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2021 Canadian Agri-Awareness Initiative Qualitative Research Final Report

Prepared for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

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Canada

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May 2021

This public opinion research report presents the results of qualitative research conducted by Earnscliffe Strategy Group on behalf of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. The research was conducted in April and May 2021.

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Executive summary

Earnscliffe Strategy Group (Earnscliffe) is pleased to present this report to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada summarizing the results of the qualitative research to inform the Canadian Agri-Awareness Initiative.

The 2019 Budget committed an investment of $25 million over five years for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) to develop a national consumer-focused campaign, now known as the Canadian Agri-Awareness Initiative (CAAI), to better connect Canadians with, and instill pride in, Canada's food system, its agriculture, and food products.

Public opinion research plays a crucial part in this initiative by providing a better understanding of Canadian consumer preferences and perceptions of the agriculture and food sector. The 2020 Buy Canadian Promotion Campaign Baseline Survey, which was conducted in July and August of 2020, was established to collect starting point results, to track potential changes in opinion throughout the initiative, and to help inform and shape the strategy. To follow this, the qualitative research with Canadian consumers explored reasons behind the quantitative survey results, including changes in perception during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The objective of this research was to gain deeper insights on the 2020 baseline survey results and to further explore Canadians' relationship with food, and the agriculture and food sector. The contract value for this project was $131,832.39 including HST.

To meet these objectives, Earnscliffe conducted a comprehensive wave of qualitative research. The research was comprised of 18 focus groups with Canadian consumers aged 18 and older representing different regions across the country and a variety of specific populations. These specific populations included: youth (18-34), non-youth (35+), vulnerable populations (low socio-economic status), racialized Canadians, Indigenous peoples, and Canadians in official language minority communities. All participants were screened to ensure they either had a positive, neutral or slightly negative impression of Canada's agriculture and food sector and had main or joint responsibility for grocery shopping in their households. Of the 18 focus groups, five were conducted in French while the rest were conducted in English. The focus groups were conducted online between April 26 and May 3, 2021. The groups took on average 90 minutes.

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. Due to 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:

- There seemed to be a deep appreciation for the Canadian agriculture and food sector. As participants reflected on Canadian agriculture, they generally conjured up positive images of vast and varied farmlands and products (namely, grains, fruits/berries, vegetables, meat, and dairy). For food, participants conjured up words that described the function food performs, a desire to eat healthy, and feelings toward food.

- There was also an appreciation for the magnitude of the challenges facing the sector. Participants spoke of the challenges posed by weather and environmental changes (climate change), soil quality and land erosion, water quality and supply, insects/pests, larger farms acquiring smaller farms, competition driving prices down leaving less room for profit, and the need to feed a growing population.

- Despite these challenges, the level of trust in Canada's food system does not seem to have changed much over the past year and most continue to hold generally positive impressions.

- What has seemingly changed over the past year, and mainly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, was a desire to buy local (and/or Canadian foods). Some focus group participants suggested the pandemic has stirred in them an increased desire to support local businesses.
  - Interpretations of the term "local food" varied. For some, local referred to foods available in their vicinity (within a certain distance from their homes). For others, it referred to products from their province or region; and, for others still, local referred to products from Canada.

- In addition to supporting local businesses and ensuring the viability of the local economy, participants said they shop local (and/or Canadian) because the quality (taste and freshness) seems to be better.

- For most audiences, perceptions of Canadian farmers also tended to be quite positive. The majority of participants trust Canadian farmers, especially local farmers who live nearby and/or those with smaller family farm operations. They are described as: hard-working, dedicated, family, generation, heritage, entrepreneurial, independent, innovative, conservative, proud, simple, and essential.
  - The one audience that seemed to display slightly more negative sentiments toward Canadian farmers were Indigenous participants, particularly those in Western Canada. When asked what comes to mind when thinking of Canadian farmers, some of the sentiments included: treaties, settlers, capitalism and being misled.

- There also appeared to be a lot of compassion for Canadian farmers and a sense that they were under-appreciated, especially those with smaller operations.

- Interestingly, the vast majority of participants had visited a farm including: those who had spent time living and/or working on a farm, those who had visited with school as a child, or those who visit now, especially with their own children. Whether they visited a local vegetable/berry/fruit, grain, or dairy farm, almost all came away with an enriching experience and improved impressions.

- While most participants were not all that knowledgeable about the specific impacts of farming on the environment, there was certainly broad understanding that it did have an impact. Those who felt more knowledgeable spoke of the quality of the soil and land erosion, impacts of climate change on farming, the use of pesticides and the run-off into our water systems, among other things.

- The overwhelming majority of participants believe the government should play a role in agriculture and food. When asked whether the government's role should be about promoting the farmer or the food, responses were mixed. Some felt the government should promote both equally because the two were so heavily intertwined. Others felt given this link, the government could promote either one as the net result would be the same; whereas, some felt the government should promote farmers as the product of their labour is food. Participants reasoned that ensuring farmers are living up to government legislated standards ensures the quality of our food.

- Food waste was a topic that was relevant to many participants and they seemed to be preoccupied with the amount of food waste in grocery stores and restaurants. Most participants indicated they were trying to actively reduce food waste in their own homes in myriad ways.

- The concept of food security was not as well understood. Some interpreted it as the quality (safety) of food available in stores (specifically, not past its expiration date, food recalls due to salmonella), whereas others interpreted it as supply chain issues impacted by factors such as the price and availability of food.

- In terms of information needs, the kinds of things participants would like to know more about included (but were not limited to):
  - Costs to farm, challenges faced, and a typical day in the life of a farmer;
  - Impact of farming on the environment, including practices to lower greenhouse gas emissions;
  - What is in food, including in plant-based foods;
  - Where and how food is grown, including better identifiers on labels;
  - Technology used in farming and how it has changed;
  - Dispelling myths about farming and agriculture;
  - What are the criteria and regulations for genetically modified organisms (GMOs);
  - Methods used/alternatives to pesticide use; and,
  - What role government plays in supporting and/or regulating farmers, whether they provide any support, and how much influence the government has on establishing prices.

- There was also interest in better understanding the harvesting and production of Indigenous or culturally diverse foods, especially among those who knew very little.
  - Worth noting, interpretation of the term “Indigenous food” varied widely with some having no idea what it was, and others interpreting it as a variety of foods such as bannock, game, and soups, or, foods that were naturally found in a particular vicinity.

- The source the majority of participants deemed most credible for information about Canada’s food and agriculture, and from whom they would most like to hear, is farmers. In addition to farmers, the sources that were most often deemed credible included: researchers, scientists, academics, nutritionists/dietitians, and the Government of Canada. Indigenous participants would also welcome information from Indigenous groups.

- When asked which sources they felt were not credible, most appeared to mention sources they thought might have an inherent bias. This included: doctors, journalists/media, elected officials, celebrities, celebrity chefs, documentaries, grocery stores, and some environmental groups.

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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:

Date: May 20, 2021

Stephanie Constable
Principal, Earnscliffe

Introduction

Earnscliffe Strategy Group (Earnscliffe) is pleased to present this report to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada summarizing the results of the qualitative research to inform the Canadian Agri-Awareness Initiative.

The 2019 Budget committed an investment of $25 million over five years for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) to develop a national consumer-focused campaign, now known as the Canadian Agri-Awareness Initiative (CAAI), to better connect Canadians with, and instill pride in, Canada's food system, its agriculture, and food products.

Public opinion research plays a crucial part in this initiative by providing a better understanding of Canadian consumer preferences and perceptions of the agriculture and food sector. The 2020 Buy Canadian Promotion Campaign Baseline Survey, which was conducted in July and August of 2020, was established to collect starting point results, to track potential changes in opinion throughout the initiative, and to help inform and shape the strategy. To follow this, the qualitative research with Canadian consumers explored reasons behind the quantitative survey results, including changes in perception during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The objectives of this research were to gain deeper insights on the 2020 baseline survey results and to further explore Canadians' relationship with food, and the agriculture and food sector. The specific objectives included, but were not limited to:

- Consumer awareness, knowledge and understanding of the agriculture and agri-food sector (for example, quality of Canadian food, trust in the food system, environmental practices, food waste);
- Consumer pride in, and appreciation of, the Canadian agriculture sector and Canadian farmers (for example, what factors make Canadians proud or not, what they appreciate about farmers, how they show their pride and/or appreciation, and what factors could lead a consumer to buy Canadian when price is higher);
- Consumer views around the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sector (for example, resilience and economic growth of the sector, food security, Government of Canada support of farmers during the pandemic); and,
- Consumer sources of information about food and the food sector (for example, where and how they get their information, who their influencers are, and what information they want to receive about farming and the food sector).

The research will be used to better understand the reasons behind the 2020 baseline survey results and to inform development of and communications related to the Canadian Agri-Awareness Initiative.

