

Next Policy Framework – Setting Our Priorities

Project Overview

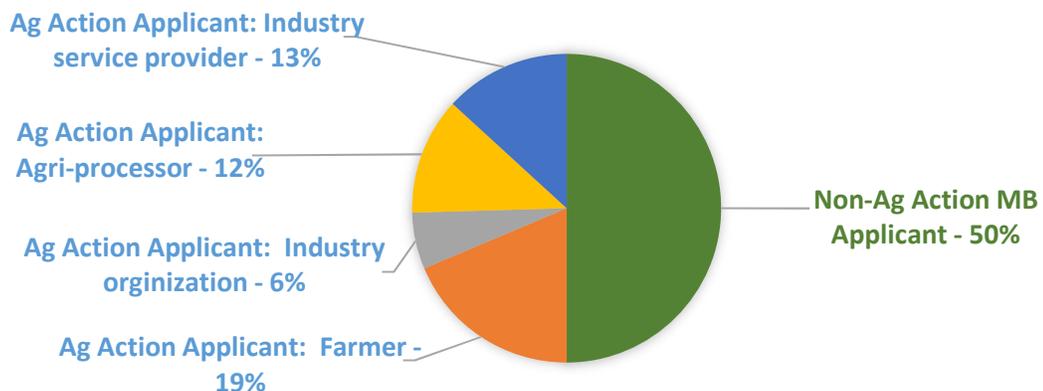
Ag Action MB (Canadian Agricultural Partnership) has entered its fourth and final year on April 1, 2021 and planning for the next policy framework agreement (NPF) has begun. The NPF priorities and the policy statement will be set at the annual Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Agriculture Ministers' meeting in September 2021. The NPF will enable programming and policy for Manitoba's agriculture and agri-food sector, supporting the sustainable economic growth of Manitoba's economy.

Engagement Overview

The survey was open to all Manitobans, with targeted invitations sent to all CAP applicants. The department also invited industry organizations to participate and requested that they raise awareness with their own membership. The survey was hosted on the Engage MB portal from May 6 – 27, 2021. The survey had two key focus areas – reviewing the Ag Action MB administration process and identifying NPF priorities.

Two hundred and eleven people participated. Respondents' experiences with Ag Action MB directed them to appropriate questions. Nearly half of the respondents (47.9 per cent) provided input about their experiences with Ag Action MB administration and all participants provided perspectives on NPF priorities.

HAVE YOU PARTICIPATED IN AG ACTION MANITOBA PROGRAMS?



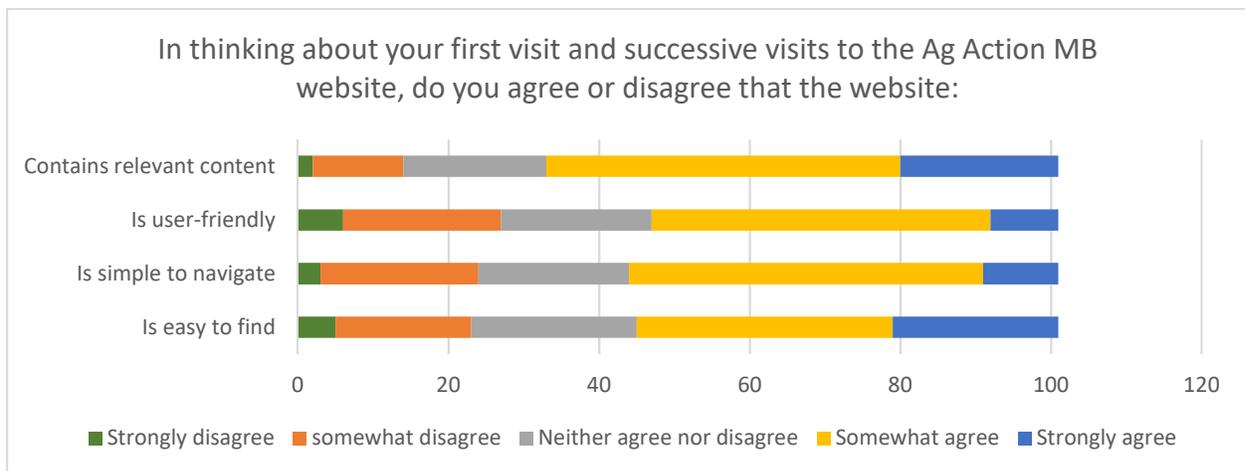
What We Heard

Administration and Delivery

In general, the responses to the program administration and delivery questions provided a mixed review, wherein approximately half of respondents indicated satisfaction with the process, timelines and communication tools and half identified delays or challenges with specific components.

