor policy frameworks, Growing Forward and Growing Forward 2. When prompted, it was clear that most were at least aware of the Growing Forward programs.

When provided with a brief description of the Partnership, most reacted with a certain level of skepticism. This was often linked to past experience with government programs, and not always federal government programs; and, a sense that this was simply a political move (rebranding an existing program). Many were also skeptical that after covering costs to administer the program, there would be many funds available to producers. Some of those with experience with the Growing Forward programs felt that past frustrations with labour-intensive application processes and insufficient funding would be carried through to the new Partnership.

Even with the expressed skepticism and the concerns with previous iterations, many, including some of those who had been frustrated with their experiences with the Growing Forward programs, indicated they would look into the Partnership. Those with experience felt better equipped to participate in the Partnership programs and would enter it with more realistic expectations.

Producers did offer a few suggestions to make such Partnership programs more accessible to them:

- Make qualifications and training consistent from one iteration of the program to the next. Do not make them re-take courses that are similar to those they have already completed;
- Involve more producers in the development of each program;
- Provide clearer explanation of the program including if and how they might qualify;
- Ensure more flexibility with the funding they receive; and,
- Shorten approval timelines.

After discussions about the Partnership, participants were asked how familiar they were with the AAFC and its programs and services. Across many of the groups, there were participants who, despite having just had a conversation about programs run by, or in partnership with, the federal government, asked who AAFC was. Upon being told the full name of the department, it was clear these participants were familiar with the department, but not the acronym AAFC. Beyond the programs described above (crop insurance, AgriInvest, AgriStability, the Partnership framework), some of which were not necessarily regarded as federal government programs per se, there were no other programs mentioned.

Despite the limited awareness of and challenging experiences dealing with government programs and services, most felt that it was important for the federal government to continue to provide support to those working in the agricultural sector.

Public Trust

There was a virtually unanimous sense that public trust in the products and practices of Canadian agricultural producers has been decreasing and that this decline is problematic. Producers described various impacts of a declining public trust including undue criticism of their practices, which in turn, causes unwarranted pressure to improve them, and unfair treatment of their products, particularly in foreign markets.

Most tended to feel that this declining trust was undeserved, as it was a result of special interest groups spreading misinformation. In most sessions, producers expressed confidence that if the public knew the truth of how their operations were managed, the public would be supportive of them. The overall view was clearly that if the public had a better understanding about farming practices, trust would increase.

"We produce some of the safest food and yet people are most afraid of it. I blame the internet. Everyone is an expert today." – Chatham

This applied to many aspects of farming, including animal husbandry, environmental sustainability, use of chemicals and horticultural practices. For example, dairy producers wondered whether the public's view might be improved if they knew more about their animal welfare measures, and changes they had made like ventilation, so that their animals live longer and more comfortably.

Feelings about the impact of declining public trust went beyond merely being about business management. For many producers, particularly those in the West, the situation triggered heightened emotions. A few sources of misinformation were mentioned by producers, but one stood out as a particular source of irritation: the A&W campaign touting that their products were free of growth hormones and antibiotics. Those who cited it pointed to it as an example of an organization putting forward some information that makes people unnecessarily suspicious of food produced by Canadian producers. Documentaries such as Food Inc. and campaigns by People for the Ethical Treatment for Animals (PETA) were named by participants as sources of similarly problematic misinformation.

"It's amazing what people will believe." – Winkler

"Lack of understanding leads to mistrust." – Charlottetown

In addition to the misinformation and attacks from outside the agricultural sector, some producers pointed out that public trust may be undermined by the way some producers position their products or imply the behaviours of other producers are less than ideal. For example, some suggested that those producing organic products and those producing non-organic products could be more collaborative rather than unnecessarily confrontational with each other.

While most felt they wanted to personally help increase public trust, many, particularly those with larger operations, pointed out that they did not have much direct contact with the public or retailers. A number of producers with smaller operations seemed to have more direct engagement with the public and were using in-person visits (i.e., “farm days”) to have members of the public visit their farms and/or by communicating with them directly via social media. However, one producer in Lethbridge indicated having actively campaigned for the industry online.

The consistent opinion expressed throughout all groups was that everyone, including producers, producer groups, retailers, scientists, and governments (including the Government of Canada), has a role to play in maintaining the public’s trust in Canadian agriculture.