To meet these objectives, Earnscliffe conducted a comprehensive wave of qualitative research. The research was comprised of 18 focus groups with 160 Canadians consumers aged 18 and older representing different regions across the country and a variety of specific populations. These specific populations included: youth (18-34), non-youth (35+), vulnerable populations, racialized Canadians, Indigenous peoples, and Canadians from official language minority communities. All participants were screened to ensure they either had a positive, neutral or slightly negative impression of Canada's agriculture and food sector and had main or joint responsibility for grocery shopping in their households. Of the 18 focus

groups, five were conducted in French while the rest were conducted in English. The focus groups were conducted online between April 26 and May 3, 2021. The groups took on average 90 minutes.
The following outlines the different regions, populations and languages for the groups:

- **British Columbia:** 1 English focus group with youth (18-34), 1 English group with non-youth (35+)
- **Prairies:** 1 English focus group with youth (18-34), 1 English group with non-youth (35+)
- **Ontario:** 1 English focus group with youth (18-34), 1 English group with non-youth (35+)
- **Quebec:** 1 French focus group with youth (18-34), 1 French group with non-youth (35+)
- **Atlantic:** 1 English focus group with youth (18-34), 1 English group with non-youth (35+)
- **Vulnerable populations (low socio-economic status households):** 2 focus groups with 1 English (across Canada) and 1 French (across Quebec)
- **Racialized Canadians:** 2 focus groups with 1 English (across Canada) and 1 French (across Quebec)
- **Indigenous peoples:** 2 English focus groups, 1 with residents of Eastern Canada and 1 with residents of Western Canada
- **Official Language Minority Communities (OLMC):** 2 focus groups, 1 with French speakers residing outside of Quebec (in French) and 1 with English speakers residing in Quebec (in English)

The focus groups also included a mix of genders (participants who identify as men, women and gender-diverse were represented), income levels, education levels, ethnicities, ages and urban versus rural locations.

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. Due to 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.

Along these lines, it is important to note that the figures displayed in the tables throughout this report reflect the total number of mentions as participants were not limited to one response (and some provided no response or more than one response). The number of participants for each audience are noted in brackets in the header to serve as a reminder of the small sample sizes and the qualitative nature of this research. Again, these figures are not meant to be representative of and cannot be extrapolated to the greater populations they represent. They should be regarded as directional only.

Appended to this report are the qualitative methodology report, discussion guide, and recruitment screener.

Detailed findings

The results of this research are presented in six sections: perceptions of the Canadian agriculture and food sector; buying local or Canadian foods; perceptions of and trust in Canadian farmers; food waste and food security; government role in agriculture and the promotion of farmers and food; and, communication needs and information sources.

Except where specifically identified, the findings also represent the combined results regardless of audience, region or language (English and French). Quotations used throughout the report were selected on the basis of bringing the analysis to life and providing unique verbatim commentary from participants across the various locations.

Please refer to Appendix A: Qualitative Methodology Report for a glossary of terms used throughout this report.

Perceptions of the Canadian agriculture and food sector

The focus groups began with a general discussion, including an initial warm-up word association exercise, about perceptions of the Canadian agriculture and food sector and the biggest challenges it faces.

For the most part, there was broad and deep appreciation for the Canadian agriculture and food sector.

As illustrated in the following table, when asked to reflect on what comes to mind when they think about the word “food”, participants conjured up words that described a desire to eat healthy, the practice of eating; feelings toward food (such as, nourishing, yummy); and, the function of food (among other things).

Exhibit 1: What comes to mind when you think about food? Numbers displayed below are total number of mentions.

Food	Total (n=160)	Youth (18-34) (n=44)	Non-youth (35+) (n=45)	Vulnerable populations (n=17)	Racialized Canadians (n=19)	Indigenous peoples (n=17)	OLMC (n=18)
Healthy eating: healthy, nutrition, balanced, variety, lifestyle, food guide	49	13	15	6	4	6	5
Practice: eating, cooking, groceries, family, share, recipes, gathering, smell	37	14	9	5	3	1	5
Positive feelings toward food: happy/joy, yummy, fresh, quality, traditional, comfort, taste/tasty, sustainable, available	20	6	6	0	0	5	3
Function of food: fuel, energy, necessity	20	7	6	1	4	1	1
Type of food: restaurant brands, organic, vegetarian, processed food, meat, take-out, homemade, protein, local	19	10	4	2	3	0	0
Negative feelings toward food: hunger, colonialism, not traditional, money	9	1	4	0	0	3	1
Agriculture	3	0	0	1	2	0	0

While both youth (18-34) and non-youth (35+) tended to most often think about healthy eating as related to food and the practice of eating, youth (18-34) more often thought about the practice of eating while non-youth (35+) most often thought about healthy eating. Youth (18-34) more often than other audiences referred to the types of food. Worth noting, the word “food” conjured up some negative feelings, especially for Indigenous participants, such as colonialism and money but it also more often conjured up positive descriptors for them as well such as traditional, tasty and yummy.

Regionally, participants from Quebec and British Columbia seemed to more often reflect on healthy eating when thinking of food as compared to participants from other regions. Participants from the Prairies more often reflected on the types of food than participants from other regions.

When subsequently asked what comes to mind when thinking about “Canadian agriculture”, the term generally conjured up words that described the various products produced in Canada; farmers and the vast Canadian farmlands; as well as a variety of positive descriptors of both such as (but not limited to): quality, large, diverse, and abundant.

Exhibit 2: What comes to mind when you think about Canadian agriculture? Numbers displayed below are total number of mentions.

Canadian agriculture	Total (n=160)	Youth (18-34) (n=44)	Non-youth (35+) (n=45)	Vulnerable populations (n=17)	Racialized Canadians (n=19)	Indigenous peoples (n=17)	OLMC (n=18)
Products/produce: wheat, beef/cows, corn, dairy/milk, eggs, chicken, canola, product of Canada, produce, cereal/grain, berries, potato, maple syrup, poutine	85	19	35	12	10	4	5
Farmers/farmlands: farmers, farms, prairies, Alberta, land, crops, fields, local	35	11	7	7	2	4	4
Positive descriptors: quality, large, diverse, fresh, rich, abundant, sustainable, essential, hardworking, safe, healthy, tradition, innovative	35	12	8	3	3	3	6
Government/regulated: national standards, regulated, government, quotas	14	3	7	2	0	0	2
Negative descriptors: struggling, declining/dying, pesticides/GMOs, colonial, genocide, faceless corporations, quotas	8	2	1	2	0	3	0
Natural resources: forest, trees, natural resources	4	1	0	0	2	1	0

While both youth (18-34) and non-youth (35+) tended to most often think about the products produced in Canada when they reflected on "Canadian agriculture", non-youth (35+) appeared to do so more often, as did vulnerable populations and racialized Canadians. Youth (18-34) and vulnerable populations also seemed to more often reflect on farmers and farmlands. Youth (18-34) and OLMC Canadians, perhaps more than any other audience, also tended to more often offer positive descriptors of Canadian products, farmers, and farmlands when reflecting on "Canadian agriculture". Finally, Indigenous participants, particularly those from western Canada, and vulnerable populations seemed to conjure up more negative descriptors than other audiences. Indigenous participants suggested words like colonial, genocide and faceless corporations as they reflected on the historical treatment of their peoples especially as it related to land claims.

> "When I think of Canadian agriculture, I think of colonialism and the cost to our people on our land."
> - Indigenous participant, West

Regionally, the only perceived difference was that participants in Atlantic Canada tended to be less likely to reflect on the products produced in Canada than participants from any other region.

When asked what the biggest challenges are facing the Canadian agriculture sector, there was an appreciation for the magnitude of the challenges facing the sector. Participants spoke of a variety of challenges in the following few key areas (outlined in order of most often mentioned across all of the groups):

Weather and environmental impacts

- Weather and environmental changes/impacts, climate change and global warming including the challenges of having to adapt to warmer temperatures, increased water usage and impact on water supply, etc.;
- Seasonal changes which impacts Canadian farmers' ability to produce all year long; and,
- Pesticide and fertilizer use and the impact on the environment.

> "You're dealing with agriculture, so you are kind of at the mercy of mother nature based on the seasons." - Non-youth participant (35+), Atlantic Canada

> "We are in a drought situation here, haven't had much snow in the winter and haven't had much rain in the spring, so definitely very concerning here if you are a farmer." - Non-youth participant (35+), Prairies

Food security

- A sense that we are not self-reliant enough in Canada and that we import too many foods; desire for increased focus on developing the necessary infrastructure to be able to produce all year round (in greenhouses);
- Food shortages and security issues including a sense that some parts of the country (Newfoundland and Northern Canada) were more remote and food was not as readily available or fresh as would be desirable;
- Cost/price of food (increasing) which means some have to shop differently than they would prefer (specifically, buying more frozen than fresh produce); and,
- Meeting the needs of a growing population.

> "My concern would be our proximity to America and Mexico. They would be our only challenge I think in being able to compete in, not just providing food for Canadians, but also compete in the international marketplace. I think the government should make sure that the farmers are competing not just with themselves but in a good place to compete with our neighbouring countries." - Indigenous participant, East

> "I've seen prices go up and the amount of food I get per dollar has changed. I remember when I could go to the grocery store and spend $100-$200 and fill my cart. I find myself spending more on frozen than fresh now." - Youth participant (18-34), Prairies

The COVID-19 pandemic

- Issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impacts on migrant workers;
- Our reliance on migrant workers to support Canadian farmers.

> "The workers were captive on their farms as a result of COVID." - OLMC participant, French (outside Quebec)

> "One of the biggest challenges is migrant workers. It's been a struggle for them and their treatment. It's a horrible situation – farmers always wanting cheaper." - Indigenous participant, West

> "I was reading in the news that there is outright competition for labour. It's particularly hard to bring workers in right now." - Racialized Canadian participant, French

Impacts on farmers and farming operations

- Big farms/corporations taking over smaller farm operations; harder for smaller operations to stay in business;
  - One of the impacts mentioned was tougher competition in the marketplace;
- Workforce issues such as younger generations not interested in taking over the family business; not enough people interested in working on farms
  - Sense that we rely too heavily on the support of migrant workers;
- Farmers not appreciated and underpaid;
- Increased costs of tools, products (pesticides, fertilizers, etc.) making it more and more difficult for smaller operations to survive; and,
- Barrier to entry, costs to get into farming including costs of machinery.