Over 50 per cent of respondents indicated that the website provided the required information, was easy to find, was user-friendly and contained relevant information. Limitations included:

- Difficulty locating:
 - the Ag Action MB website,
 - required reports and templates, and
 - information on funded programs and progress reports (if they are available)
- Disjointed information:
 - Application deadlines are not on the same page as applications, and;
 - Challenges in comparing and contrasting various programs and eligibility criteria.

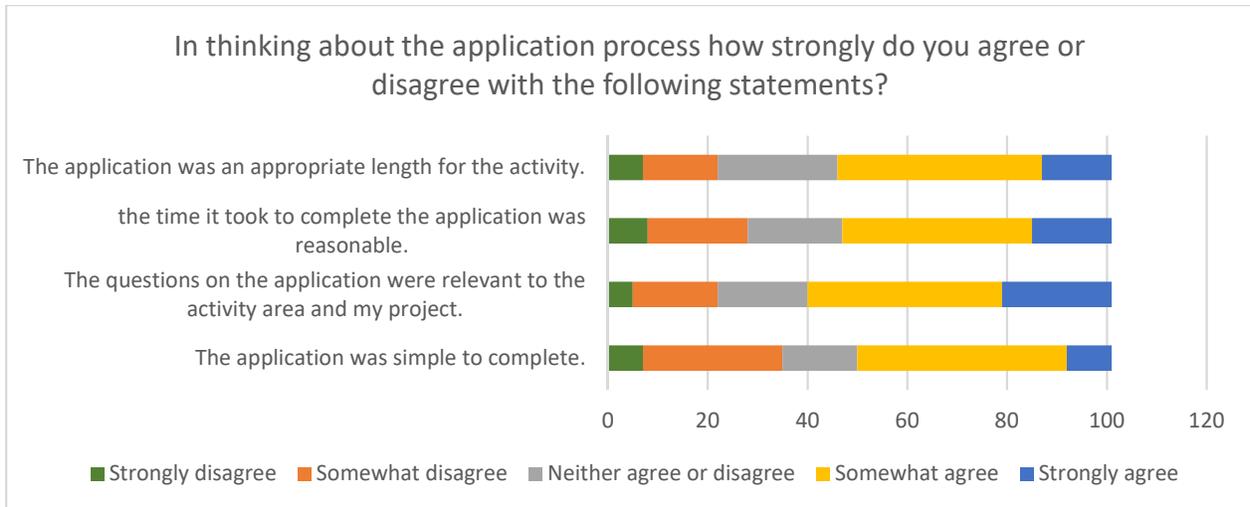


One-half of respondents indicated that the communication timeline from application to notification of funding was slower than expected. Whereas two thirds (~70 per cent) of respondents indicated that communication timelines from funding notification to project start and project completion to claim payment were as expected, or faster than expected.

A 1-800 number was available for direct communication where required; ~20 per cent of respondents used this communication platform. In other cases, applicants gathered information by:

- reaching out to local departmental rep
- emailing the project liaison or program officer

Applications are a critical component of the AG Action MB client experience. In general, less than 30 per cent of applicants indicated challenges with the existing design.



Cost Share Ratio

As with past framework agreements, the majority of the Ag Action MB programs have a cost share component. When asked, 25 per cent of respondents indicated that the cost share requirement prevented them from accessing funding. Suggestions for an equitable cost share model included:

- A cost share ratio reflective of the project risk and cost, for example, a lower cost share for exploratory innovation and advanced capital equipment (robotics) investments
- A system where large producers/groups pay a 75 per cent share and smaller producers/groups pay a lower cost share (0 to 10 per cent).
- A 15-25 per cent cost share ratio for non-profit organizations

Research and Innovation

Government supports research and innovation for public benefit through Ag Action Manitoba. Currently, applicants are required to pay 50 per cent of the total project cost, with government paying the remainder. Although participants provided a diversity of answers when asked about the equitability of the research and innovation cost share, a few key themes emerged:

- The existing cost share ratio is fair and ensures equal investment between applicants. However, it is limited by:
 - low value placed on in-kind contributions
 - requirement for researchers to have an industry partner
 - timelines
 - funding caps
- Funding model reviews need to consider support for early adoption to transition innovation from research to commercialization.
- Funding ratios should vary according to the risk of the research, with greater government investment at early research phases and greater industry contribution as the project moves to market/implementation.
- There should be lower cost share requirements for research and innovation projects with high public benefit or ones that have high-risk, high-reward efforts.; The current 50 per cent cost share is limiting to applicants that are not private sector organizations or commodity associations.
- There should be consideration for a sliding scale funding model.