“I think we need to make a concerted effort to educate the public. It’s up to all of the players to do that.” – Chatham

When asked how the federal government can best help restore public trust, producers typically tended to say they want the Government of Canada to be a champion for the sector, educating the public on the fact that Canadian producers, regardless of their type of farm, are responsible and ethical producers who provide Canadians and the rest of the world with a safe and high-quality product. Some specifically requested that the federal government do what it can to refute or combat the specific misinformation that erodes trust as soon as it is presented. Further, a few particularly pointed out that there may be credibility advantages to have the Government of Canada speak to these facts, as it has less of a vested interest than the producers themselves or their respective producer group.

“Someone needs to champion us and set the record straight”- Winkler

Environmental Sustainability

Throughout the groups, it was clear that producers tend to see themselves as stewards of the land. Participants frequently described two main pieces of evidence to support that self-perception.

First, they pointed out that people who seek a career working in agriculture tend to be naturally mindful of the land and being careful to do everything they can to protect the environment is part of that mindset.

Second, they pointed out that for the owners of agricultural operations, environmental sustainability is equivalent to operational sustainability. They described the land as their livelihood – protecting it is protecting their own future. As a result, many bristled while pointing out the irony of public suspicion of producers’ activities; amplified by a sense that the public is ignorant to the environmental degradation of their own behaviour on producers’ lands.

“What the public doesn't understand is that animal and plant well-being is very important to us. If an animal is mistreated, it affects our business. If a plant isn't healthy, it dies. It's bad for business.” – Saint-Jérôme

As the focus group discussions moved to the topic of what producers have done in terms of environmental sustainability, some producers pointed out that most things they do to improve their operations are, by nature, improving their operation's environmental sustainability. A few offered that it felt condescending or perhaps ignorant when the Government of Canada communicates to producers that they should consider making some changes for the sake of the environment.

Environmental sustainability actions producers have undertaken included the introduction of new practices and investments in new technology to be more efficient with water and energy, to protect the soil, and to reduce waste. The kinds of initiatives mentioned included:

- Soil sampling to determine where fertilizers and other products are actually needed, rather than covering the whole field;
- Planting cover crops;
- Using GPS in a variety of ways to reduce the amount of chemicals or energy used; and,
- Installing water-efficient irrigation systems.

In terms of motivation, producers tended to describe it being a combination of ensuring a return on their investment and improving the environmental sustainability of their operations and preservation of the environment for future generations. Some pointed out that the investment in improved sustainability does not necessarily have to be profitable, but it has to at least break even. These producers pointed out the fact that an operator willing to go to the trouble of making such an improvement even if there is no significant payoff was clearly someone who places importance on environmental issues.

“We're doing it for ourselves but also to preserve the environment for future generations.” - Chatham

“We do it to secure trust. It's due diligence. Everybody wants to do the right thing. From an economics perspective, we do what's reasonable.” English-speaking in Quebec

Communication

In terms of communications, producers indicated relying on a variety of sources for information relating to their sector. Word of mouth in peer-to-peer discussions such as at conferences or meetings was nearly universally described as a primary source of communications. There was also a fairly heavy reliance (and trust) in producer associations for information that is relevant and tailored to their businesses.

Many participants mentioned relying on American sources of both agricultural news and emerging research rather than, or in addition to, Canadian sources. Among the sources mentioned were American Land Grant Universities such as: Cornell and the University of Minnesota and conferences in the U.S. One participant mentioned hearing about research done at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. Certain radio broadcasts/podcasts such as the U.S. Farm Report, RealAg as well as a variety of agricultural blogs were also sporadically mentioned as specific sources of information relevant to their operation.

Of all governments, producers seemed to have the weakest connection with the federal government, and some had the sense that AAFC was particularly bad at understanding farming. For some, it seemed to be about whether agriculture was enough of a priority (compared to natural resources, manufacturing, etc.). For others it appeared to be a sense that federal AAFC employees could not possibly know enough about life at the front lines of farming and actual farming practices to have valuable input or create valuable policies.

Nevertheless, when discussing the opportunity to hear more from the federal government, there was curiosity and appetite for learning what AAFC scientists are working on and what science learnings they have in order to determine whether any may be useful to their operations. Among the topics they may be more interested in hearing from the Government of Canada were:

- Information about markets (domestic and international);
- Explanation of trade agreement implications for each type of producer and how to take advantage of new international market opportunities;
- Explanation of how policies such as carbon tax will impact/affect producers;
- Assistance with improving farm safety;
- Sharing science and research and development information; and,
- Explanation of how differences in Canadian regulations are advantageous.