> "Seems like the smaller farms are going away. They are getting bought up by the big conglomerates." - Non-youth participant (35+), Atlantic Canada

> "Attract new talent. We do not have new people entering the sector. We have a lot of people leaving the sector. We really need to attract people to become farmers and producers." - Youth participant (18-34), Quebec

When asked whether their perception of Canadian agriculture and food had changed over the past year, the majority of participants indicated that their perception had not changed all that much. They continued to hold generally positive impressions of Canadian agriculture and food.

Among those with changing impressions, some participants indicated a positive change in impressions which was often attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. They spoke of buying more local products now, which, as will be expanded upon later in this report, continues to be assumed to be a higher quality product, but has changed as a result of their increased efforts to support the local economy and to keep jobs in Canada to counter the economic impact of COVID-19. A few also mentioned having noticed more Canadian products in stores although it was not clear whether this was as a result of purchase and/or promotional changes in stores or a change in their personal shopping behaviour. Moreover, there was also a sense (among a few participants) that the pandemic had resulted in positive behavioural change with more people paying attention to what they eat, reading labels, cooking and baking more, (for example, bread) eating less meat, and planting their own gardens; all of which they attributed to healthier eating.

> "Because of COVID, I'm at home more and less in stores. I'm intrigued by my interest in baking bread, growing what I can." - Youth participant (18-34), Prairies

Having said all this, several participants also registered concerns with Canadian agriculture and food. A few mentions were related to the COVID-19 pandemic and a sense that there was a lack of food products (at times) and a few participants felt they were seeing more imported products in stores.

Concerns unrelated to the pandemic included: foreign companies buying Canadian land and the increased costs of farming (to farmers). Other mentions included:

- Quality of produce decreasing with the use of GMOs; vegetables and fruits looking different now (specifically, seedless watermelons);
- Price increases which were resulting in participants changing their behaviour (specifically, selecting frozen produce over fresh, etc.);
- Vulnerability of Canadian transportation system as witnessed by the Indigenous-led blockades in 2020; and,
- Product recalls (romaine lettuce and chicken E. coli recalls mentioned specifically).

Worth noting, over the course of the focus groups, a few participants volunteered having more confidence in Canada's food systems and practices than those in some other parts of the world. Comparisons were spontaneously made to questionable dairy practices in the United States, as were concerns about products from China, more generally.

> "I think that here in Quebec we have regulations that ensure people can't just put anything in our foods. I have confidence in that. I have more confidence in our Canadian producers than other producers." – Youth participant (18-34), Quebec

> "I do trust the Canadian agriculture guidelines. For example, I know there are guidelines as to what is considered organic. I trust that over what is considered organic in other countries." – Youth participant (18-34), British Columbia

> "American food scares me." – OLMC participant, English (in Quebec)

Buying local or Canadian foods

Participants were asked to discuss the importance of buying local and/or Canadian foods and how their behaviours have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the price, and seasonality of local and/or Canadian foods.

The majority of participants in most groups indicated that they shop or look for local and/or Canadian foods when they shop. Non-youth (35+), women, OLMC, and participants from Quebec and Ontario seemed to do so more readily.

Incidentally, interpretations of the term "local food" varied. As illustrated in the following table, the term "local food" generally conjured up positive interpretations that referred to the quality and variety of available produce, as well as idealistic notions of farmers' markets and community.

Exhibit 3: What comes to mind when you think about local food? Numbers displayed below are total number of mentions.

Local food	Total (n=160)	Youth (18-34) (n=44)	Non-youth (35+) (n=45)	Vulnerable populations (n=17)	Racialized Canadians (n=19)	Indigenous peoples (n=17)	OLMC (n=18)
Quality (positive descriptors): fresh, healthy, environmentally friendly, quality, important, ethical, authentic, less pollution, less pesticides, sustainable, non-GMO, preferable, organic, easy to access, non-exported, non-imported, support	66	14	13	11	4	11	13
Farms/farmers/markets: market/farmers' markets, farms, farmers, community, producers, family, gardens, food stand, produce, farm share, small businesses, agriculture	49	26	11	3	5	3	1
Types of products: fruits and veggies, product of Quebec, product of Ontario, dairy, seasonal, craft beer, vegan, meat shop, poutine, Tim Horton's, Canada, Indigenous, produce	41	14	8	4	9	3	3
Negative descriptors: expensive, hard to find	7	1	4	0	0	1	1

Few participants perceived differences across the various audiences and regions. Youth (18-34) seemed to more often reflect on farmers' markets and the sense of community as well as the types of products. Racialized Canadians seemed to reflect less often on the quality, and reflect more often on the types of products. Regionally, participants in Atlantic Canada and British Columbia seemed to more often reflect on the quality of local foods, while participants in the Prairies reflected more on the types of products.

Furthermore, interpretations of what "local" referred to geographically also varied. Almost all participants in every group agreed that local certainly referred to foods available in their vicinity (within a certain distance from their homes). However, in some groups, local was also interpreted as meaning products from their provinces or regions which was the case for many participants from Quebec and Atlantic Canada (specifically, Atlantic seafood). For some participants, and quite often for racialized Canadians, local referred to products from Canada (specifically, Canadian beef).

> "Local means from where I live, down the road, but also from the Maritimes." - Youth participant (18-34), Atlantic Canada
>
> "For me, it refers to products of Quebec, but I don't exclude Canadian products." - Youth participant (18-34), Quebec

When asked why they buy local and/or Canadian, most participants shop local for the quality, specifically for the taste, but also because it is fresher. After quality, many participants in each group suggested that the pandemic had increased their desire to buy local. This desire seemed to be driven by a sense of economic protectionism. The pandemic seems to have caused an increased desire to support the local economy and keep jobs in Canada to counter the economic impact of COVID-19. There was a sense that Canadians have suffered an economic impact due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and farmers – seen as among the more economically vulnerable sectors – were often assumed to have been particularly impacted by the pandemic for one reason or another. Participants described expectations that there was an increased challenge for farmers in getting their produce harvested, getting their product to market, and fewer people or stores buying their products.

> “When I do my grocery shopping, I actually go to a farmers’ market first to get my local products. I actually do find, one, it’s cheaper, but I also find the product a little bit better. Then I’ll go to [national grocery chain] and of course it has local products as well. For me knowing it comes from Canada, or at least local, you are kind of putting money back into the local economy and helping local farmers.” – Youth participant (18-34), Atlantic Canada

> “Because of COVID, I am trying to support local businesses. I’ve made a point to shop more locally. When I shop at the grocery store, I look for local Canadian brands. I shop at farmers’ markets to support local vendors. I try to go for locally farmed meat because it’s fresher and there are less chemicals.” - Youth participant (18-34), Prairies

> “I’m feeling patriotic – supporting local because they’re busy taking care of us.” - OLMC participant, English (in Quebec)

Otherwise, some participants conveyed they felt local products were grown with fewer chemicals and pesticides coupled with a sense that Canadian regulations are stringent; and, a few participants noted they buy local because the food does not travel as far and therefore is more environmentally friendly.

> “For the environment it’s better. The quality is better. Some lose a lot of flavour in transportation.”
> - OLMC participant, English (in Quebec)

> “I do buy local. I look at labels. My first choice is Canadian and preferably Ontario because we have certain guidelines. It’s picked at the right time and has less travel.” - Racialized Canadian participant, English

While the desire to buy local was fairly broad, some participants – including some who expressed a preference to buy local products – described shopping behaviours that limited the number of stores they would shop at and/or limited their time in stores. They described both these habits as making them less inclined to search out local products.

> “I’ve never noticed where it is grown. I just go in and grab what I always grab in my 15 minutes.” – Youth participant (18-34), Prairies

When asked whether they would buy local if the price were the same or higher, many participants suggested that they would still buy local. Others mentioned that it depends on the product and the price differential, including vulnerable populations (low socio-economic status) who said they would select the less expensive product (even if it was imported). This sentiment seemed to be slightly more important among participants in the vulnerable populations groups.

> "I'm more intrigued in Canadian products. Sometimes the price is similar or higher and depending on the week/month, I do pay more for Canadian products. And, I do buy some international products but I'd like a lot more Canadian products. The pandemic brought my awareness to home. People struggling at home, neighbours." - Youth participant (18-34), Prairies

> "If price is the same, I'll buy local but I'm a single mom and if it comes from somewhere else and it is cheaper, I'll buy the cheaper product." - Vulnerable populations participant, French

When asked what they do when they have trouble finding local foods out of season, many spoke of trying to eat seasonally (namely, doing without local berries in the winter), or preserving and freezing seasonal produce to consume out of season; while, some indicated they do buy imported produce out of season although they admit the taste is not the same.

Perceptions of and trust in Canadian farmers

The discussions explored perceptions of and the level of trust in Canadian farmers. This discussion also explored whether participants had ever visited a farm and the perceived impacts of farming on the environment.

For most audiences, perceptions of Canadian farmers tended to be overwhelmingly positive. Most participants indicated they trust Canadian farmers, especially local farmers who live nearby and/or those with smaller family farm operations.

