

Minister
of Agriculture and
Agri-Food



Ministre
de l'Agriculture et de
l'Agroalimentaire

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0C5

Quote: 240738

JUN 01 2018

Mr. Jeff Reid
Industry Co-Chair
Seed Sector Value Chain Roundtable
400-300 Terry Fox Drive
Kanata ON K2K 0E3

Mr. Rick White
Industry Co-Chair
Grains Roundtable
400-1661 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg MB R3J 3T7

Dear Messrs. Reid and White:

Thank you for your letter regarding driving investment in plant breeding innovations in Canada and the importance it bears for the seed and grain sectors.

I recognize that the Government of Canada has set a very ambitious target of growing our yearly agriculture and agri-food exports to \$75 billion by 2025, and that we will need to use every tool at our disposal to be able to meet this target. I understand the importance of making sure that Canada continues to be well positioned to benefit from the exciting potential presented by plant breeding innovations.

Our rigorous, science-based, flexible, and transparent approach to regulating products of agriculture biotechnology has been successful to date in positioning Canada among the top grains and oilseeds producers and exporters in the world. I believe it has played a major role in supporting an innovative and competitive agriculture and agri-food sector. As new technologies emerge, it is important to ensure that the delivery of our approach continues to provide an efficient and predictable pathway to commercialization, while protecting human, animal and plant health, as well as the environment.

I trust that you appreciate the importance of maintaining a rigorous scientific basis for our regulatory system, as it is integral to maintaining confidence in the safety of Canadian agriculture and agri-food products here and abroad. However, like your respective value-chains, I see the benefit in ensuring our regulatory system continues to encourage innovation and facilitate trade.

I understand that my officials and those from other federal departments and agencies have recently engaged with your members on the rapid developments in plant breeding innovation and, more specifically, on the recommendations you made in your letter. This engagement has taken place through industry-government fora. A continued industry-government dialogue will be key to finding ways to capitalize on the significant opportunities offered by plant breeding

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innovation in order to maintain Canadian competitiveness. At the same time, it is important to address potential challenges, such as continued investment in innovation, market access, and trade challenges.

I support this continued dialogue and am committed to moving it forward. In my view, two areas of ongoing industry-government collaboration provide us with meaningful opportunities for engagement on the issues you have raised in your letter.

First, the Government established the Economic Strategy Agri-Food Table, a key vehicle to address roadblocks impacting the future growth of the sector. I understand that Value Chain Roundtables have provided thorough input to the table, which included plant breeding innovations, and that this was followed by a discussion with the Chair, Mr. Murad Al-Katib. I look forward to the recommendations from this table.

Second, I would also like to suggest that this useful and necessary exchange continue through the Grains Roundtable biotechnology sub-working group. This forum would allow Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, regulators, and industry representatives to work together on priority issues.

Budget 2018 announced a regulatory reform agenda focused on supporting innovation and business investment. The regulatory reform agenda consists of regulatory reviews, including a horizontal review of systematic regulatory challenges and opportunities and targeted sector reviews. Targeted reviews will place an initial focus on agri-food and aquaculture, health/bio-sciences, and transportation and infrastructure. Through this exercise, we will explore areas where our regulatory environment could be optimized to enable the sector to fully realize innovation opportunities and improve its competitiveness. I fully expect that the regulatory review will draw linkages to concurrent exercises such as the Economic Strategy Agri-Food Table and its regulatory recommendations, and work undertaken by the Value Chain Roundtables, among other efforts.

I look forward to continuing to work with Canada's seed sector and grains and oilseeds producers to reap the benefits of plant breeding innovation and to ensure that the competitiveness of Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector is maintained.

Again, thank you for taking the time to write on this very important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lawrence MacAulay". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Lawrence MacAulay, PC, MP