“Explain what you’re doing. Introduce experts who are credible.” - Lethbridge

“Help me understand how I’m not going to lose money on the carbon tax and tell me how it’s going to make a difference.” - Winkler

Ideally, information they would like to hear from the government would be more tailored to their own interests, region and farm. By default and habit, producers said they tend to prefer to hear from people who are actually active in the sector – such as other producers – to find out what they are doing and how their experiences have turned out, rather than hear whatever the government thinks producers should know. Agricultural science research was also of interest, but some pointed out that they would like to know how their research was funded.

When specifically asked, no one was familiar with Agri-info, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's (AAFC's) now bi-monthly newsletter, although, many expressed interest. Asked how they would like to be informed about AAFC resources, email newsletters were often described as an effective way to communicate with them. A number mentioned receiving regular email updates from their producer associations.

Most described relying on more traditional forms of communication such as radio and print. Producers' use of more current digital modes of communication was very limited. For example, very few, if any, producers indicated they listen to podcasts or follow blogs. That said, there were a few blogs that were mentioned by some producers, including: High Heels and Canola Fields, The Farm Babe and Wheat Pete.

Among modern forms of communication, use of social media was a little more common. It tended to be more widely used by younger producers and those with smaller operations who have or need more direct contact with the public. Facebook and Instagram seemed to be the more popular social media platforms. Some did mention they follow other producers on social media and get ideas from them.

Probing the idea of a podcast found mixed reactions to a certain extent based on their use of podcasts (which was fairly limited). Those who use podcasts reacted more encouragingly than those who do not, but in either case, producers expressed some skepticism that AAFC could produce a podcast that would be valuable. However, discussions suggested that if AAFC could make a podcast that contained the kind of information listed above, presented in a way that they could relate to, there could be potential for it to be well-received.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based upon these focus groups, it would appear producers' relationship with AAFC, as described by producers themselves, is fairly limited and not highly valued. Direct communication between AAFC and producers certainly has the potential to strengthen the relationship and raise the level of familiarity with, and appreciation for, the work of AAFC. However, producers were skeptical that AAFC has much to communicate that producers would find beneficial. Nonetheless, producers offered advice on how to more effectively connect with them.

Recommendation: Providing literature has some potential to raise awareness of programs, but the methods that producers say they value most are those that involve more interaction — speaking directly with them (formally or informally) at producer meetings, conferences, etc. Developing a podcast has the potential to connect with some producers, as well as enabling producers to request tailor content customized to their needs and interests.

Trade agreements were certainly an area where there was appetite for more information and the Government of Canada was recognized as having uniquely valuable insight, even if there was not much confidence that the federal government could explain things simply. Trade was seen as vital and agreements were seen as necessary but fears of downsides often outweighed the sense of opportunity. CUSMA was often seen as a defensive deal – perhaps not a good deal, but better than no deal.

Recommendation: Producers indicated that AAFC could be uniquely suited to provide a particularly valuable understanding of how each of the three agreements impacted or enable producers.

In addition to the specific interest in trade agreements, producers offered a variety of topics of concern to them on which AAFC may be particularly well-suited to communicating.

Recommendation: Producers indicated interest in learning about developments in agricultural science and emerging practices – whether emanating from AAFC or elsewhere – market news, as well as learning more about federal benefits and programs designed for producers.

Programs, such as those under the Partnership, seem to get promoted to producers by others (accountants, retailers, provincial governments, peers) more than by AAFC. That may not be problematic since the information does seem to propagate, but it was still the case that constructive criticism was offered of this program.

Recommendation: Streamlining the application process and setting realistic expectations would help leave producers with more consistently positive experiences.

Producers were only somewhat aware of AAFC programs and services. Crop insurance and AgriInvest were both widely used and appreciated to at least some degree.