> "My trust level is moderate. I trust small farmers more because I feel like the quality control measures would be better." – Participant, vulnerable populations, English

All participants in Quebec, whether youth (18-34), non-youth (35+), racialized Canadians or vulnerable populations, indicated they trusted Canadian farmers. Beyond Quebec, most participants in the other groups also indicated they trusted farmers. Consistent with what was mentioned earlier with respect to Canadian agriculture, the one audience who seemed slightly less trusting of Canadian farmers was Indigenous peoples.

The two-word association exercises related to Canadian farmers demonstrated these impressions very clearly.

As illustrated in the following table, when asked to reflect on what comes to mind when thinking about "Canadian farmers", the responses are overwhelmingly positive. The majority of participants suggested a wide variety of words that described farmers as very hardworking, respectable and upstanding citizens. Secondarily, participants seemed to reflect on the variety of products produced by farmers and the diverse nature of farming operations.

Exhibit 4: What comes to mind when you think about Canadian farmers? Numbers displayed below are total number of mentions.

Canadian farmers	Total (n=160)	Youth (18-34) (n=44)	Non-youth (35+) (n=45)	Vulnerable populations (n=17)	Racialized Canadians (n=19)	Indigenous peoples (n=17)	OLMC (n=18)
Upstanding/respectable: hardworking, essential, early-risers, innovative/resourceful, honest/reliable, safe/ethical, dedicated, knowledgeable, respected, tough, plaid, eco-friendly, proud, courageous, positive, traditional, generational, providers, quality, overworked, underappreciated, underestimated	80	25	24	4	7	8	12
Products: dairy/milk, wheat, beef/cows, chicken/eggs, produce, veggies,	21	9	2	2	4	1	3
Operations: fields/farms, markets, out West, corporate/large farms, small businesses, PEI, local, prairies, tractors, foreign workers	21	5	8	0	4	3	1
Financially unstable: disappearing/struggling, underpaid, poor	20	5	6	7	0	2	0
Negative descriptors: settlers, capitalists, treaties, monoculture	6	1	0	0	0	5	0
National: contribute to economy, Canadian standards	5	0	3	1	0	0	1
Positive descriptors: diverse, fresh, sustainable	4	3	1	0	0	0	0

Noteworthy differences by audience included participants from the Prairies, British Columbia, and Quebec who seemed to more often reflect on the upstanding and respectable nature of Canadian farmers. Additionally, as noted earlier, Indigenous peoples more often reflected on the historical treatment of their peoples when they suggested words like settlers, capitalists, and treaties.

Similarly, when asked what words you would use to describe farmers, the sentiments expressed most often tended to revolve around the upstanding and respectable characterization of Canadian farmers.

Exhibit 5: What word(s) would you use to describe Canadian farmers? Numbers displayed below are total number of mentions.

Canadian farmers	Total (n=160)	Youth (18-34) (n=44)	Non-youth (35+) (n=45)	Vulnerable populations (n=17)	Racialized Canadians (n=19)	Indigenous peoples (n=17)	OLMC (n=18)
Upstanding/respectable: hardworking, dedicated, devoted, determined, driver, reliable, dependable, intelligent, knowledgeable, athletic, healthy, innovative, resourceful, passionate, essential, important, producers, providers, proud, ethical, honest, courageous, loyal, people of the land, motivated, ambitious, necessary, responsible, helpful, nurturers, backbone, perseverance, cooperative, compassionate, skilled, livelihood, admirable, fundamental, tough, consistent, humble, technologically adept	128	29	35	19	17	14	14
Hardship: early risers, long days, at mercy of weather, manual labour, underappreciated, sleep deprived, high-stress, no vacation, unfair working conditions, disrespected, busy, exploited	26	10	9	2	1	0	4
Operations: quality products, business people, entrepreneur, autonomous, fresh produce, pesticide use, local, urban, rural, small town, close knit	12	2	2	0	4	0	4
Financially unstable: disappearing/struggling, underpaid, poor, expensive venture	10	0	6	3	0	0	1
Negative descriptors: dirty, colonial, homogeneous (Caucasian)	3	0	0	0	1	1	1
National: national economy, heavily regulated	2	0	1	0	1	0	0

These exercises demonstrated that there was a lot of compassion for Canadian farmers and almost all participants in every group felt they were under-appreciated, especially those with smaller operations.

> "I think smaller farms are under appreciated but the big ones get more recognition." - Youth participant (18-34), Prairies

> "Farmers are not appreciated. The status and economic status that comes with it. It's a blue collar job." - Racialized Canadian participant, English

To show appreciation of farmers, the vast majority of participants felt the best thing we could do was to continue to show support by buying their products. Several participants (across all groups) offered other solutions that included (but were not limited to): more information/promotion/public awareness/education about farmers and farming (specifically, Farmer Appreciation Day); clearer labelling and branding of their products (especially in grocery stores); and, farm visits, which also tended to reinforce deep appreciation of farmers and agriculture.

Conversely, when asked whether farmers should show their appreciation of Canadian consumers, most felt Canadian farmers already do a good job of demonstrating their appreciation through their hard work, dedication and the quality of their products. Certainly, few if any feel they are owed a gesture of appreciation from Canadian farmers.

> "They show us all the time when we buy their products. They want to give us more. They explain things. They're very kind. We trust them." - Non-youth participant (35+), Quebec

Worth noting, a few participants in the Indigenous groups suggested that Canadian farmers could show their appreciation of Indigenous peoples by engaging with them – both as a means to better understand Indigenous traditions and culture, and how that might impact and/or improve their approaches and the products they produce, but also to share what they know about farming.

> "Perhaps engaging with the Indigenous community. Even as a show of appreciation and having dialogue about what is important to us." - Indigenous participant, Western Canada

Interestingly, the vast majority of participants in every group had visited a farm, including those who had spent time living and/or working on a farm, those who had visited with school as a child, or those who visit now, especially with their own children. Incidentally, youth (18-34) tended to speak of having visited with school as a child or you-pick farms, whereas, non-youth (35+) tended to mention having grown up on, or visited a family farm.

Whether they had attended a local farming event or visited a vineyard, corn maze, or local vegetable/berry/fruit, honey, vineyard, grain, hay, cattle, dairy, or salmon farm, almost all came away with an enriching experience and improved impressions. Participants certainly seemed to come away having learned about the hard work and long hours, pride and dedication. Some participants also learned about the sophistication of the operations, innovative machinery and techniques used, and the constant need to adapt to evolving changes.

> "I'd have to say after I visited a farm at a younger age, I did have a greater appreciation of the time and effort and meticulous care that goes into growing that stuff. I was never one to waste food but

> now I know that when I waste food I feel bad knowing all the time it took to make it.” – Youth participant (18-34), Prairies

> “It’s difficult not to be impressed. It’s so much work. They are so proud of what they’ve created. You can’t not be impressed. It’s so extraordinary.” - Youth participant (18-34), Quebec

> “I am so impressed by the family work lifestyle. Every worker was a family member.” - Non-youth participant (35+), British Columbia

> “Visiting creates a better understanding and education. You learn the process and have a greater appreciation for their passion. It’s the tactile moments.” - Racialized Canadian participant, English

When asked in some groups whether a visit to a food processing plant would also be of interest, a few participants felt this would be a valuable experience. They spoke of an interest and curiosity in learning the entire process, which extended to opportunities to hear from an agricultural scientist or to visit a research lab; and, a sense of appreciation for the transparency this would provide.

> “I’d like to learn where food comes from that I get in the grocery store. I don’t know where it comes from. To be honest, I mean I know it comes from a farm but like I don’t know how to actually grow food. I’d like to learn how things actually grow, from the beginning to the end and how it actually gets to the store. I don’t think my kids even know how it starts and gets to the store.” - Non-youth participant (35+), British Columbia

Finally, in terms of the impact of farming on the environment, while the majority of participants in each group did not feel particularly knowledgeable of this aspect, there was certainly broad assumption that farming does have an impact. There was a mix of whether the impact was positive or negative and several participants indicated feeling there were both benefits and drawbacks for the environment. It appeared that participants more readily identified specific drawbacks, while they connected benefits to an overall commitment to environmental stewardship, rather than specific environmentally responsible practices. Much of the commentary offered was clearly tied to a specific type and/or size of farm operation a participant had in mind and therefore, the negative remarks do not necessarily apply to all Canadian farmers or operations.

> “Local, small farms, they don’t impact the environment as much. Mass farming, meat and dairy farms in particular, are not good. They’re doing massive damage to the land.” – OLMC participant, English (in Quebec)

Those who identified drawbacks spoke of impacts on the quality of the soil and land erosion, the use of pesticides and the run-off into our water systems, among other things. In addition, it was striking how often participants mentioned the impacts of cattle farming on greenhouse gas emissions. A small number felt with economic pressures as high as they are, it must be tempting for farmers to cut environmental corners in order to make ends meet.

Those who felt more positively about farming’s contribution to environmental protection tended to see farmers as responsible and qualified stewards of the land. Farmers’ motivations were often described as coming from an innate passion for land and/or the economic necessity to ensure their land remains viable and healthy.

When asked whether pesticides are necessary in food production, some participants did not feel well enough informed to contribute to the conversation. As with the discussion about the environmental impact of farming, others expressed a mix of opinions, including those who indicated wrestling with mixed feelings on the topic of pesticides.

