

## Food Policy Committee

CCA's Food Policy Committee (FPC) enters its second year.

In 2019, CCA identified several food policy issues as priorities and thus the Food Policy Committee was born. Despite the disruptions of a global pandemic, the Committee made headway on various mandates including front of pack labelling, alternative proteins, food waste and more in 2020. The mandate of the FPC is to ensure federal food policy and food innovation supports Canadian beef as a strong, safe, and sustainable food choice for Canadian consumers.



**Amid the rise of new plant-based food options, meat dishes still top food trends. Pictured here a birria taco. Birria is a traditional Mexican dish where meat is braised for hours with chiles and spices.**

This year has been tumultuous and has required a redirection of resources on so many fronts. This has impacted FPC work, with delays in planned government timelines, a new schedule for the House and Senate as they learn to work remotely, and a Parliamentary prorogation. On the industry side as well, CCA staff and our stakeholders have been working hard to address the ongoing and disruptive nature of COVID-19.

Finally, the FPC Committee witnessed a change in staff support and welcomed Lauren Martin in October 2020 as the new staff lead, replacing Jennifer Babcock. Despite all the changes, FPC's second year was productive. As stated in Committee's Terms of Reference, FPC's duties and responsibilities include:

- Overseeing Government of Canada consultations related to food policy, including the Safe Food for Canadians Act / Regulations
- Developing food policy positions for CCA and communicating with government and interested stakeholders

- Food Guide and Policy lobbying and stakeholder communication on the many nutritional benefits of Canadian beef
- Stakeholder (partner) relationship management within the food and meat policy community
- Food labelling
- Food Waste
- Alternative and cell-cultured protein policy oversight
- Providing policy support to Public and Stakeholder Engagement and Canada Beef in their food and meat marketing, education, and communication efforts
- Meat inspection and grading, including instrument grading and new grading technologies
- Providing a forum for new food innovations

Here are a few key updates from the past year:

With respect to building relationships; CCA has been strategic about building government and stakeholder relationships. Staff meet regularly with officials within Health Canada, Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC). Politically too, staff have made in-roads across party lines and meet with key stakeholders in the agriculture space frequently. Regarding stakeholders, creating partnerships among protein producers is an area of ongoing work. CCA considers Canada Beef, the Canadian Meat Council and the Canadian Pork Council partners in food policy work and this has been key in creating consistent messaging. Internally,

CCA staff have created a Food Task Force to work across the industry (both nationally and internationally) to have a cohesive and collaborative outward approach. Members include the Public and Stakeholder Engagement Team, Canada Beef and the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB). Identifying areas of alignment with a broader group of protein producers such as chicken, egg, sheep, pulses and soybeans is an area for work in 2021.

Food waste is one component of CCA's overall sustainability efforts. Already, beef producers have many processes in place to reduce food waste but there is a further opportunity to conduct research to identify instances of food waste along the supply chain and what opportunities exist to reduce it. FPC's work in this area is in collaboration with the CRSB, the Beef Cattle Research Council (BCRC), and others. In November 2020, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) announced a Food Waste Challenge. AAFC's Food Waste Challenge is a multi-million-dollar investment that will award funding

to innovative solutions that have the potential of reducing the most amount of food waste. This is an opportunity for CCA members, and FPC is poised to support member applicants.

The FPC is active in addressing issues related to alternative and cell-cultured protein policy and government regulations and monitors global trends for indications of where we see these policies shifting in the future.

Of particular note, in fall 2020, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) launched a consultation on the proposed changes to its Guidelines for simulated meat and simulated chicken. CFIA sought responses to proposed updates which included some modernizing of the simulated meat and simulated poultry products as well as new guidelines for certain plant-based protein foods. The updates are intended to provide consumers with information to make informed buying decisions and to clarify for Canada's food industry what constitutes simulated meat or poultry products.

CCA formalized a response, supported members and stakeholders in their responses, and worked with industry partners to ensure an aligned message. CCA's position is that the proposed guidelines do not encourage clarity principally because the term 'meat' is used to describe these products throughout. Consumers are free to make their own consumption choices, but it should be clear to them what choice they are making. Advocating for the removal of meat nomenclature for non-meat products, and further clarity for the consumer, will continue to be an FPC priority for 2021, an opportunity exists for CCA to take a leadership role.

Front-of-package labelling was also prominent for FPC in 2020. Health Canada is proposing amendments to the Food and Drug Regulations to require a front-of-package nutrition symbol on foods high in saturated fat, sugars and/or sodium and ground beef is not exempt; a decision that is not based in science. CCA is advocating for a full exemption and has been working with partners, including Canada Beef, to achieve this policy outcome.

CCA has worked on various government food policy initiatives, including the Food Policy Advisory Council. The Council reports directly to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, serving as a diverse advisory function. The Council's creation is in recognition of the collaboration necessary to make meaningful progress on the more complex challenges facing the food system. CCA appointed an FPC member to the Council and an announcement was expected in early 2020. Timelines have been delayed and CCA is actively monitoring for the outcome.

Looking to the future, FPC will lead CCA in preparing for the United Nations' Food Systems Summit, taking place fall 2021. The Food Systems Summit is part of the decade of action to deliver the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The decade of action was called

for by world leaders at the 2019 UN General Assembly to accelerate efforts towards the achievement of the SDGs. As this is the first World Food Summit in 25 years, this global event is expected to influence international dialogue and domestic policy. A key concern of Canadian beef producers is the forum's focus on reducing meat consumption, particularly red meat, for environmental and health reasons.

There are nutritional and environmental benefits to the production of beef and CCA's goal is to ensure these facts are part of the dialogue. CCA will be working through its international partners to advance its objectives.



**Committee Members:** Co-Chair: Kirk Jackson, Co-Chair: Cathy Sharp, Sheila Hillmer, Ryan Beierbach, Ryan Scorgie, Matt Bowman, Nathan Phinney, Evan Chaffe, YCC ex-officio, Joyce Parslow, ex-officio; and Amie Peck, ex-officio. **CCA Staff:** Lauren Martin