



**ENSURE EVERYONE IS AT THE
TABLE**



**FSC
RAD**

Food
Secure
Canada
Réseau
pour une alimentation
durable

WHAT IS EAT THINK VOTE?

Eat Think Vote is a non-partisan campaign, gathering community members living coast-to-coast-to-coast to speak with federal candidates ahead of the upcoming election. This backgrounder, and other policy backgrounders are based on Growing resilience and equity, Food Secure Canada's food policy action. It is grounded in the analysis and policy proposals of civil society food movement actors across the country, and situated within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Framework. This page highlights the intersections between the policy issues and the SDGs

CONTEXT: ENSURING EVERYONE IS AT THE TABLE

In June 2019 the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Marie-Claude Bibeau, launched the first-ever Food Policy For Canada¹. While welcoming the Policy as an important first step, and encouraged by its ambitious vision and principles, Food Secure Canada was disappointed by its modest initial budget and limited programming mechanisms².

Then, after years of collective advocacy, the federal government announced the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council (CFPAC), which convened for the first time on March 4, 2021. This was a key moment for the Canadian food movement, with an independent, multi-stakeholder body with some diversity of voices appointed to advise the Minister on implementing the Food Policy. The new Council has 22 members including food movement leaders, non-profits, academics, health professionals, farmers, processors and retailers. However, with only one Indigenous member, and no budget to support the equal participation of diverse members, the Council is not yet equipped to meet its representation goals.

¹ Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food (June 2019) Food Policy for Canada. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/campaign/food-policy/thefoodpolicy.html>

² Food Secure Canada (June 2019) Food Policy Analysis. Retrieved from <https://foodsecurecanada.org/policy-advocacy>

CONTEXT:

ENSURING EVERYONE IS AT THE TABLE

The Advisory Council has the potential to encourage meaningful progress on complex issues. As Melana Roberts, FSC Chair and Council member said “The Food Policy is a roadmap towards greater accountability and public engagement in food systems governance. We are in desperate need of policy leadership that not only addresses the mounting levels of food insecurity, but also advances racial justice and food sovereignty for Indigenous Peoples, Black communities and racialized groups – who are most disproportionately impacted by gaps in our food system.”

Despite the new Council’s emergence, existing industry roundtables and strategy tables representing private interests dominate. It will be important for the CFPAC to get to work to actualize the broad vision of the Food Policy for Canada, and be empowered to engage in policy decisions and program design measured against Canada’s right to food and other human rights obligations, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals.

Beyond the Council, developing and financing spaces and channels for broader and deeper civil society participation will be necessary to provide diverse and inclusive contributions to food policy-making. Ensuring that those who disproportionately experience food insecurity are resourced and heard is vital. Now, more than ever, we need everyone at the table, guiding further development and implementation of coherent, coordinated food policy in the public interest.

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

It is also important to consider the international dimensions³ of the current pandemic. Covid-19 is affecting people and food systems globally. According to the World Food Programme acute food insecurity has soared to a five-year high⁴. On September 23rd, 2021 just days after the federal election, the UN Food Systems Summit will convene. Summit organizers have been heavily criticized from the outset for bypassing established multilateral processes, such as the United Nations Committee on World Food Security, in favour of a multi-stakeholder approach where the voices of large corporations (e.g., synthetic agricultural input companies) risk overshadowing those of civil society organizations and small-hold farmers^{5,6}.

It is critical that Canada play a strong role on the world stage in order to encourage the kind of global response⁷ that will not only respond to immediate food needs, but build more resilient food systems longer-term. Coherent and integrated trade, aid and development policies, programmes and approaches must be designed to both specifically support the small farmers who produce more than 70% of the world's food, and to prioritise low-input, low-emissions, agroecological food production that will help food producers and processors get through subsequent shocks and crises. More broadly, farmers and communities must be supported in their efforts to build place-based resilient and agroecological food webs and systems⁸. Having everyone at the table reminds us that ultimately, we are all in this together. Championing healthy, just and sustainable food policies domestically and abroad will build a better food future for all.

³ International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) (April, 2020) COVID-19 and the crisis in food systems: symptoms, causes, and potential solutions. Retrieved from <http://www.ipes-food.org/pages/covid19>

⁴ World Food Program (21 April, 2020) COVID-19 will double number of people facing food crises unless swift action is taken. Retrieved from <https://www.wfp.org/news/covid-19-will-double-number-people-facing-food-crises-unless-swift-action-taken>

⁵ Fakhri, M., De Schutter, O., & Elver, H. (2021, March 22). *The UN food Systems Summit: How not to respond to the urgency of reform*. Inter Press Service. <http://www.ipsnews.net/2021/03/un-food-systems-summit-not-respond-urgency-reform/>.

⁶ Chaurette, E, & Yasmeen, G. (2021). It's time for Canada to show food policy leadership – at home and abroad. *National Observer*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2021/07/08/opinion/canada-food-policy-leadership-at-home-abroad>

⁷ Rabinowicz J. and Settle M. (22 April 2020) COVID-19 is creating a [global] food crisis and Canada needs to respond (SeedChange). Retrieved from <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2020/04/22/opinion/covid-19-creating-food-crisis-and-canada-needs-respond>

⁸ National Farmers Union and Via Campesina (17 April, 2020) Till, sow and harvest transformative ideas for the future! - Now is the moment to demand food. Retrieved from <https://www.nfu.ca/till-sow-and-harvest-transformative-ideas-for-the-future/>

POLICY PRIORITIES

- Adequately resource and empower the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council (CFPAC) to engage in policy decisions and program design measured against fulfilling the right to food, other human rights obligations and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as to actualize the broad vision of the Food Policy for Canada.
 - Prioritize a “nothing for us, without us” approach to food policy development, by developing and financing channels to ensure that civil society voices beyond the CFPAC, above all those most marginalized by the present food system, are included in policy conversations; and
 - Harmonize Canada’s national and international (aid, trade, and development) food policies, prioritizing food sovereignty approaches, supporting small producers and processors, and encouraging low-input, low-emissions agroecological food production.
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QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

- How will your government engage with the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council (CFPAC) and ensure that this body has the resources it needs to do its work, and ensure the full participation of diverse members?
- Beyond CFPAC, how will your government ensure that diverse civil society voices are at the table for other federal government policy making directly and indirectly related to food and food systems (e.g. health, environment, economic and social development)?