

Financé par le  
gouvernement  
du Canada

Funded by the  
Government  
of Canada

Canada



Funded by  
the European Union

Financé par  
l'Union européenne



5 DECEMBER 2023

EU-CANADA  
CETA AGRICULTURE DIALOGUE  
SUSTAINABILITY WORKSHOPS  
STAKEHOLDERS' CONFERENCE

**POTENTIAL  
PATHS FORWARD**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the research and policy experts of the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada for their support throughout this project.

### SENIOR EXPERT

**Dr. Bronwynne Wilton**

Senior Expert in Agri-food systems

On behalf of EU-Canada Policy Dialogues Support Facility

bronwynne@wiltongroup.ca

### LEAD AUTHOR

**Dr. Andrea Gal**

Expert in Agri-food systems

On behalf of EU-Canada Policy Dialogues Support Facility

### RESEARCH SUPPORT TEAM

**Krista Kapitan and Jessica Deveau**

### DISCLAIMER

The "EU-Canada CETA Agriculture Dialogue Sustainability Workshops – Stakeholders' Conference" was co-funded by the European Union through the EU-Canada Policy Dialogues Support Facility, and the Agriculture and Agri-food Canada. The content of this publication does not reflect the official opinion of the European Union and the Government of Canada. Responsibility for the information and views expressed therein lies entirely with the author(s).

Reproduction is authorized provided the source is acknowledged.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 EVENT AND REPORT CONTEXT

In June 2021, at the Canadian-European Union (EU) Leaders' Summit, the leaders committed to "launch a series of joint events to promote sustainability, environmental stewardship and climate action in agriculture, within the framework of the Agriculture Dialogue" under the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).<sup>1</sup>

A series of five events between 2021 and 2023 explored the policy context and showcased beneficial practices, research and innovation taking place in Canada and the EU. The Stakeholders' Conference took stock of what was achieved during the series of workshops. The conference was held in Brussels, Belgium on December 4 and 5, 2023. A total of 88 individuals from the EU and Canada participated. Participants included researchers, academics, farmers, industry stakeholders, government officials, and not-for-profit representatives. The objectives of the Stakeholders' Conference were as follows:

- To learn, understand and debate about policy context and best practices in an effort to establish a common understanding about the motivations, ambitions and avenues the EU and Canada are taking on pressing sustainability challenges in agriculture and agri-food value chains.
- To enhance collaboration on sustainable agriculture between EU stakeholders and Canadian stakeholders representing governments on all administrative levels, civil society and academia.
- To chart a path for concrete activities under the EU-Canada Dialogue on Agriculture.

To accomplish these objectives, the [conference](#) included both plenary and breakout sessions<sup>2</sup>. This report summarizes the key findings from the discussions in the different working groups. The report also highlights key takeaways from the series of dialogues and considers next steps in the shared goal of advancing the sustainability of the agricultural industry.

### EU-Canada CETA Agriculture Dialogue Sustainability Workshops

1. **Soil health (See the [Outcomes Report](#))**
2. **Greenhouse gas reduction in livestock production (See the [Outcomes Report](#))**
3. **Organic production (See the [Outcomes Report](#))**
4. **Sustainable use of fertilisers (See the [Outcomes Report](#))**
5. **Sustainable crop protection: Pesticide use in agriculture (See the [Outcomes Report](#))**

For more information about these workshops, please visit the websites of the [European Commission](#) and the [Government of Canada](#).

This report simply synthesizes the key discussions in the working groups at the Stakeholders' Conference. As a result of the focus in some discussions, certain subsections of the report provide more detail on the desired outcomes, while other subsections outline possible actions to help achieve these outcomes.

1 Canada-European Union. (June 2021.) European Union-Canada Summit – Joint Statement, p. 3-4. Retrieved from <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/backgrounders/2021/06/15/canada-european-union-summit-joint-statement>.

2 The interests of organic production were considered to be cross-cutting and of relevance to the topics discussed in the other breakout sessions and so were not treated separately.



## 2. KEY FINDINGS

### SOIL HEALTH

Stakeholders in this working group prioritized the need to strengthen networks and two-way lines of communication between soil health researchers and farmers as well as to enhance relationships and grow partnerships between individuals and organizations working in the EU and Canada. These strengthened networks and relationships would contribute to climate change mitigation, as the various stakeholders would be better positioned to collaborate to implement on-farm solutions.

Participants would like to see the development of:

- A continuous exchange between soil health stakeholders in Canada and the EU
- An open-source database that includes regional filters for sharing soil health information (e.g., data, best practices)
- Increased availability of independent advisory services for farmers, as well as reference farms, to support research and knowledge translation and transfer on soil health beneficial management practices (BMPs)
- A clear understanding of soil health indicators and baselines for different regions/ countries and the effect different practices have on these indicators

To advance these efforts, participants suggested the industry should:

- Build upon existing initiatives, such as [EIP-AGRI Operational Group](#) projects, the [EU Mission: A Soil Deal for Europe](#), Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's [Living Labs](#), and the [Organic Science Clusters](#)
- Use soil health ambassadors to help with knowledge transfer

### GREENHOUSE GAS (GHG) REDUCTION IN LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION

Working group participants advised that industry stakeholders should focus on two interrelated activities to help advance the sustainability of livestock production:

