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Liberal farm policy has room for improvement – Grain Growers of Canada

The recently announced Liberal farm policy is strong in some areas, but fails to address other important concerns of Canadian farmers.

The Liberal National Food Policy, announced last week, promotes five central tenets: healthy living, safe food, sustainable farm incomes, environmental farmland stewardship and international leadership.

“On the plus side, the Liberals are generally headed in the right direction on “food as health”, land stewardship, expanding trade and increasing food security in developing nations,” said Doug Robertson, president of the Grain Growers of Canada.

“However, we were surprised to see no mention of public research in their policies. Grain farmers from coast to coast have told all political parties that public research is their number one priority.”

Since 1994, funding for core agronomic research has dropped 40 per cent. The Grain Growers of Canada have called on the government to restore that funding by 2020.

The Liberal farm plan also appears to signal an end to national risk management programs.

“One strength of our current programs is their resilience to trade actions. Liberals really need to think twice about increasing the probability of trade challenges on our major agricultural exports,” said Robertson. “Countervail actions like our pork producers faced had devastating effects on Canadian farmers and this is not a door we want to see reopened.”

Robertson also said that although the Liberals had identified important areas of concern for farmers, specific details were sparse.

“They have identified a set of key principles, but they must be backed by good policy,” said Robertson. “Liberals need to consult more directly with major farm commodity associations to develop that policy.”

The Grain Growers of Canada represent over 80,000 successful farmers through its membership organizations who grow wheat, oats, barley, canola, corn, peas, lentils and triticale.

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