Producers indicated feeling these programs provide an important, if modest, level of protection against market or production volatility and tend to feel they understand how to take advantage of the programs and that these programs are reliable. Conversely, AgriStability does not enjoy the same impressions. AgriStability was consistently criticized based upon its complexity, requirements and the sense that it excludes deserving producers. It was described as particularly problematic for producers with diverse operations. Those producers who diversified their operations did so specifically to reduce their financial vulnerability – to avoid the kind of financial crisis (caused by having a particularly bad year) that AgriStability was designed to address. However, producers who prudently diversified their operations, and thus limited both their degree of risk and the degree of crisis they would face if any single line of their operation had a particularly bad year, describe applying for AgriStability as pointless.

Recommendation: Producers would prefer that aspect be rectified as well as issues of timing of payments and the tax implications of being paid in a subsequent, better performing year.

Environmental sustainability was considered equivalent to operation sustainability. The notion that producers should now start to consider behaving in a more environmentally sustainable manner causes some to react negatively at the inherent assumption that this was not what they have always done and will always do. There was certainly an emotional factor driving them to protect the environment, but there was also a rational factor. Technologies or practices that assist with soil health, water conservation, fuel efficiency, reduced need/cost of farming inputs such as chemicals and medicines, etc., were all already recognized as fundamental to ensuring the long-term sustainability of a business that is historically volatile and low-margin. As with any business owner, they both want to reap short-term benefits and ensure long-term returns in both productivity and asset value. Younger producers tended to see more of a potential for the return on investment in making large investments, but older producers expressed greater concern over financing investments that would not pay off before their retirement. A key variable in these decisions was whether the asset value would be more guaranteed or increased by making the investment. There was also some concern expressed about the price of the asset they will need to sell in order to liquidate and realize the value for post-retirement living.

All of this related directly to decisions over making the kinds of investments discussed in the focus groups as “environmental sustainability.” In terms of recommendations on dialog with producers on the topic of environmental sustainability, it may be more helpful to avoid the implication that producers need to become more environmentally conscious and instead focus on enabling more investment in the kinds of things producers already want to do that serve the dual purpose of promoting business efficiency, profit and sustainability, and environmental sustainability. Further, if programs require more investment than the long-term payoff can justify, it will be difficult for low-margin, volatile businesses – which is how producers tend to regard their businesses – to justify the sacrifice.

Recommendation: AAFC sharing information that is more compelling about the business impact or providing programs that ensure producers are guaranteed to at least be covered for any net loss due to making the investment, have potential to stimulate additional behaviours that align with public policy objectives.

Appendix A: Discussion guide

Introduction

Time: 10 minutes

Total time: 10 minutes

Moderator introduces herself/himself and her/his role: role of moderator is to ask questions, make sure everyone has a chance to express themselves, keep track of the time, be objective/no special interest.

- Moderator works for Earnscliffe Strategy Group, an independent marketing research firm
- Role of participants: speak openly and frankly when expressing opinions, remember that there are no right or wrong answers and no need to agree with each other
- Results are confidential and reported all together/individuals are not identified/participation is voluntary
- The length of the session (2 hours)
- The presence of any observers, their role and purpose, and the means of observation (presence in room; colleagues listening in remotely)
- The presence and purpose of any recording being made of the session (audio and video taping of the discussion)
- Turn off cell phones for the duration of the discussion
- As mentioned when we invited you to participate in this discussion group, we are conducting focus groups on behalf of the Government of Canada. These groups are being conducted for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) to explore important issues facing the farm sector across Canada. This research will help AAFC to make decisions regarding programs and services and to help inform public policy.

[Moderator will go around the table and ask participants to introduce themselves].

- **Introduction of participants:** To get started, please give your first name, where you are from and a little about your operation (i.e., type of products, size of operation, etc.).
 - What are you hoping to get out of this (discussion today)?

Views on trade agreements and strategic partnerships

Time =20 minutes

Total time=30 minutes

- How important, if at all, do you feel finding new trade opportunities in different markets is for the growth of the Canadian agricultural sector? Why do you say that?
- [Hands up] By a show of hands, how many of you are familiar with the new Canada, United States, Mexico Agreement (otherwise known as CUSMA or USMCA)?
- [Hands up] What about The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (otherwise known as CETA) with the European Union?
- [Hands up] What about The Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (otherwise known as the CPTPP)?

[Moderator to ensure each trade agreement is discussed using the following prompts]:

- What are your overall impressions of these trade agreements?
- What impact have they had/will they have on your business, if at all? Why do you say that? Do you feel like you have the information you need about these trade agreements? Why or why not?
 - [If not] What information needs do you have? What would you like to know more about?

