

An Open Letter to the Government of Canada Against Increased Regulations on Canadian Farmers.

In a move started under the Harper government and now continued by the Trudeau government, the Canadian Food Inspection agency is pushing forward a plan to increase the licensing and regulatory requirements on Canadian farms.

The full disclosure of the Safe Food for Canadians Act and what is proposed along with what this means can be found at:

<http://www.gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p1/2017/2017-01-21/html/reg1-eng.php#reg>

Who could be against safe food? I certainly am not. I'm a small Canadian farmer and my livelihood depends on safe food. If we have a major food safety issue from our farm it would put us out of business in a heartbeat. Food safety is a number one priority.

That said, I do not believe that increasing regulation on Canadian farmers will actually benefit Canadians and instead I believe it will only continue to speed up the widespread loss of Canadian family farms. I support the notion that regulations be consolidated and simplified, but I do not support increasing the regulations on fresh fruit and vegetable farmers nor do I support increasing regulations for the organic food sector which is already so regulated that young and new farmers are being scared off.

Here is why I believe this...

I reviewed all the food safety recalls on the CFIA website from 2013 - Feb 2017 and discovered that there were 840 food recalls (sometimes multiple recalls pertaining to one issue) during this time. Of these half are for labeling related issues pertaining to allergens not listed on the label etc. The other half are food safety related. Of the half that are food safety related, the majority are for meats and packaged ready to eat foods with only 22 recalls of fresh fruit and vegetables (excluding seeds, grains, and packaged herbs). Of these, 21 cases are either clearly imported or international in scope. Several recalls were triggered by recalls in other countries but it does not specify where the product was grown. Only 1 recall was clearly from Canadian farms and this was the needle issue in potatoes from PEI. There were no injuries or deaths as a result.

The gazette with the link above explains that fresh fruit and vegetable imports into Canada have doubled from 2006 to 2015. Yes, I can see that we may be importing more product out of season and more tropical fruits etc, but twice as much in 9 short years? This tells me Canadian farmers are already at a disadvantage. We can't compete in the global marketplace and it is increasingly cheaper to bring fresh fruits and vegetables from other countries. The statistics also show that this is where the vast majority of food related contamination is coming from.

So the government of Canada's solution to the problem? Regulate everyone! Regulate imports and regulate the Canadian farmer because we have to be on a "level playing field". Sadly our playing field is not level from the start and this will only exacerbate the problem. Canadian farmers have already shown that they are not the primary problem.

So if the Canadian government pushes forward with this regulatory agenda, how much is this added regulation going to cost the farmer? Again, the same gazette publication listed above says and I quote “the estimated average annualized costs for an impacted business to implement preventative controls and a PCP (*Preventive Control Procedure*) are \$6,370.” This is every year folks!

So my message to the Canadian Government is “Don’t punish us for the problems brought in with imported foods. Regulate the imports if you must, but whatever you do, do not put more regulatory burdens on the Canadian farmer who is already doing a great job. “

There is a public comment period open now to all Canadians so my message to the Canadian public is: “Please support Canadian farmers and speak up. Tell our government that you want to buy and eat Canadian grown food and that we do not need more regulations on Canadian farms that are clearly doing a great job.”

“Also for those interested in organic food, please tell our government that we need to make the certification process possible for more farms to join and do not support making the process harder and more costly which will only serve to reduce the availability of great Canadian-grown organic food.”

Tim Livingstone,

Strawberry Hill Farm, NB

Have your say

Canadians and food businesses play an important role in keeping the food we eat safe. Your feedback is important.

These are links from the CFIA (Canadian Food Inspection Agency):

We want to hear from you. Visit inspection.gc.ca/safefood to [learn more and have your say](#).

During the 90-day consultation period, the CFIA will host a series of webinars and information sessions across Canada. [Register online](#) at inspection.gc.ca/safefood.

[Stay connected](#) to receive the latest news and updates. Sign up for emails, or follow us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

Join Canada's food safety conversation online using #SafeFoodCan.

Still have questions? Ask CFIA. [Contact us](#).