



Freedom To Create. Spirit To Achieve.

Understanding and Engaging Consumers and Markets in Agri-food

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development

Policy, Strategy and Intergovernmental Affairs Division

Government
of Alberta ■

Questions to Address

- What are the biggest challenges/limitations within Alberta agri-food industry in understanding and communicating with its customers, consumers and markets?
- How have these Challenges/limitations shaped the current policy within ARD?
- Is understanding and engagement of customers, consumers and markets a priority policy area within the Department?
- How has policy within the Department changed within the last 5-10 years to better address the challenges and limitations alluded to above?

Major Trends and Issues

- Consumers more sophisticated. They demand more than just a product or a food item.
- Demand-driven markets
- Markets change fast
- Increased competition
- Heightened business risks
 - Increased globalization (e.g., communication and mobility)

Implications & Opportunities

- The whole value chain has to respond to consumers demands
- Industry need to accommodate risks in business decisions
- Need for unfettered market signals
- Understand the changing policy paradigm

Importance of Communication

- Greater demand for communication to facilitate two-way understanding regarding products and production practices
 - Environment
 - Food safety
 - Animal health and welfare
 - Human health and nutrition
 - Worker care

Impediments

- Historical
 - Commodity orientation versus value-added and differentiated marketing
 - Reliance on U.S. market
- Interference with market signals
 - Government intervention with market signals through policies and regulations
 - Barriers to market access
- Industry governance (i.e., lack of coordination)
 - At provincial level industry organizations may not work effectively together

Shifts in ARD Policy/Approach

- Historical
 - Focus on primary production sector
 - Less focus on role of government in market promotion
 - Crisis management/income support

Current and Future ARD Policy/Strategic Directions

- ARD strategies:
 - Advocate for Alberta's interest in national and international policy
 - **Research** and **information** to foster the development of innovative products and technologies and favorably position Alberta products.
 - **Identify** and support niche markets (domestic, international)
 - Work with industry to **brand Alberta products** for their quality
 - **Information, training and mentoring** to producers and processors

Current and future ARD Policy/Strategic Directions

- ARD strategies:
 - Work with industry to identify and **remove value chain impediments, trade barriers and regulatory infrastructure requirements**
 - Provide **clear and consistent guidelines** for industry based on internationally accepted standards.
 - **Harmonization/alignment of food standards** nationally
 - Develop and deploy **traceability** systems for multiple livestock species and crops

Current and Future ARD Policy/Strategic Directions

- ALMS and ALMA
 - Supporting systems for better communication (example Traceability)
- Advocacy framework/plan
- International Marketing
- Trade policy
 - WTO, NAFTA, Canada/EU, AIT, TILMA, etc
- Research and Innovation Strategy
 - Focus on translational research leading to commercialization

Looking ahead

- Roles and responsibilities
 - Who and what?
 - Assurance role for ARD/GOA
- Areas for improvement
 - Market signals
 - Removal of impediments
- Is there a problem with information flow down the value-chain?
- Inequitable playing field between large and small players?

Conclusion

- Industry responsibility for eliciting change
 - Need involvement and support from all stakeholders
 - Government is a trusted partner