Canadian Agricultural Partnership

Time=20 minutes

Total time =50 minutes

- When you think of governmental agricultural programs and services, what comes to mind? **Probe for:** types and names of programs they are familiar with
 - What do you think of these programs? Why do you say that?
- [HANDS UP] Have you seen, heard or read anything about the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP)?

[If yes]

- What have you heard?
- What is your overall impression of the Canadian Agricultural Partnership? Why do you say that?
- How familiar are you with the programming and services available under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership?

[If no]

The Canadian Agriculture Partnership is a 5 year, \$3 billion federal-provincial-territorial agreement that replaced Growing Forward 2 and was announced in 2018. The money will be used to help farmers and the agricultural sector in a variety of ways including investing in agricultural research, expanding markets and managing risk. As well, some of the money will be directly accessible to farmers who can take actions to do such things as adapt to climate change, conserve water and soil resources or grow their business.

- Based on this description, what is your overall impression of the Canadian Agricultural Partnership? Why do you say that?
- How familiar would you say you are with AAFC and their programs and services? Is there an aspect of AAFC that you are more interested in (i.e., services, industry information, research, etc.)?
- Do you feel like you have the information you need about the suite of programs? Why or why not?
 - [If not] What information needs do you have? What would you like to know more about?
- How important, if at all, are these investments for the sector? Why do you say that?
 - What is most important for you?
- How do you generally learn about AAFC's program information and research? Do you seek out this information or do you happen upon it?
 - How would you prefer to hear about AAFC's program information and research?

Public trust

Time=25 minutes

Total time=75 minutes

- What does the term public trust mean to you?
- Public trust in the agricultural sector refers to the confidence Canadians have in the way their food is produced, processed, labelled and packaged.
- Have you felt the need to change your production practices to be able to better market to the public or because of retailer requirements?
 - From whom has the pressure been most significant? Why?
 - What has the impact been for you on your operation?
- As a producer, do you engage with your consumers or the public about your farming practices? Why or why not?
 - What initiatives/engagement strategies have been and/or could be most successful for you, and why?
- How do you feel consumers' level of interest has changed, if at all, with respect to where and how food is produced?
 - What direct feedback have consumers, or the public, given you?

- What can the agriculture sector do to manage consumer expectations and adapt to trends?
 - Has this already been going on? How is the agriculture industry adapting to shifting public demands/values in a timely and coordinated manner?
 - Does more need to be done? In what areas?
 - Do you think if the public had a better understanding about farming practices that it would increase or decrease public trust in farming? Why do you say that?
- Who do you believe should be playing the lead role in maintaining the public's trust in Canadian agriculture? Why do you say that?
 - **Probe:** Producers, Processors, Sector/Industry associations, Provincial governments, Federal government, Retailers and buyers, other
 - What specifically could they do?
- What type of government action could help reinforce public trust and confidence in the agriculture sector?

Environmental sustainability

Time=20 minutes

Total time=95 minutes

I'd like to spend some time exploring your views and practices around environmental sustainability.

- What, if anything, are you doing to be more environmentally sustainable?
 - **Probe:** changing on-farm production practices (low till, crop rotation, wind breaks), investing in new technologies (efficient/reduce waste, watering, fertilizing etc.)
- Have any of these involved investments in new technology? Which ones?
- [If yes] What has been your main motivation for making investments in environmental sustainability?
 - **Probe:** decrease costs, increase yields/output, save time, address public concerns, etc.?
- [If no] Why haven't you been using technology?
 - **Probe:** costs too high, unsure about return on investment, insufficient IT infrastructure (ex: access to broadband internet and cellular coverage), don't have the technical skills to use it, lack of equipment dealers and service suppliers in my area, other?
 - What would have to change for you to consider new technologies?
- Do you feel you have access to the latest advice and information about innovative farm practices around environmental sustainability? Why or why not?
 - What specific sources do you rely on for this kind of information?
 - What are your overall impressions of this source? Why do you say that?
 - Are you able to apply this knowledge or use this technology in a successful way? Why or why not?

- [Hands up] Has anyone ever consulted government sources for information on innovative farm practices around environmental sustainability?
 - Which specific sources have you consulted?
 - Were you satisfied with the information or advice you received? Why or why not?