- Collaborate to enhance knowledge on and understanding of existing national and regional farm management decision-making tools for GHG emissions
- Improve and promote these tools to encourage widespread use by farmers



To advance efforts in these areas, participants suggested the industry needs to:

- Foster open dialogue between all stakeholders, by, for example, leveraging civil dialogue groups in the EU and sectoral roundtables
- Develop an international framework for regulation, data collection, measurement and verification as well as international standards and regulatory processes that are based on sound science
- Create an internationally recognized carbon credit framework that includes both methane reduction and carbon sequestration, which could be used to encourage further uptake of beneficial management practices that reduce farm-level emissions
- Encourage peer-to-peer learning, drawing on the expertise and experiences of early adopters of these tools, as well as tech-savvy users
- Promote open source and free tools for GHG estimations and develop clear guidance for farmers on how to use these tools
- Explore the possibility of using a tiered methodology/system for on-farm measurement and reporting, like the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's](#) standards for country-level emissions reporting

## SUSTAINABLE USE OF FERTILISERS

Stakeholders in this working group prioritized three key activities to help advance the sustainability of fertiliser use:

- Fostering more co-developed applied research across multiple sites and years
- Collaborating to improve data collection related to fertiliser use
- Strengthening producers' trust and participation in data collection and sharing

Good data is crucial for the supply chain, policy development, and understanding the impact of changing practices on fertiliser emissions.

Participants developed the following outcomes:

- The large-scale application of digital technologies that are site specific and tailored to farm needs
- The establishment of a Representative Data Committee for systemic data collection methodologies. These methodologies should focus on synthesizing and aggregating farmer data and ensuring the proper storage of data.
- Continued progress towards government policies related to fertiliser use while maintaining and improving producer and supply chain profitability
- Long-term government funding to incentivize and ensure meaningful beneficial management practices adoption, which will help governments to realize their policy goals



To help achieve these desired outcomes, participants suggested that the following actions would be beneficial:

- Increased funding to:
  - Promote the most promising beneficial management practices
  - Co-develop, test, and demonstrate practices
  - Share experiences and information
  - Train knowledge mobilisation personnel
- The establishment of an EU-Canada working group to help develop a standardized protocol for data collection, storage and dissemination, and to address issues related to data transparency and ownership
- Expanded EU-Canada collaboration to coordinate and share long-term, multi-site and multi-partner research

## SUSTAINABLE CROP PROTECTION

Working group participants saw the following activities as the most urgent and impactful in increasing the sustainability of crop protection:

- Improving data collection
- Ensuring surveillance and monitoring data is accessible for all stakeholders, easy to interpret, and has good data governance
- Leveraging this data to strengthen communication about sustainable crop protection between farmers, policymakers and public authorities

As industry stakeholders make progress on these fronts, they should:

- Create space for farmers and food producer associations to have the necessary, and sometimes challenging, conversations about pesticides with policymakers and consumers
- Develop [Codex Alimentarius](#) international food guidelines for sustainable food
- Identify the specific types of data that would be most useful for industry stakeholders (e.g., the scientific community, policymakers, public authorities, farmers, and the value chain), and most helpful in communications
- Ensure well-informed stakeholders, spanning the full value chain from producers through to consumers



Participants advocated for the following actions:

- Foster greater cooperation between the European Food Safety Authority and the Health Canada Pest Management Regulatory Agency and broaden the discussion to include multiple source substances
- Develop congruent policies about pesticide approvals, registrations, detection, and use
- Host targeted, multi-level exchanges between industry and government to showcase solutions to common problems and goals
- Establish a mechanism for inclusive, transparent, and voluntary data sharing across the value chain that has clear rules for use (e.g., regarding data ownership)
- Standardize the types of data collected to enable stakeholders to understand and track progress towards sustainability goals

### 3. CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

The series of dialogues underscored the good work underway in the agricultural industry to improve sustainability including the continuing research and innovation to advance these efforts. Going forward, the industry must prioritize research collaborations that are farmer driven. The Living Labs are a shining example of such co-creation. Opportunities exist for increased collaboration between jurisdictions on research projects that address shared priorities and help to address gaps in industry knowledge.

To further drive this work ahead, the industry indicated that it needs access to more – and better – data, calling for consistent standards for data measurement, management, and reporting.

Stakeholders highlighted the value of continuing to exchange knowledge and best practices while also beginning to act on the lessons learned, taking an incremental approach to implementing change as industry knowledge continues to evolve. Beneficial management practices, as well as government policies and regulations, must work on a practical level to ensure all three pillars of sustainability (i.e., economic, environmental, and social) are supported in the agricultural industry. A strong ecosystem surrounding the farmer is crucial; it should include knowledge translation and transfer, extension, training, and peer-to-peer support.

Stakeholders in both Canada and the EU are eager to move into the next stage in their relationships, seeking to undertake joint activities to advance the sustainability of the agricultural industry in their respective jurisdictions.

**“We have a good story to tell but we do not have the data to support that story”**

Conference participant

**“Don’t let perfect get in the way of good”**

Conference participant

**“Keep talking but start acting.”**

Conference participant

Financé par le  
gouvernement  
du Canada

Funded by the  
Government  
of Canada

| Canada 



Funded by  
the European Union  
Financé par  
l'Union européenne