



IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED BY PROVINCE TO PROTECT FOOD SECURITY

ONTARIO (April 27, 2020) – Beef Farmers of Ontario, Grain Farmers of Ontario, Veal Farmers of Ontario, and the Ontario Sheep Farmers are asking the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to immediately move to fully fund the Ontario Risk Management Program (RMP) to help over 50,000 Ontario farmers continue to deliver food for the people of Ontario.

COVID-19 impacts have exacerbated the challenges already faced by Ontario's grain and livestock farmers and immediate support is needed to ensure our farmers can continue to deliver local, quality food to Ontarians.

Many Ontario farmers in the non-supply managed sectors are in crisis without access to sufficient safety net support that programs like RMP provide. In the last election, Ontario's Premier campaigned to increase much-needed funding for the Ontario RMP, recognizing the critical underfunding of the program in recent years and its importance to the agri-food sector and Ontario economy. COVID-19 has amplified financial challenges facing our family farms and induced market and production disruptions that threaten the food supply and viability of farm operations. Fully funding the RMP will provide the essential security Ontario farmers need to continue to provide food for Ontarians and keep rural Ontario's communities and economy strong during this time of crisis.

"Farmers are asking the province of Ontario to share in the risk that it takes for a farmer to grow food for the province and the country – the RMP program is not a bailout", said Markus Haerle, Chairman of Grain Farmers of Ontario. "Farmers are risking their livelihoods, and a fully funded RMP would only provide support if the cost of growing the crop isn't covered by the price", added Haerle.

"Farm operations can't wait any longer for support from our provincial government. It's absolutely imperative that this safety net be put in place to ensure beef operations and the beef supply chain can continue to provide Ontarians with access to local food", said Rob Lipsett, Chair of the Beef Farmers of Ontario. "RMP is the right mechanism to provide stability to the sector".

"RMP has proven to be a predictable program that works for farmers. With the uncertainty and volatility we are facing, veal farmers need the reassurance that this program provides so we can weather this crisis. However, the program desperately needs the additional funding that the Premier and the Minister promised to be put in place immediately", said Pascal Bouilly, Chair of Veal Farmers of Ontario.

"This crisis has highlighted the fact that the current Risk Management Program in Ontario is inadequate to deal with this kind of acute risk. The program needs to change to provide more support for our farmers against a growing number of unforeseen risks", said Marc Carere, Chair of Ontario Sheep Farmers.

Ontario's response to the broader health and economic crisis has thus far been strong and efficient. We applaud the Premier and the Ontario government's efforts to keep Ontarians healthy and position our economy for a strong rebound. But the time to act for farmers and Ontario's food supply is now. The RMP has an allowance that the Province can make changes to the program "in case of an extraordinary market or production disruption". If COVID-19 does not represent extraordinary market conditions, we don't know what does. By making sure the funding is not limited by an arbitrary funding cap put in place by the previous government, an uncapped RMP will give farmers in Ontario confidence to invest in their food production systems.