Communication

Time=15 minutes

Total time=110 minutes

- Where do you go to find information about agriculture programs? What about information relating to the sector as a whole?
 - [If not AAFC] Where do you get your information? Why do you look for information there?
 - Do you share the information you find with others? Why or why not?
- Are there any websites, publications or social media you typically go to for information related to your industry?
 - What are they?
 - How useful are they and why?
- [Hands up] Do you actively use social media for your work?
 - Which tools do you use most often? Why?
 - How do you use them?
 - Do you use them to communicate/engage with consumers? How so?
 - What about with the agricultural sector, do you use them to communicate/engage with the agricultural sector? How so?
- [Hands up] Do you follow AAFC's social media channels on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter or YouTube?
- [If yes] What are your overall impressions? Why do you say that?
- Have you ever used, liked, shared or commented on any AAFC's social media channel posts on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter or YouTube?
 - Do you recall which one(s)? Why did you engage with those posts in particular? What information would you find useful?
 - What impression did these posts leave with you? Why do you say that?
- [Hands up] Are you subscribed to any agricultural newsletters? Which ones?
 - [IF YES] What impression did the newsletters leave with you?
- [Hands up] How many of you listen to podcasts about your industry?
 - [If yes] Which ones? What do you like about them?
 - What topics interest you? Could these topics apply to other formats? (Twitter, newsletter etc.)
 - [If no] Do you listen to podcasts generally? Why or why not?

- AAFC has been considering whether to produce a regular podcast. [HANDS UP] Would any of you listen to a podcast by AAFC? Why or why not?
 - [If yes] What topics would be of interest? **Probe:** news, science, programs, markets and trade, information etc.
 - Who would you most like to hear from? **Probe:** other farmers, AAFC scientists, economists, government officials, etc.
- AAFC has also been considering whether to create a blog with stories for producers, industry and other people employed in the agriculture sector.
 - [Hands up] Would any of you follow or read a blog produced by AAFC? Why or why not?
 - [If yes] What topics would be of interest? **Probe:** success stories, innovative initiatives, news, science, programs, markets and trade, information etc.
 - Could any topics work for both blogs and podcasts?
 - Do you currently follow any blogs relating to the agriculture sector?

Wrap-up

Time=10 minutes

Total time=120 minutes

Moderator to check in the back room and probe on any additional areas of interest.

- Is there anything that we haven't talked about or that you would like to add or discuss before we go?
- This concludes what we needed to cover tonight. We really appreciate you taking the time to come down here to share your views. Your input is very important.

Appendix B: Recruitment Screener

Chatham, ON Monday, February 4, 2019

SESSION 1: 3:00 pm

SESSION 2: 5:30 pm

Online Tuesday, February 5, 2019

SESSION 1 English-speaking in Quebec: 3:00 pm

SESSION 2 French-speaking outside Quebec: 5:30 pm

Charlottetown, PE Wednesday, February 6, 2019

SESSION 1: 3:00 pm

SESSION 2: 5:30 pm

Winkler, MB Wednesday, February 6, 2019

SESSION 1: 3:00 pm

SESSION 2: 5:30 pm

Saint-jérôme, QC Thursday, February 7, 2019

SESSION 1: 3:00 pm

SESSION 2: 5:30 pm

Lethbridge, AB Thursday, February 7, 2019

SESSION 1: 3:00 pm

SESSION 2: 5:30 pm

Respondent's name:

Respondent's phone number: (home)

Respondent's phone number: (cell)

Respondent's email:

Sample source: panel random client referral

Interviewer:

Date:

Validated:

On list:

On quotas:

Hello, my name is _____ and I'm calling on behalf of Earnscliffe, a national public opinion research firm. We are conducting a study on behalf of the Government of Canada, specifically for the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, which will involve a series of small group discussions with agricultural producers, including farmers and ranchers. These discussions are about issues facing agricultural producers and agricultural policy and programs. We are looking for people who would be willing to participate. Participants will receive an honorarium for their participation. May I continue?

- Yes, [continue]
- No, [thank and terminate]

Participation is voluntary and your decision to participate or not will not affect any dealings that you may have with the Government of Canada. We are interested in hearing your opinions; no attempt will be made to sell you anything or change your point of view. The format is a 'round table' discussion led by a research professional. All opinions expressed will remain anonymous and views will be grouped together to ensure no particular individual can be identified. But before we invite you to attend, we need to ask you a few questions to ensure that we get a good mix and variety of people. May I ask you a few questions?

