



CFA 2025 Annual General Meeting

February 25th, 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

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Summary Notes: Public Perception of Agriculture Workshop Overview

This workshop explored the public perception of agriculture and farmers in Canada, examining the factors that shape these views and identifying strategies to foster a more informed and positive relationship between the agricultural sector and the general public. Participants engaged in discussions, interactive activities, and presentations that highlight both challenges and opportunities in this critical area.

Moderator: Catherine King, Vice-President of Corporate Affairs, Fertilizer Canada

Keynote: Lisa Bishop-Spencer, Executive Director, Canadian Centre for Food Integrity

Panelists:

- Tim Kennedy, President & CEO, Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance
- Dorothy Long, Managing Director, Canadian Food Focus
- Luree Williams, CEO, Agriculture for Life

The Problem

While Canadian agriculture is of vital importance to the Canadian economy, food security and domestic resilience, the public knows very little about agriculture or how their food gets to their plate.

Public Trust

Keynote speaker Lisa Bishop-Spencer presented results from their study “Public Trust in Canada’s Food System.” The results show that trust in the Canadian food system is eroding, as less than half of Canadians view the food system positively, and pessimistic feelings are on the rise. However, the agrifood sector remains the most trusted sector, with farmers being the most trusted, closely followed by scientists and university researchers.



There is a need to have better communication and transparency with the public, especially to combat misinformation and disinformation.

At a time when more Canadians feel connected to a Canadian identity, the agriculture and food sector has an opportunity to foster optimism and be a rallying point. Although several efforts have been undertaken to elevate the food system, they've been usually scattered, lacked transparency, used ineffective messaging, and had insufficient resources. The Canadian Centre for Food Integrity presented their strategy to elevate Canada's food system by working together, focusing on grassroots, and better communication with the public & consumers, to tackle misinformation, increase trust, and secure a policy environment that fosters innovation.

Outreach

Dorothy Long presented the work being currently done by Canadian Food Focus ([Home - Canadian Food Focus](#)), an outreach program to help consumers know more about Canadian food. She noted the positive engagement they have, including 50% open rate for the newsletter. Their focus is to reach consumers in cities, and work with existing organizations and commodity groups to amplify their messages. She also talked about the need to focus on the benefits to consumers, engaging with dieticians and other influential actors to bridge the gap between farmers and food consumers.

Tim Kennedy talked about the need for communication to focus on what appeals to people, and to move away from technical and detached explanations that do not resonate with people. He talked briefly about the current challenges that aquaculture is facing due to activism and stressed the need for critics to be held accountable to the same high standards of truth that are being imposed on the agriculture sector. He ended with the need to engage with people, especially young city dwellers, who are far removed from the realities of rural areas, and especially aquaculture.

Luree Williams from Ag in the Classroom ([Home | AITC Canada](#)) presented their work with students in schools where they directly reach over one million students per year. She stressed the importance of teaching the young generation about food, where it comes from, and what agriculture really is about. She also talked about the interest and positive reactions they receive from teachers and students.

Participants raised questions on how to update the outdated view that most people had of agriculture. Panelists focused on the need to show rather than tell, be truthful, and educate



urban centers that are far removed from agriculture, while holding on to values and showing people the outcomes of the industry (e.g. job opportunities). Some examples included farm visits, short-term work opportunities on farm (similar to tree planting programs), etc.

Participants then had small group discussions around prepared questions on public outreach. Answers focused on:

- The need to listen and engage with producer associations, work collaboratively and have common messaging, build relationships with others such as government, and even inside the government to break the silos.
- The need to educate the general public, especially the ones who would have the bigger influence on policies, and increase respect for the agricultural sector.
- The importance of education and adding agriculture to the curriculum, and support initiatives to buy local.
- The need to present agriculture as a solution to climate change in Canada.