While there was an undeniable sense that Canadian farmers have to deal with a variety of different pests who can easily destroy crops, participants tended to be hesitant to approve of the use of pesticides.

Among those who felt pesticides were probably necessary, the notion of their use did not seem to sit well with most, with some opting to describe it as a "necessary evil." Some, however, pointed out that farmers are feeding their own families with their products as evidence they must be using practices that produce food that is safe.

In contrast, there was also a small portion of participants who feel pesticides are not necessary. There appeared to be a tendency to confuse organic with pesticide-free and would point to those products as proof that products could be successfully produced and sold without the need of pesticides.

A few participants also mentioned knowing certain plants can be planted together and act as natural pesticides; and, expressed a desire to see the Canadian agriculture sector do more to research and investigate these options.

Pesticide use and regulation were among the most frequently identified topics of interest to participants. The discussions demonstrated that for a number of people, this is an area where they feel they have a gap of information on an issue of importance to them.

Food waste and food security

While not explored in every focus group, in some groups there was enough time to explore the topics of food waste and food security.

Food waste was an issue relevant to many participants and several mentioned it in different ways throughout the discussion. For example, some participants seemed to be preoccupied with the amount of food waste in grocery stores and restaurants. Some mentioned online applications, specifically Food Hero, Flash Food, and Second Life, that enabled grocery stores to sell products close to the expiration date or no longer suitable for the grocery store shelves. Most participants felt they were trying to actively reduce food waste in their own homes by shopping more frequently (a routine impacted by the pandemic), only buying what they intended to eat, freezing food, vacuum packing food, sharing leftovers with others, and composting.

The concept of food security was not as well understood. Some interpreted it as the quality (safety) of food available in stores (specifically, not past its expiration date, food recalls due to salmonella), whereas others interpreted it as supply chain issues impacted by factors such as the price and availability of food. Participants tended to think those with a lower economic status or who lived in more remote parts of the country were more affected than others.

> "In Newfoundland, by the time we get our food, it's not as fresh as we'd like." – Youth participant (18-34), Atlantic Canada

Government role in agriculture and the promotion of farmers and food

While not explored in every focus group, in some groups there was enough time to explore the role of government in agriculture and the promotion of farmers and/or food.

Participants unanimously agreed the government should play a role in agriculture and food. When asked whether the government's role should be about promoting the farmer or the food, responses were mixed. Some felt the government should promote both equally because the two were so heavily intertwined. Others felt given this link, the government could promote either one as the net result would be the same; whereas, some felt the government should promote farmers as the product of their labour is food. Participants reasoned that ensuring farmers are living up to government legislated standards ensures the quality of our food.

Regardless of which should be promoted, there was certainly widespread endorsement of the idea that the Government of Canada should be promoting Canadian agriculture and food.

Communication needs and information sources

The focus groups also explored the topics participants would most like to better understand or learn more about, including the harvesting and production of Indigenous foods, and the credibility of different individuals on the topic of Canada's agriculture and food sector.

Communication needs

Participants were asked to share what they would like to better understand or learn about when it comes to farmers, farming and food, participants offered a variety of topics:

- Costs to farm (including difference between costs of big versus small farming operations), challenges faced, and a typical day in the life of a farmer;
- Impact of farming on the environment, including practices to lower greenhouse gas emissions and sustainable farming practices;
- What is in food, including in plant-based foods;
- Where and how food is grown, including better identifiers on labels;
- How food is processed from beginning to end;
- Technology used in farming and how it has changed;
- Dispelling myths about farming and agriculture;
- What are the criteria and regulations for genetically modified organisms (GMOs);
- Methods used/alternatives to pesticide use;
- Insects as another source of protein; and,
- What role government plays in supporting and/or regulating farmers, whether they provide any support, and how much influence the government has on establishing prices.

When asked whether there was interest in better understanding the harvesting and production of Indigenous or culturally diverse foods, many participants in each group expressed an interest. Those most interested tended to be women and those who knew very little. They felt there was a lot that could be learned through Indigenous, and other cultures and traditions.

"Even by treatment of animals, I really appreciate how the Indigenous tradition is to use as much as possible of the animals out of respect." - Youth participant (18-34), Prairies

"Just to see the traditions that they have passed down of how they do it a specific way." - Non-youth participant (35+), Prairies

"You can be more educated with the choices you make if you know the process behind it. I was just reading an article about the seal hunt. People are offended but if they understood the process behind it and how Indigenous people use every bit of the animal. Education is the key, right, that you are able to then appreciate the process." - Indigenous participant, East

Worth noting, interpretation of the term "Indigenous food" varied widely with some having no idea what it is and others interpreting it as a variety of foods such as bannock, game, and soups, or, foods that were naturally found in a particular vicinity.

Exhibit 6: What comes to mind when you think about Indigenous food? Numbers displayed below are total number of mentions.

Indigenous food	Total (n=151)	Youth (18-34) (n=44)	Non-youth (35+) (n=45)	Vulnerable populations (n=17)	Racialized Canadians (n=19)	Indigenous peoples (n=8)	OLMC (n=18)
Foods: fish/fishing, bannock, wild game, veggies, plants/roots, meat, hunting, caribou, soup, seafood, moose, corn, seal, grain, deer, nuts, herbs, seaweed, salmon, herring eggs	74	19	24	11	6	5	9
Indigenous culture: First Nations, culture, traditional, gathering, community, product of Northern Canada	26	9	4	1	7	2	3
Original: from the area/land, natural, respect for nature, raw, unprocessed, sustainable, free range, local, organic	22	9	5	1	4	0	3
Positive descriptors: tasty, homemade, amazing	3	1	1	0	0	1	0
Not accessible	2	0	0	0	0	2	0
Unsure	8	3	1	3	0	0	1

Some participants in each of the groups with non-Indigenous peoples were unsure of the meaning of the term or did not hazard a guess. Those who did, often interpreted it as referring to original; as in from the land/area, natural or local. Even when referring to different foods, some of the examples provided referred more to original foods (specifically, plants/roots, herbs, nuts, etc.) than to Indigenous foods although many did also cite traditionally Indigenous foods such as bannock, game, seal, etc.

As noted in Exhibit 6, only one of the groups with Indigenous peoples was asked to provide their interpretation of the term, Indigenous Food. However, the term was certainly understood by all. Indigenous peoples often referred to different Indigenous foods such as moose and other wild meats, fish and salmon, and herring eggs. Unlike participants from other groups, a few also mentioned that Indigenous foods were not easily accessible. Indeed, several Indigenous participants who no longer live in their traditional communities mentioned looking forward to returning home to enjoy Indigenous foods and to receiving provisions for their freezers.

In the groups with Indigenous peoples, the terms “country food” and “traditional food” were also explored. The term, “country food” did not resonate with Indigenous participants. This term was interpreted as meaning fresh, local, or referring to farmers’ markets. The term “traditional food”, on the other hand, resonated much more and spoke of their culture, traditions, practices, and home.

Information sources

The source the majority of participants deemed most credible for information about food and agriculture, and from whom they would most like to hear, is farmers. Again, participants very much shop local farmers’ markets, trust farmers, appreciate knowing where their food comes from and the opportunity to develop a rapport with a local farmer. When visualizing a farmer, participants very much have a romantic vision of the small, local, family farmer who works hard every day to produce quality products.

> “I would like to hear from farmers. They could do workshops or ‘A Day at the Farm’ tours. They could get creative and use [web conference supplier]. It could be educational.” - Racialized Canadian participant, English

Beyond farmers, the sources that were more often deemed credible, included: researchers, scientists, academics, nutritionists/dietitians, and, the Government of Canada. The vast majority of participants felt these individuals/groups did not have an inherent bias or motive.

Additionally, Indigenous peoples would also welcome information from Indigenous groups. Few participants from the other groups mentioned Indigenous groups, however, some expressed interest in learning more about Indigenous culture and traditions.

When asked which sources they would not feel were credible sources of information about Canada’s agriculture and food sectors, most appeared to mention sources they felt might have an inherent bias. While not all participants agreed on all of the individuals/groups on this list, they were mentioned often enough in each group to be captured here: doctors, journalists/media, elected officials, celebrities, celebrity chefs, documentaries, grocery stores, and environmental groups. Participants explained that the majority of these individuals/groups have a bias or an agenda that would cause participants to regard them with more scrutiny than some of the sources mentioned above.

Conclusions

This qualitative study was designed to delve more deeply into the reasons behind the results of the 2020 Buy Canadian Promotion Campaign Baseline Survey and investigate what changes in perceptions there have been, if any, in Canadian opinion and behaviour relating to Canadian food, agriculture, and the food system more generally.

Where the previous study tended to elicit more specifics on how behaviours had rapidly been adapted to fit the requirements of the pandemic, this study elicited more specifics relating to how Canadians feel about the food system these days and their views and behaviours relating to food products and producers.

One of the most strongly held themes observed in the focus groups was around the appreciation for Canadian agriculture and the desire to show support for Canadian farmers by buying local, regional or Canadian products. For the most part, and consistent with the survey results, this was generally tied to a sense that Canadian or local products were better quality and better tasting and that regulations were more stringent in Canada. What seemed to be more pronounced in the focus groups, however, was the impact of the pandemic on purchase behaviour and desire to support local farmers from the economic impacts of both COVID-19 and increased competition. And, while not everyone seemed to be buying local, almost all recognized the vulnerability of local farmers and the lack of appreciation for their hard work.