- Yes, [continue]
- No, [thank and terminate]

S1. Are you an agricultural producer who holds or shares primary responsibility for making decisions for your agricultural operation?

- Yes, [continue]
- No, [ask S1A]

S1A. Is there someone else in your household who fits this definition [Read if necessary: Is an agricultural producer who holds or shares primary responsibility for making decisions for your agricultural operation]?

- Yes, [ask to speak with this person and start from the beginning but skip questions s1 and s1a].
- No, [thank and terminate.]

S2. Do you or any member of your family work for

	Yes	No
A marketing research firm	1	2
A magazine or newspaper, online or print	1	2
A radio or television station	1	2
A public relations company	1	2
An advertising agency or graphic design firm	1	2
An online media company or as a blog writer	1	2
The government, whether federal, provincial or municipal	1	2

[If “yes” to any of the above, thank and terminate.]

S3. **Do not ask** – [note gender]

- Male: 1
- Female: 2

S4. Could you please tell me which of the following age categories you fall into? [read list] Are you...

- Under 18 years: 1, [Thank and terminate]
- 18-29 years: 2
- 30-49 years: 3
- 50 years or more: 4

S5. Could you also please tell me which of the following categories your farm sales for 2017 fall into? [Read list]

Sales category (\$)	Code	Instructions
Under 10,000	1	Thank and terminate
10,000 to 49,000	2	Ensure a good mix
50,000 to 99,000	3	Ensure a good mix
100,000 to 149,000	4	Ensure a good mix
150,000 to 199,000	5	Ensure a good mix
200,000 to 249,000	6	Ensure a good mix

Sales category (\$)	Code	Instructions
250,000 to 499,000	7	Ensure a good mix
500,000 or more	8	Ensure a good mix
Don't know/No response	9	Thank and terminate

S6. What type of production do you draw most of your gross farm revenue from? [Read list]

- Field crop: 1
- Cattle: 2
- Dairy: 3
- Horticulture: 4
- Viticulture: 5
- Hogs/Pigs: 6
- Poultry: 7
- Other livestock: 8
- Other (please specify): 9

S7. How many years have you been managing a farm business? [Read list]

- Less than 5 years: 1
- 6 to 20 years: 2
- 20 or more years: 3

S8. Have you participated in a discussion or focus group for the Government of Canada before? A discussion group brings together a few people in order to know their opinion about a given subject.

- Yes: 1
- No: 2 [Skip to S11]
- DK /NR: 9 [Thank and terminate]

S9. When was the last time you attended a discussion or focus group that was sponsored by the Government of Canada?

- If within the last 6 months: 1 [Thank and terminate]
- If not within the last 6 months: 2 [Continue]
- Don't know/No response: 9 [Thank and terminate]

S10. How many of these sessions have you attended in the last five years?

- If 4 or less: 1 [Continue]

- If 5 or more: 2 [Thank and terminate]
- DK/NR : 9 [Thank and terminate]

S11. Participants in discussion groups are asked to voice their opinions and thoughts. How comfortable are you in voicing your opinions in front of others? Are you... [Read list]

- Very comfortable: 1 [Minimum 4 per group]
- Somewhat comfortable : 2 [Continue]
- Not very comfortable: 3 [Thank and terminate]
- Not at all comfortable: 4 [Thank and terminate]
- DK/NR : 9 [Thank and terminate]

S12. Sometimes participants are asked to read text and/or review images during the discussion. Is there any reason why you could not participate?

- Yes: 1 [Thank and terminate]
- No: 2 [Continue]
- DK/NR: 9 [Thank and terminate]

S13. The discussion group will take place on [insert date @ time] for [insert duration] and participants will receive [insert amount] for their time. Would you be willing to attend?

- Yes: 1 [Recruit]
- No: 2 [Thank and terminate]
- DK/NR: 9 [Thank and terminate]

Privacy questions

Now I have a few questions that relate to privacy, your personal information and the research process. We will need your consent on a few issues that enable us to conduct our research. As I run through these questions, please feel free to ask me any questions you would like clarified.

P1. First, we will be providing the hosting facility and session moderator with a list of respondents' names and profiles (screener responses) so that they can sign you into the group. This information will not be shared with the Government of Canada department organizing this research. Do we have your permission to do this? I assure you it will be kept strictly confidential.

