



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ontario's Meat and Poultry Sector Welcomes \$25 Million Strategic Agri-Food Processing Fund to Enhance Processing Capacity and Food Security

November 5, 2021: Ontario's processing, livestock and farm organizations welcome the announcement made by provincial government that they will invest \$25 million to help strengthen food processing capacity in Ontario.

The Strategic Agri-Food Processing Fund comes in response to key issues brought to the Government through Livestock Processing Capacity Working Group, which included several key industry organizations working collaboratively to provide insight on the challenges the sector is currently facing, and possible solutions. This funding will help address the key challenges and opportunities for both processors and livestock farmers.

"The pandemic has highlighted some of the vulnerabilities in our sector, including the need to increase processing capacity," says Carol Goriup, President of Meat & Poultry Ontario "We thank the province for their continued partnership and this crucial funding that will help our sector invest in solutions that will benefit both processors and consumers."

"Thank you to the Government of Ontario for recognizing the importance of food and beverage processing businesses to jobs, the economy and the well-being of Ontarians. To advance as an industry, employers need to grow their workforce and evolve their manufacturing practices, and the Strategic Agri-Food Processing Fund will do exactly that." Says CEO of Food and Beverage Ontario, Chris Conway.

"The pandemic has exposed the limited and precarious capacity of food processing in Ontario." says President of Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Peggy Brekveld "Regulatory burdens, financial strain and labour shortages have posed a significant risk processing in Ontario, making this a welcome investment to bring stability to the sector. Securing food processing in Ontario ensures we are able to reduce our reliance on imports, while creating economic opportunities and employment in Ontario."

"Veal Farmers of Ontario appreciates the support and investment of the Government of Ontario through the Strategic Agri-Food Processing Fund. This new funding program is a good indication that the livestock industry's need for additional processing capacity is being heard and these important investments will allow processors to grow, improve and innovate which will ultimately benefit all of us in the supply chain." Pascal Bouilly, Chair of Veal Farmers of Ontario.

"Ontario Sheep Farmers is very encouraged by the productive discussions with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs leading to today's announcement of provincial funding support for Ontario's livestock processing sector," says John Hemsted, Chair, Ontario Sheep Farmers. "We have been actively engaged in discussions with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs about the critical need for increased processing capacity in Ontario. Our industry wants to grow, and this new support will help make that happen."

"Ontario Pork applauds the government of Ontario for its recognition of the need for increased livestock processing capacity in the province and the challenges faced by our family farms. We appreciate today's

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announcement as a first step in facilitating the growth of processing capacity here in Ontario, which will help strengthen the provincial pork industry.” John de Bruyn, Board Chair, Ontario Pork.

“Ontario’s beef farmers are grateful for the investment announced by the Government of Ontario as part of the fall economic statement that will help promote productivity and growth in the meat processing sector,” shares Rob Lipsett, BFO President. “The lack of sufficient processing capacity in Ontario has been a limiting factor to a healthy competitive market for the province’s beef sector. For some time, we have been concerned about labour shortages and seasonal processing backups, which has led to lost market opportunities and depressed market prices for farmers. We are appreciative of Ontario’s commitment to help address these concerns through financial assistance programs like this, and through other measures to help position our sector to better meet the demands for Ontario beef at home and abroad.”

“Ontario’s chicken farmers are pleased to see support for the agriculture and agri-food sector as part of the Ontario Government’s Fall Economic Statement,” said Ed Benjamins, Chair of Chicken Farmers of Ontario. “Investments in the supply chain helps farmers continue to deliver a steady and reliable supply of safe, healthy, locally-grown food.”

“The processing shortage has been a major concern for farmers for many years, and the pandemic has only highlighted the problem.” says Ed Scharringa, President of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario. “There is enormous potential for growth in this industry, and government investment is crucial. Through hard work and collaboration, agricultural organizations have been heard, and we thank the Government of Ontario for supporting our industry.”

Ontario’s 500+ Provincial Meat Plants have been instrumental in insuring continued supply of meat and poultry to consumers. This funding will have a direct impact on increasing capacity at processing facilities and ensuring a stable supply of food for Ontarians.

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ABOUT MPO

Meat & Poultry Ontario (MPO) is the representative voice of Ontario’s meat industry. Our members are independent businesses proud to serve the communities they live and work in. The association is comprised of meat and poultry processors, wholesalers, and retailers; industry suppliers; and not-for-profit organizations that support MPO’s objectives.

Ontario’s meat and poultry sector employs 25% of Ontario’s food and beverage processing industry — the single largest manufacturing employer in Ontario — and generates \$11.2 billion of the province’s \$45 billion food and beverage processing industry revenue.

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