Interestingly, when thinking about farmers (particularly local farmers), it was clear participants tended to be thinking of the passionate, dedicated, family farm operation that has tremendous work ethic and takes on a largely thankless, unrewarding task that is extremely valuable to society; less so of the larger scale farming operations.

As was discovered in the 2020 baseline survey, when it comes to protecting the environment, views of food producers in Canada continue to be more positive than negative and there is some degree of faith in farmers' judgement. However, as with the point above on the general feelings towards Canadian farmers, how one feels about producers' environmental stewardship was often tied to the size of the farming operation. One line of thinking that was presented was that the struggling family farmer living on the land they worked relied on the land for survival and would therefore be very protective of the health of the environment. When participants offered more negative impressions of the protection of the environment, it was often related to the perceived practices of large farming operations. When it comes to pesticides, opinions were mixed with some participants feeling pesticides were undesirable but perhaps necessary; several feeling they are completely unnecessary; and, a few feeling perfectly comfortable with their use.

One interesting aspect was how many participants had first-hand experience at a farm. Some had lived and/or worked on a farm at some point, while others shared fond memories of childhood experiences, employment, school trips, or pick-your-own fruit outings. The exposure was nearly unanimously described as positive; and, most participants expressed interest in learning more about at least one aspect of farming or food production, including of Indigenous or culturally diverse foods.

The subjects that seemed to be of the most interest included: understanding the challenges and costs to run a farm; where and how food is grown as well as what is in food; impact of farming on the environment; methods used for GMOs, pesticides, etc.; and, the role the government plays in supporting/regulating farmers, among other things.

Perhaps not surprising given the overall generally positive views, participants would most like to hear from farmers (especially those with smaller operations). Other sources that they deemed credible included researchers, scientists, academics, nutritionists/dietitians, and the Government of Canada. Indeed, many participants would like to hear about how the government supports and promotes Canadian agriculture, food and farmers. The sources that they felt were not as credible included: doctors, journalists/media, elected officials, celebrities, grocery stores and environmental groups.

Appendix A: Qualitative Methodology Report

Methodology

The research was comprised of 18 focus groups with Canadian consumers aged 18 and older representing different regions across the country and a variety of specific populations. Of the 18 focus groups, five were conducted in French while the rest were conducted in English. The discussion groups were conducted online between April 26 and May 3, 2021. The groups took on average 90 minutes. Participants were offered an honorarium of $100 as a thank you for their participation.

Schedule and composition of the focus groups

Audience	Moderator	Participants	Date/Time
Atlantic youth (18-34)	Stephanie Constable	9	Monday, April 26, 5:00 pm (EDT)
Prairies youth (18-34)	Stephanie Constable	8	Monday, April 26, 7:00 pm (EDT)
Quebec youth (18-34) (French)	Stephanie Constable	9	Tuesday April 27, 5:00 pm (EDT)
Quebec non-youth (35+) (French)	Stephanie Constable	8	Tuesday April 27, 7:00 pm (EDT)
Atlantic non-youth (35+)	Doug Anderson	10	Tuesday April 27, 5:00 pm (EDT)
Prairies non-youth (35+)	Doug Anderson	8	Tuesday April 27, 7:00 pm (EDT)
Racialized Canadians (French)	Stephanie Constable	10	Wednesday, April 28, 5:00 pm (EDT)
Racialized Canadians (English)	Stephanie Constable	9	Wednesday, April 28, 7:00 pm (EDT)
Ontario youth (18-34)	Doug Anderson	8	Wednesday, April 28, 6:00 pm (EDT)
BC youth (18-34)	Doug Anderson	10	Wednesday, April 28, 8:00 pm (EDT)
OLMC (English in Quebec)	Stephanie Constable	9	Thursday April 29, 5:00 pm (EDT)
OLMC (French outside of Quebec)	Stephanie Constable	9	Thursday April 29, 7:00 pm (EDT)
Ontario non-youth (35+)	Doug Anderson	9	Thursday April 29, 6:00 pm (EDT)
BC non-youth (35+)	Doug Anderson	10	Thursday April 29, 8:00 pm (EDT)
Vulnerable populations (French)	Stephanie Constable	7	Monday, May 3, 5:00 pm (EDT)
Indigenous peoples (West)	Stephanie Constable	8	Monday, May 3, 7:00 pm (EDT)
Indigenous peoples (East)	Doug Anderson	9	Monday, May 3, 5:00 pm (EDT)
Vulnerable populations (English)	Doug Anderson	10	Monday, May 3, 7:00 pm (EDT)

Recruitment

Participants were recruited using a screening questionnaire (included in Appendix C).

The target audiences were: youth (18-34), non-youth (35+), vulnerable populations, racialized Canadians, Indigenous peoples, and official language minority Canadians. All had a positive, neutral or slightly negative impression of Canada's agriculture and food sector, and main or joint responsibility for grocery shopping in their households. The screener contained a series of standard screening questions to ensure participants qualified based on their demographics. Additionally, participants were screened to ensure a good mix of gender, community type, household income, ethnicity, etc.

Fieldwork was conducted by Quality Response. Their database includes approximately 35,000 Canadians with profiling on a range of attributes including standard personal demographics, household composition, medical background, technology usage, financial services, health and wellness, business profiles, and other relevant criteria. Potential group participants are recruited to their database via mixed-mode: following a proprietary telephone survey, online, referral, social media and print advertising. Initial contact is often made via email or online pre-screening for speed and economies, followed up by personal telephone recruitment and pre-group attendance confirmation.

Quality Response's partners for this project included:

- Metroline: Metroline's database includes approximately 4,500 Canadians. New participants are added to their database via referrals and online advertising. Metroline profiles their database for a variety of characteristics including but not limited to: location; marital status; occupation; income; smoking habits; drinking habits, etc.
- MBA Recherche: MBA Recherche's vast database includes approximately 35,000 Canadians across Quebec. They use Google ads, their website, telephone random digit dialing (RDD) lists, and referrals to recruit new participants. In addition to a variety of demographics, MBA Recherche's profiling includes automobile types, substance use, and mobile phone attributes.
- Walmsley Research: Walmsley's database is comprised of approximately 5,500 residents of Vancouver. They rely on referrals and online advertisements to recruit to their database. In addition to a variety of demographics, their database is profiled for: age of children, occupation, spouse's occupation, health issues, etc.
- Qualitative Coordination: Qualitative Coordination's database contains approximately 5,500 Calgarians. Qualitative Coordination uses referrals and online advertisements to find new participants. Their database is not profiled, and new registrants are only asked for their full name, email address, date of birth, and where they reside.
- Brookson: Located in Ottawa, Ontario, Brookson Research's database is comprised of approximately 9,500 individuals in Ottawa and the surrounding area. Data is stored locally and backed up by a local third party provider. New people are added to the database via phone, text, email and corporate website. The company does twice-yearly drives to refresh the database in English and French. The database is profiled by name, gender, age, contact information, city of residence, education, mother tongue, occupation and history attending market research sessions.
- Pele Research: Located in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Pele Research's database includes approximately 3,000 Canadians per province. The data is stored locally and is backed up on two separate in-house services. Pele Research profiles their database by name, age, gender, income, education, occupation, and phone number.
- Indigenous Link: Using their community outreach strategies, Indigenous Link can reach directly into 28,000 Indigenous offices, both on and off reserve where 1.6 million Indigenous individuals work, live, learn, and play. In addition to directly targeting Indigenous leaders, decision-makers, community members, and job seekers, they publish information to more than 50,000 e-subscribers and social media followers across Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, and a network of Indigenous focused websites ensuring messages are inclusive to all Indigenous Peoples.

Moderation

Given the accelerated timeline, two moderators were used to conduct the focus groups. Stephanie Constable led the first night of groups while Doug Anderson observed to ensure both were aware of the flow of the focus groups and involved in any conversation about potential changes to the discussion guide or flow of conversation for subsequent groups.

A note about interpreting qualitative research results

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.

Reporting

Except where specifically identified, the findings represent the combined results regardless of audience, location or language (English and French). Quotations exhibited throughout the report are selected on the sole basis of bringing the report to life, and providing unique verbatim commentary from the participants across the various locations.

Glossary of terms

The following is a glossary of terms used throughout the report. These phrases are used when groups of participants share a specific point of view. Unless otherwise stated, it should not be taken to mean that the rest of participants disagreed with the point; rather others either did not comment or did not have a strong opinion on the question.

Term	Definition
Few	**Few** is used when less than 10% of participants have responded with similar answers.
Several	**Several** is used when fewer than 20% of the participants responded with similar answers.
Some	**Some** is used when more than 20% but significantly fewer than 50% of participants with similar answers.
Many	**Many** is used when nearly 50% of participants responded with similar answers.
Majority/Plurality	**Majority** or **plurality** are used when more than 50% but fewer than 75% of the participants responded with similar answers.
Most	**Most** is used when more than 75% of the participants responded with similar answers.
Vast majority	**Vast majority** is used when nearly all participants responded with similar answers, but several had differing views.
Unanimous/Almost all	**Unanimous** or **almost all** are used when all participants gave similar answers or when the vast majority of participants gave similar answers and the remaining few declined to comment on the issue in question.

Appendix B: Discussion Guide

Introduction (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.

Welcome everyone. I would like to begin by acknowledging that I am joining this discussion from the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg people.