Priority setting for the NPF

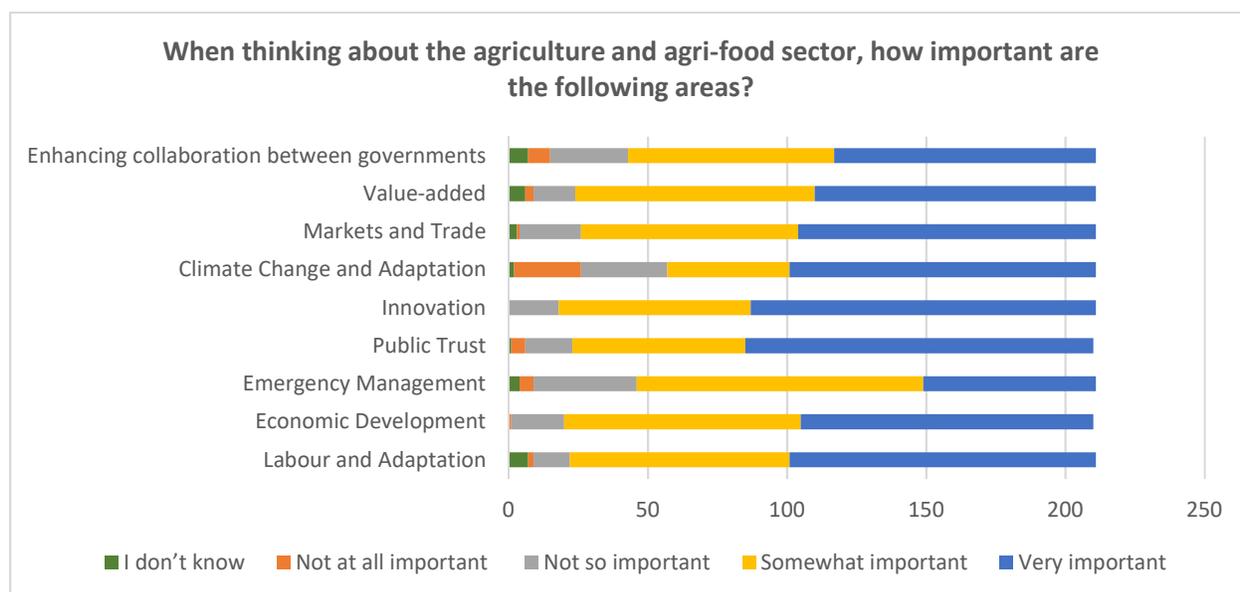
Historically, framework agreements focused on economic growth and competitiveness, 60 per cent of participants indicated that this should continue to be the focus of the NPF.

Approximately 24 per cent of the respondents felt that the NPF should be refocused.

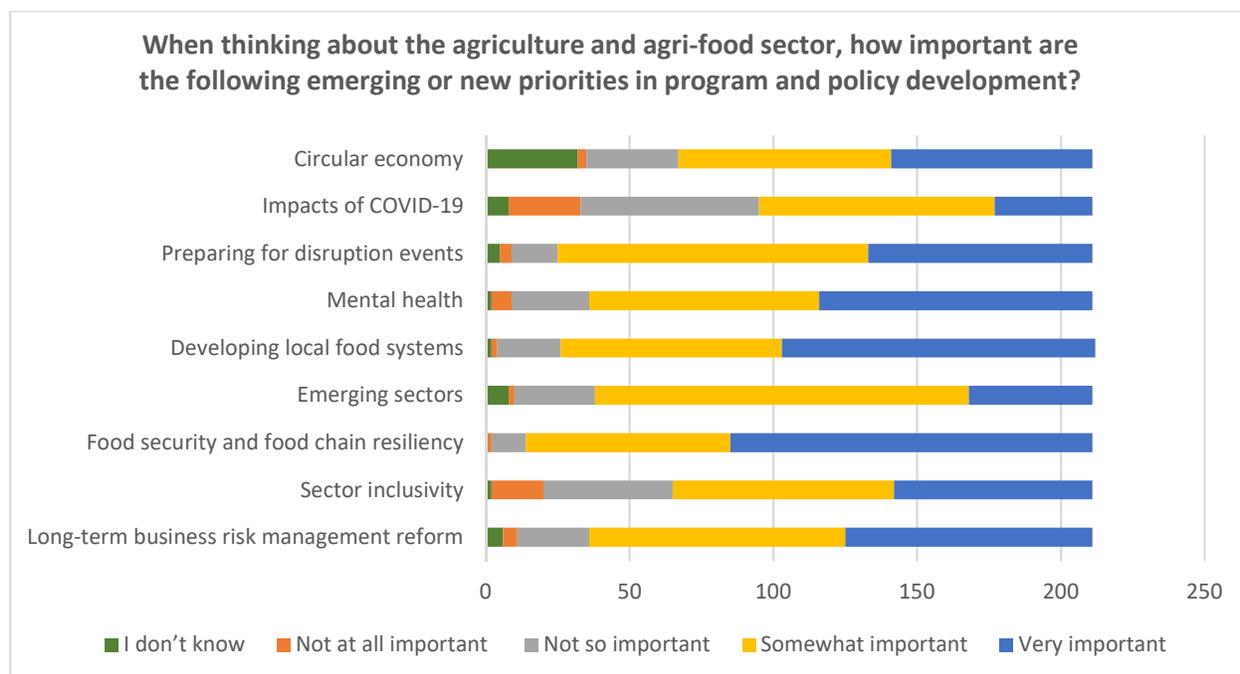
Suggested areas of refocus included:

- adoption of sustainable farming practices and biodiversity improvement
- increasing participation of young farmers, new entrants, and newcomers in the sector
- investment in developing local food production models and availability
- adoption of technology that prepares Manitoba producers and processors to pivot as new opportunities or risks emerge
- prioritizing watershed health and providing opportunities for landowners to manage the land for public benefit
- building public trust, specifically in areas of animal welfare

Governments are currently reviewing existing CAP priority areas, while also evaluating new and emerging thematic areas to build future programming that will address key sector challenges and support sustainable economic growth. Participant responses support continued focus on current CAP priority areas.



Participants identified that all of emerging priority areas listed are important (to varying degrees), but developing local food systems, and food security and food chain resiliency received the most weighting.



Building Resiliency

Framework agreements represent one tool to support building capacity, adapting to change, increasing economic growth and alignment with regulatory requirements. When asked how the NPF can support building sector capacity and resiliency in agriculture and agri-food, respondents indicated the need to target:

- Local food models:
 - building sustainable local supply chains (producer-processor-retailer) and expanding on niche production and processing opportunities (e.g., sheep and goats)
 - rebuilding capacity for local root crop production in the province, including support for new storage crops like sweet potatoes that contribute to local and diversified food production
- Diversity and Young Farmers:
 - reducing establishment risk for young farmers (age 35 and younger), new entrants and entrepreneurs
 - programming to support inclusivity (women and Indigenous peoples)
- Innovation:
 - secure and flexible multi-year funding for innovative approaches to sector challenges, such as:
 - community economic development,
 - industry collaboration and partnerships,
 - connecting urban-rural communities,
 - enhanced consumer education, and
 - opportunity to present ideas beyond those identified in the framework.
 - enable the development of 'new' products and approaches through multi-year and multi-framework funding models.
- Climate change adaptation:
 - strengthen existing tools, such as environmental farm plans and best management practices (BMPs) that include carbon sequestration, decrease

- fertilizer run-off, biodiversity, increase soil organic content and decrease water shed pressure
- continue with GROW Trust-type investments and working with producers to help the land managers with adopting BMPs
- support on-farm climate change innovation
- support adoption of Regenerative Agriculture Methods
- building policy around principles rather than targeted BMPs
- wetland restoration and management
- Workforce Development:
 - funding for targeted education and training opportunities
 - invest in local labour development
- Value-added:
 - increased value added processing in Manitoba
 - support on-farm value-added research (food and textiles)
- Other:
 - Break down silos (e.g., industry, government) that prevent synergies.
 - Build trust with the public.
 - Align priorities with industry objectives to ensure a successful framework rollout and uptake of programs.
 - Develop a data policy/framework to ensure data is working for public interest and that producers have some control over it.
 - Continue to remove red tape and regulatory barriers, both provincially and federally.

Next Steps

ARD is committed to continued engagement throughout the development of the NPF. This survey is a continuation of our dialogue and provides a foundation for future discussions.

On June 24, Minister Pedersen will be hosting a virtual engagement with participation from industry associations. This event will support refining Manitoba's position prior to the annual FPT Agriculture Minister meetings in mid-September where the NPF 'Guelph statement' and the priorities will be finalized.

Following the September ministers' meeting, ARD will begin program design and development. We look forward to continuing to work with our stakeholders through this process. Your participation will inform program and policy development.

Industry participants are welcome to provide written submissions to agrpolicy@gov.mb.ca.