



FSC
RAD

Food
Secure
Canada
Réseau
pour une alimentation
durable

October 1st, 2021

Right Honourable Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, PC, MP
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
Sent by email to: justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca and pm@pm.gc.ca

Re: Achieving the ambition of the Food Policy for Canada

Dear Prime-Minister Elect Trudeau,

On behalf of Food Secure Canada, I am writing to congratulate you on being re-elected Prime Minister of Canada. With your new mandate, we urge you to begin to realise the breadth and ambition of the *Food Policy for Canada*, announced in June 2019 by Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau. Transforming our food systems can result in multiple, positive outcomes for Canadians, and generate essential pathways towards fulfilling the *Sustainable Development Goals* by 2030. Addressing various systemic inequities and the climate crisis as well as related environmental challenges is at the heart of the urgently required food system transformation.

Food Secure Canada is a pan-Canadian alliance of organizations and individuals working together to advance food security and food sovereignty through three interlocking goals: zero hunger, healthy and safe food, and sustainable food systems. We advocated for the whole of government *Food Policy for Canada* and the associated *Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council (CFPAC)*, which was named in February of this year and whose work we encourage you to continue with more strength and depth. With that context, there are six interrelated food-system issues we urge you to act on with details in the attached appendix:

- Addressing the root causes of food insecurity
- Building resilient local food systems
- Supporting Indigenous food sovereignty
- Championing decent work and justice for workers all along the food chain
- Ensuring everyone is at the table; and
- Advancing a school food program for Canada

We are delighted that your election platform, as well as that of the New Democratic Party, included a costed commitment of \$1 billion towards a National School Food Program, representing a very welcome next step towards

fulfilling the promise in the Food Policy and a priority of the CFPAC. A separate letter sent on September 24 from the *Coalition for Healthy School Food*, which we host, lays out the health, economic, social, environmental, equity and reconciliation opportunities of a well-designed, healthy and universal program. We join the Coalition in urging you to move forward with this program immediately, which, if properly designed, can play a positive role in transforming our food-system.

You are committed to fighting systemic racism and that means rooting it out of our food systems. We urge you to explicitly adopt a food justice framing within the Food Policy for Canada. Racism including anti-Black racism has shaped our food systems from field to fork, resulting, for example, in Black households facing food insecurity at a rate 3.5 times higher than white households. And the impacts of colonialism have resulted in First Nations, Métis and Inuit households facing disproportionately high rates of food insecurity and nutrition-related chronic health conditions. Before Covid, half of First Nations families on reserve were food insecure. Distinct and appropriate responses should be led by the affected communities themselves, as the Indigenous food sovereignty and Black food sovereignty movements are enacting.

The Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council convened for the first time in March 2021, with enormous potential as an independent, multi-stakeholder body to advise the Minister on implementing the Food Policy, and realising its ambitious vision and principles. We need everyone at the table, guiding further development and implementation of coherent, coordinated food policy in the public interest. I was honoured to be named to the Council. However, gaps in representation and a lack of adequate resourcing are limiting its scope and capacity as it begins its work. We urge you to 'level the playing field' so that actors from across the food system, including those currently most marginalized, are empowered to advise on policy design and program implementation, which advance the public good.

During the election campaign our third edition of [Eat Think Vote](#) brought together communities and candidates to talk about food security, food sovereignty, and other issues that matter to them. As climate changes continues to create serious issues for food production and supply chains in Canada and globally, as food insecurity rises again domestically and worldwide, as the crisis of preventable diet related illnesses grows, and as the need for Indigenous food sovereignty becomes ever more clear, we urge your government to prioritize food policies that are doable, realistic and so needed. We look forward to working with you to help build a healthier, more just and sustainable Canadian food future for all.

Sincerely,



Gisèle Yasmeen, Ph.D.

Executive Director, Food Secure Canada

Appendix

Addressing the root causes of food insecurity

- Many more Canadians became food insecure during the COVID pandemic. Just as you championed the right to housing, we ask you to guarantee the right to food according to Canada's ratification of the *UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. A rights-based approach, rather than a charitable model, should underpin a suite of coherent measures to end food insecurity by 2030, and to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger.
- Food insecurity is primarily related to poverty and systemic inequities and a healthy diet has increasingly become restricted to the privileged. Please tackle the root causes through a universal livable minimum income floor and by ensuring access to healthy, affordable food through publicly funded programs.
- Furthermore, private sector opposition blocked your previous efforts to stop the marketing of highly processed food to kids and to introduce front of pack labelling to promote healthier eating. Thank you for recommitting to getting them done in your election platform. We ask you to measure all your policy and program interventions against the benchmark of ensuring that everyone can afford and source healthy, sustainably-produced, culturally-appropriate food, in line with *Canada's Food Guide*.

Building resilient local food systems

- In the context of climate change and the ongoing collapse of biodiversity, we need to build resilient, ecological local food chains that shorten and diversify food chains, revitalize communities, ensure greater access to healthy and fresh foods, support lower-emissions food systems, build greater resiliency to shocks and reduce food loss and waste.
- We support *Farmers for Climate Solutions* in advocating that the forthcoming, new Agricultural Policy Framework be climate-focused. We will work with the federal government and across the food movement to build solutions and policies that are good for farmers, people and the planet.
- Tackling food loss and waste is urgent and important, but it is a supply chain issue that should not be conflated with tackling food insecurity, which is about realising the right to food and dignified access, not charity models.

Supporting Indigenous food sovereignty

- As part of your commitment to reconciliation, it is time for First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities to take back control to determine their place-based food systems, as well as the policies that will best support resilient futures.
- As you once again amend the *Nutrition North* program, please reform it "in partnership with Inuit into a program that is designed to address the drivers of food insecurity and uphold the right to adequate food" as outlined in the *Inuit Nunangat Food Security Strategy*. The same would apply to First Nations and Métis.

Championing decent work and justice for workers all along the food chain

- We support permanent residency status on arrival as the best way to guarantee the rights, safety and well-being of workers arriving from overseas to our fields, abattoirs and processing plants.

Ensuring everyone is at the table

- Ensure adequate representation, particularly by Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) communities, and effectively resource the work of the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council - including honoraria for participants who might not be able to participate otherwise and an independent research budget - to have meaningful and impactful policy influence.
- Recognising the risks of decorative multi-stakeholderism, and the other roundtables, strategy tables and lobbying avenues through which private interests can dominate policy-making, ensure that the Council and other mechanisms that represent the public interest and evidence-based policy making have more influence.

Advancing a school food program for Canada

- We commend to you the principles and proposals of the Coalition for Healthy School Food, which we host, as explained in the letter sent on September 24 and towards the immediate fulfillment of your costed election platform pledge.

Please see [Growing resilience and equity: A food policy action plan in the context of Covid-19](#) (May 2020) for a more comprehensive analysis, rooted in policy proposals that emerged from the food movement, and [Eat Think Vote 2021](#).