- The name of the firm the moderator works for, and the type of firm that employs them (specifically, an independent marketing research firm).
- Role of participants: speak openly and frankly about 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 (1.5 hours).
- The presence of any observers, their role and purpose, and the means of observation (observers viewing and listening in remotely).
- The presence and purpose of any recording being made of the session.
- Confirm participants are comfortable with the platform and some specific settings such as: how to mute and unmute themselves; where the hand raise button is; and, the chat box.

Moderator to explain the research purpose and disclose the research sponsor, described, at a minimum. These groups are being conducted on behalf of the Government of Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, specifically. The purpose is to understand people's views of agriculture and food products in Canada.

Moderator will ask participants to introduce themselves. Given the topic the moderator will also ask about the household composition and the role they play in grocery shopping and meal preparation.

Context and Understanding (Warm-up) (15 minutes)

To begin, I'd like to spend some time understanding your initial thoughts/reactions to a variety of different words/terms. I am going to display each on screen and I would ask you to write what comes to mind in the chat.

- What comes to mind when you think about…?
  - Food
  - Local food
  - Indigenous food **[FOR INDIGENOUS GROUPS] Country or traditional food**
  - Canadian agriculture
  - Canadian farmers

- What do you think are the biggest challenges facing the Canadian agriculture sector? Why?
  - **Probe:** Weather, land, environment, other (please specify)? How so? Why?

- Has your perception of Canadian agriculture and food changed over the past year? How so? Why?
  - What about your level of trust in Canada's food system? Why?
  - What would improve your level of trust in Canada's food system? Why?

Buying Local or Canadian Foods (15 minutes)

- When you shop, do you look for local and/or Canadian foods? Why or why not?
  - **[IF YES]** What about local and/or Canadian foods is important to you? Why?
    - **Probe:** Brand/logo, price, safety, quality, nutrition, taste, corporate ethics, environment, supporting local economy
  - What do you consider to be local? Why?
    - **Probe: province, region, distance from your home, Canadian**.
- If price was the same or higher, what factors would motivate you to buy a Canadian product over an imported product? Why?
  - **Probe:** quality, freshness, nutrition, environment, supporting local economy, other (please specify)
- Since COVID, have you looked for more local foods in your grocery stores, restaurants, or online shopping? Why or why not?
- When you're shopping, do you ever have trouble finding the local foods you're searching for? Which products?
  - **Probe:** local berries in winter, seasonal foods
  - When that happens, what do you do or buy instead? Why?

Perceptions of and Trust in Canadian Farmers (25 minutes)

- What word(s) would you use to describe farmers? Why? **[MODERATOR TO MAKE A LIST ON SCREEN]**
  - **[IF NOT MENTIONED] Probe:**
    - family run/business
    - local
    - hardworking
    - pride
    - innovative
    - care about environment
    - educated
    - admirable
    - good employers
    - profitable

- Do you do trust farmers? Why or why not?
  - What makes you trust farmers? What makes you not trust them? Why?
  - Do you think farmers are under appreciated? Why?
  - Would you like to show your appreciation to farmers? If so, how?
  - Do you think farmers should show their appreciation to you? If so, how?

- **[HANDS UP]** Have you ever visited a farm?
  - Have you ever done a virtual farm tour?
  - **[IF YES]** What kind of farm and why did you go?

  - **[IF YES]** What did you think of your experience visiting the farm? Was anything surprising to you?
  - **[IF YES]** Did you come away from your visit with a better or worse impression of Canadian farms/farmers or did your view not change as a result? Why or why not?
  - **[IF NO]** Why not? What types of farms would you be interested in seeing, if you could? What would you expect to see at a farm?
- How, if at all, do you think farming impacts the environment? Why?
  - Do you think farmers protect and take care of the land? Why or why not?
    - To the best of your knowledge, have their approaches/practices improved, worsened or stayed the same over the years? Why?
  - Do you think pesticides are necessary in food production? Why or why not?
- When you think about farmers, farming and food, is there anything you'd like to better understand/learn about? Why?
  - **[IF NOT MENTIONED] Probe:** farming practices, local foods, plant-based foods, Indigenous or Inuit foods, culturally diverse foods
- Are you interested in better understanding the harvesting and production of Indigenous or culturally diverse foods? Why or why not?
  - Have you heard the term "Country Food" or Traditional Food, with respect to Indigenous food systems?
    - Probe: Country food/traditional food: Inuit food, game, seal, fish, berries, hunting, caribou, etc.

Communications Needs (10 minutes)

- **[HANDS UP]** Do you seek out information about food and agriculture? Why or why not?
  - What information do you typically look for?
  - Where do you look?
  - What platforms do you use?
  - What aspects of Canadian agriculture do you feel most knowledgeable about?
  - What information do you think people should know more about in regards to Canadian agriculture?
  - Would you be interested in hearing from or meeting an agriculture scientist? Would you be interested in visiting a research lab?

- Who would you most want to receive information about food and agriculture from?
  - Who do you trust, or what sources do you find most credible when seeking information about food and agriculture? Why? Probe: specific sources
  - Do you follow food influencers? Why or why not? Probe: specific sources
  - **[MODERATOR TO SHARE SCREEN]** Is there anyone on the following list that you feel is NOT a credible source for information about Canada's agriculture and food sectors? Why or why not?
    - Doctors
    - Journalists/News media
    - Family/Friends
    - Farmers
    - Farmers' markets
    - Elected officials
    - Researchers
    - Celebrities
    - Documentaries

- Celebrity chefs
- Scientists
- Nutritionists or Dietitians
- Grocery stores
- Academics
- Government of Canada
- Non-profit organizations
- Indigenous groups
- Environmental groups

[IF TIME PERMITS] Government Role in Agriculture and Food (5 minutes)

- What, if any, do you think the Government of Canada's role should be in agriculture and food? Why?
- Do you feel the Government of Canada should make a better effort to get involved in…
  - Helping farmers?
  - Food security?
  - Food processing?
  - Food labelling?
  - Health and nutrition of animals?

[IF TIME PERMITS] Food Security and Food Waste (10 minutes, total 90 minutes)

- What does food security mean to you?
  - What would cause food insecurity?
  - Are you aware of a particular group that is more affected than others?
    - Probe: rural versus urban, elderly, low income, racialized groups

- What does food waste mean to you?
  - What steps do you take to reduce food waste?
  - Why does food in your household go to waste?
  - Are there any specific challenges you face?

Conclusion

MODERATOR TO CHECK IN THE VIRTUAL BACK ROOM AND PROBE ON ANY ADDITIONAL AREAS OF INTEREST.

This concludes what we needed to cover today/tonight.

- Do you have any final thoughts or advice to pass along?

We really appreciate you taking the time to share your views. Your input is very important. Thank you very much.

Appendix C: Recruitment screener

Summary

- Recruit 10 participants for each group EXCEPT Groups 16 and 17, recruit 12 participants.
- Participants must be at least 18 years of age.
- All have a positive, neutral or slightly negative impression of Canada's agriculture and food sector; no one has a very negative impression of Canada's agriculture and food sector (S2).
- All must have main or joint responsibility for grocery shopping in their households (S3).
- Good mix of demographics (age, income, ethnicity, etc.) in each group, as appropriate (S4-S10)

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TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 2021 GROUP 5: ATLANTIC Non-youth (35+) GROUP 6: PRAIRIES Non-youth (35+)	 5:00 pm EDT / 6:00 pm ADT / 6:30 pm NDT 7:00 pm EDT / 6:00 pm CDT / 5:00 pm CST / 5:00 pm MDT
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28, 2021 GROUP 7: RACIALIZED (French) GROUP 8: RACIALIZED (English)	 5:00 pm EDT 7:00 pm EDT / 8:00 pm ADT / 8:30 pm NDT / 6:00 pm CDT / 5:00 pm CST / 5:00 pm MDT / 4:00 pm PDT
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28, 2021 GROUP 9: ONTARIO youth (18-34) GROUP 10: BC Youth (18-34)	 6:00 pm EDT 8:00 pm EDT / 5:00 PM PDT
THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 2021 GROUP 11: OLMC (English in Quebec) GROUP 12: OLMC (French outside Quebec)	 5:00 pm EDT 7:00 pm EDT / 8:00 pm ADT / 6:00 pm CDT
THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 2021 GROUP 13: ONTARIO Non-youth (35+) GROUP 14: BC Non-youth (35+)	 6:00 pm EDT 8:00 pm EDT / 5:00 PM PDT
MONDAY, MAY 3, 2021 GROUP 15: LOW SES (French) GROUP 16: INDIGENOUS (West)	 5:00 pm EDT 7:00 pm EDT / 6:00 pm CDT / 5:00 pm CST / 5:00 pm MDT / 4:00 pm PDT
MONDAY, MAY 3, 2021 GROUP 17: INDIGENOUS (East) GROUP 18: LOW SES (English)	 5:00 pm EDT / 6:00 pm ADT / 6:30 pm NDT 7:00 pm EDT / 8:00 pm ADT / 8:30 pm NDT / 6:00 pm CDT / 5:00 pm CST / 5:00 pm MDT / 4:00 pm PDT

Hello/Bonjour, my name is _______________ and I'm calling on behalf of Earnscliffe, a national public opinion research firm. We are organizing a series of discussion groups on issues of importance to Canadians, on behalf of the Government of Canada, specifically for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. The purpose of the study is to understand perceptions and views of Canada's agriculture and food sector.

