

OFA Commentary: April 6, 2017

Government releases Red Tape Challenge report on food processing sector

By Peggy Brekveld, Vice President, Ontario Federation of Agriculture

When the Ontario government announced its Red Tape Challenge in 2016, Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) encouraged all farm businesses to submit their comments as part of the open and public review of regulations that impact the entire food value chain. During August and September of 2016, input was gathered on regulations affecting the food processing sector, and the final report for the sector was officially released on April 5, 2017.

OFA is encouraged the Ontario government took a broader agri-food system perspective in their report instead of narrowing in on only food processor red tape concerns. This broader perspective allowed the report to highlight regulatory challenges of concern to farmers. The report cited safety, labelling and marketing regulations with regards to food and various labour regulatory requirements. Some environmental, land-use planning and transportation regulations and policies were also noted.

To be effective, government regulations should make sense, and the rationale for them should be obvious. Consultation feedback from farmers and others asked many “why” questions. Why the redundant reporting? Why the inconsistency with other regulations? Why is the regulation not taking a risk-based approach? The government should fully consider these questions when developing their action plans.

The report identified 57 opportunities for government action to modernize regulations. OFA is committed to ensuring government follows through on these opportunities. We believe the overall success of the government’s Red Tape Challenge will be determined by outcomes. Meaningful regulatory and procedural changes must be made to address the concerns and issues submitted through the consultation process. Quite frankly, government plans to increase awareness and information sources about government-imposed requirements will not be enough to seize the opportunities identified in the report.

OFA will continue to provide input to government action plans as a participant on the Open for Business Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector Consultation Forum. We will be watching for regulatory changes that will create an environment that attracts investment, innovation and jobs, with regulations that help and do not hinder opportunities for farm businesses.

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