- Yes: 1, [Go to P2]
- No: 2, [Go to P1A]

We need to provide the facility hosting the session and the moderator with the names and background of the people attending the focus group because only the individuals

invited are allowed in the session and the facility and moderator must have this information for verification purposes. Please be assured that this information will be kept strictly confidential. [GO TO P1A]

P1A. Now that I've explained this, do I have your permission to provide your name and profile to the facility?

- Yes: [Go to P2]
- No: 2 [Thank and terminate)

P2. An audio and/or video tape of the group session will be produced for research purposes. The tapes will be used only by the research professional to assist in preparing a report on the research findings and will be destroyed once the report is completed.

Do you agree to be audio and/or video taped for research purposes only?

- Yes: 1 [Thank and go to P3]
- No: 2 [Read respondent Information Below and go to P2A]

It is necessary for the research process for us to audio/video tape the session as the researcher needs this material to complete the report.

P2A. Now that I've explained this, do I have your permission for audio/video taping?

- Yes: 1 [Thank and go to P3]
- No: 2 [Thank and terminate]

P3. Employees from the Government of Canada may be onsite to observe the groups in-person from behind a one-way mirror or by video conference.

Do you agree to be observed by Government of Canada employees?

- Yes: 1 (Thank and go to invitation)
- No: 2 (Go to P3A)

P3A. It is standard qualitative procedure to invite clients, in this case, Government of Canada employees, to observe the groups in person or by video conference. They may be seated in a separate room and observe from behind a one-way mirror. They will be there simply to hear your opinions first hand although they may take their own notes and confer with the moderator on occasion to discuss whether there are any additional questions to ask the group.

Do you agree to be observed by Government of Canada employees?

- Yes: 1 (Thank and go to invitation)
- No: 2 (Thank and terminate)

Invitation:

Wonderful, you qualify to participate in one of our discussion sessions. As I mentioned earlier, the group discussion will take place [Insert date and time] for up to [Insert duration].

Do you have a pen handy so that I can give you the address where the group will be held? It will be held at:

Place	Time	Honorarium
Chatham, ON Monday, February 4, 2019 Convention Centre 565 Richmond St Chatham, ON N7M 1R2 T: 519.598.0200	3:00 pm 5:30 pm	\$300
Online Tuesday, February 5, 2019	3:00 pm 5:30 pm	\$250
Charlottetown, PE Wednesday, February 6, 2019 MQO Research 97 Queen Street Charlottetown, PEI C1A 4B3 T: 902.569.5955	3:00 pm 5:30 pm	\$300
Winkler, MB Wednesday, February 6, 2019 Days Inn & Suites 395 Boundary Trail Winkler, MB R6W 4B1 T: 204.325.8888	3:00 pm 5:30 pm	\$300
Saint-Jérôme, QC Thursday, February 7, 2019 Best Western 420 Boulevard Monseigneur-Dubois Saint-Jérôme, QC J7Y 3L8 T: 450.438.1155	3:00 pm 5:30 pm	\$300
Lethbridge, AB Thursday February 7, 2019 Ramada by Wyndham 1303 Mayor Magrath Drive South	3:00 pm 5:30 pm	\$300

Place

Time

Honorarium

Lethbridge, AB T1K 2R1
T: 587.800.0335

We ask that you arrive fifteen minutes early to be sure you find parking, locate the facility and have time to check-in with the hosts. The hosts may be checking respondents' identification prior to the group, so please be sure to bring some personal identification with you (for example, a health card, a student card, or a driver's license). If you require glasses for reading make sure you bring them with you as well.

As we are only inviting a small number of people, your participation is very important to us. If for some reason you are unable to attend, please call us so that we may get someone to replace you. You can reach us at **[Insert phone number]** at our office. Please ask for **[Name]**. Someone will call you in the days leading up to the discussion to remind you.

So that we can call you to remind you about the discussion group or contact you should there be any changes, can you please confirm your name and contact information for me?

First name

Last Name

Email

Daytime phone number

Evening phone number

If the respondent refuses to give his/her first or last name or phone number please assure them that this information will be kept strictly confidential in accordance with the privacy law and that it is used strictly to contact them to confirm their attendance and to inform them of any changes to the discussion group. If they still refuse, THANK and TERMINATE.