We are looking for people who would be willing to participate in a discussion group that will last up to ninety minutes. These people must be 18 years of age or older. Up to 10 participants will be taking part and for their time, participants will receive an honorarium of $100.00. May I continue?

Yes	CONTINUE
No	THANK AND TERMINATE

Would you prefer that I continue in English or French? Préférez-vous continuer en français ou en anglais? **[IF FRENCH, CONTINUE IN FRENCH OR ARRANGE A CALL BACK WITH FRENCH INTERVIEWER:** Nous vous rappellerons pour mener cette entrevue de recherche en français. Merci. Au revoir].

Participation is voluntary. 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? This will only take about 5 minutes.

Yes	CONTINUE
No	THANK AND TERMINATE

READ TO ALL: "This call may be monitored or recorded for quality control and evaluation purposes.
ADDITIONAL CLARIFICATION IF NEEDED:

- To ensure that I (the interviewer) am reading the questions correctly and collecting your answers accurately;
- To assess my (the interviewer) work for performance evaluation;
- To ensure that the questionnaire is accurate/correct (specifically, evaluation of programming and methodology – we're asking the right questions to meet our clients' research requirements)
- If the call is recorded, it is only for the purposes of playback to the interviewer for a performance evaluation immediately after the interview is conducted or it can be used by the Project Manager/client to evaluate the questionnaire if they are unavailable at the time of the interview – all recordings are destroyed after the evaluation.

S1. Do you or any member of your household 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
The healthcare sector (READ if necessary: such as physicians, nutritionists, dietitians, etc.)	1	2
The agriculture and farming sector	1	2
Food manufacturing/food industry	1	2

IF "YES" TO ANY OF THE ABOVE, THANK AND TERMINATE.

S2. Generally speaking, what is your overall impression of Canada's agriculture and food sector? **[ENSURE GOOD MIX]**

Very positive	1
Somewhat positive	2
Neutral	3
Somehwat negative	4
Very negative	5 THANK AND TERMINATE

S3. I am going to read you three statements. Please let me know which one most accurately reflects your role in your household.

a. I have the main responsibility of grocery shopping in my household.
b. I share joint responsibility of grocery shopping in my household.
c. I do not have main or joint responsibility of grocery shopping in my household.

ALL PARTICIPANTS MUST BE A OR B – PREFERENCE FOR A'S. IF C, THANK AND TERMINATE

S4. Please indicate your gender. Do you identify as…?

A man	1
A woman	2
Gender diverse	3
Don't know/Prefer not to say	9 THANK AND TERMINATE

PLEASE AIM TO RECRUIT SOME GENDER DIVERSE IN THE GROUPS

S5. How would you describe the area in which you live? **[ENSURE GOOD MIX]**

Large urban population centre, that is, it has a population 100,000 or greater	1
Medium urban population centre, that is, it has a population of 30,000 to 99,999	2
Small urban population centre, that is, it has a population of 1,000 to 29,999	3
Rural area, that is, it has a population of less than 1,000	4
Remote area, that is, it has a population of less than 1,000 and you are isolated from other communities	5
Don't know/Prefer not to say	9

IF DON'T KNOW/PREFER NOT TO SAY, THANK AND TERMINATE

S6. Could you please tell me which of the following age categories you fall in to? Are you...? **[ENSURE GOOD MIX]**

18-24 years	1
25-29 years	2
30-34 years	3
35-44 years	4
45-54 years	5
55-64 years	6
65+ years	7
Don't know/Prefer not to say	9 THANK AND TERMINATE

S7. What is your current employment status? **[ENSURE GOOD MIX]**

Working full-time	1
Working part-time	2
Self-employed	3
Retired	4
Unemployed	5
Student	6
Homemaker	7
Other (please specify)	8
Don't know/Prefer not to say	9 THANK AND TERMINATE

S8. Which of the following categories best describes your total annual household income? That is, the total income of all persons in your household combined, before taxes [READ LIST]? **[ENSURE GOOD MIX]**

Under $20,000	1
$20,000 to under $40,000	2
$40,000 to under $60,000	3
$60,000 to under $80,000	4
$80,000 to under $100,000	5
$100,000 to under $150,000	6
$150,000 or more	7
Don't know/Prefer not to say	9 THANK AND TERMINATE

TO QUALIFY AS LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS (SES), MUST HAVE A TOTAL ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME UNDER $40,000

S9. What is the last level of education that you have completed? *[ENSURE GOOD MIX]*

Some high school only	1
Completed high school	2
Some college/university	3
Completed college/university	4
Post-graduate studies	5
Don't know/Prefer not to say	9 THANK AND TERMINATE

S10. To make sure that we speak to a diversity of people, could you tell me what is your cultural background? **DO NOT READ [ENSURE GOOD MIX]**

Caucasian	1
Chinese	2
South Asian (East Indian, Pakistani, etc.)	3
Black	4
Filipino	5
Latin American	6
Southeast Asian (Vietnamese, etc.)	7
Arab	8
West Asian (Iranian, Afghan, etc.)	9
Korean	10
Japanese	11
Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit)	12
Other (please specify)	13
Don't know/Prefer not to say	99, THANK AND TERMINATE

TO QUALIFY AS RACIALIZED (GROUPS 7 AND 8), MUST NOT BE CAUCASIAN. MUST SAY 'INDIGENOUS' TO QUALIFY AS INDIGENOUS (GROUPS 16 AND 17)

This research will require participating in a video call online.

S11. Do you have access to a computer, smartphone or tablet with high speed internet which will allow you to participate in an online discussion group?

Yes	CONTINUE
No	THANK AND TERMINATE

S12. Does your computer, smartphone or tablet have a camera that will allow you to be visible to the moderator and other participants as part of an online discussion group?

Yes	CONTINUE
No	THANK AND TERMINATE

S13. Do you have a personal email address that is currently active and available to you?

Yes	CONTINUE, PLEASE RECORD EMAIL
No	THANK AND TERMINATE

S14. Have you participated in a discussion or focus group before? A discussion group brings together a few people in order to know their opinion about a given subject.

Yes	1 (MAX 1/3 PER GROUP, ASK S15, S16, S17)
No	2 SKIP TO S18
Don't know/Prefer not to say	9 THANK AND TERMINATE

S15. When was the last time you attended a discussion or focus group?

If within the last 6 months	1 THANK AND TERMINATE
If not within the last 6 months	2 CONTINUE
Don't know/Prefer not to say	9 THANK AND TERMINATE

S16. 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
Don't know/Prefer not to say	9 THANK AND TERMINATE

S17. And what was/were the main topic(s) of discussion in those groups?

IF RELATED TO AGRICULTURE, FARMING, FOOD, FOOD QUALITY, FOOD PRODUCTION, THANK AND TERMINATE.

INVITATION

S18. 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
Fairly comfortable	2 CONTINUE
Comfortable	3 CONTINUE

Not very comfortable	4 THANK AND TERMINATE
Very uncomfortable	5 THANK AND TERMINATE
Don’t know/Prefer not to say	9 THANK AND TERMINATE

S19. Sometimes participants are asked to read text, review images, or write out answers during the discussion. Is there any reason why you could not participate?

Yes	1 ASK S20
No	2 SKIP TO S22
Don’t know/Prefer not to say	9 THANK AND TERMINATE

S20. Is there anything we could do to ensure that you can participate?

Yes	1 ASK S21
No	2 THANK AND TERMINATE
Don’t know/Prefer not to say	9 THANK AND TERMINATE

S21. What specifically? [OPEN END]

S22. Based on your responses, it looks like you have the profile we are looking for. I would like to invite you to participate in a small group discussion, called a focus group, we are conducting at [TIME], on [DATE].

As you may know, focus groups are used to gather information on a particular subject matter; in this case, the discussion will touch on Canada’s agriculture and food sectors. The discussion will consist of approximately 8 to 10 people and will be very informal.

Yes	1 RECRUIT
No	2 THANK AND TERMINATE
Don’t know/Prefer not to say	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 a list of respondents’ first names and profiles (screener responses) to the moderator so that they can sign you into the group. 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 first names and background of the people attending the focus group because only the individuals invited are allowed in the session and this information is necessary 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 first name and profile?

Yes	1 GO TO P2
No	2 THANK AND TERMINATE

P2) A recording of the group session will be produced for research purposes. The recordings will be used by the research professional to assist in preparing a report on the research findings and may be used by the Government of Canada and their advertising agency for internal reporting and analysis purposes.

Do you agree to be recorded for research and reporting purposes only?

Yes	1 THANK AND GO TO P32
No	2 READ RESPONDENT INFO BELOW AND GO TO P2A

It is necessary for the research process for us to record the session as the researchers need this material to complete the report and the Government of Canada may need them for their own analysis purposes and to help inform their communications plan/approach.

P2a) Now that I've explained this, do I have your permission for recording?

Yes	1 THANK AND GO TO P3
No	2 THANK AND TERMINATE

P3) Employees from the Government of Canada and their marketing communications agency may also be online to observe the groups.

Do you agree to be observed by employees of the Government of Canada and their marketing communications agency?

Yes	1 THANK AND GO TO INVITATION
No	2 GO TO P3A

P3a) It is standard qualitative procedure to invite clients and their agencies to observe the groups online. They will be there simply to hear your opinions firsthand 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 employees of the Government of Canada and their marketing communications agency?

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 ninety minutes.

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We ask that you login a few minutes early to be sure you are able to connect and to test your camera and sound (speaker and microphone). If you require glasses for reading, please make sure you have them handy 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, email 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.