

Understanding Food Systems Governance in a Changing World

# The Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council

April 2025

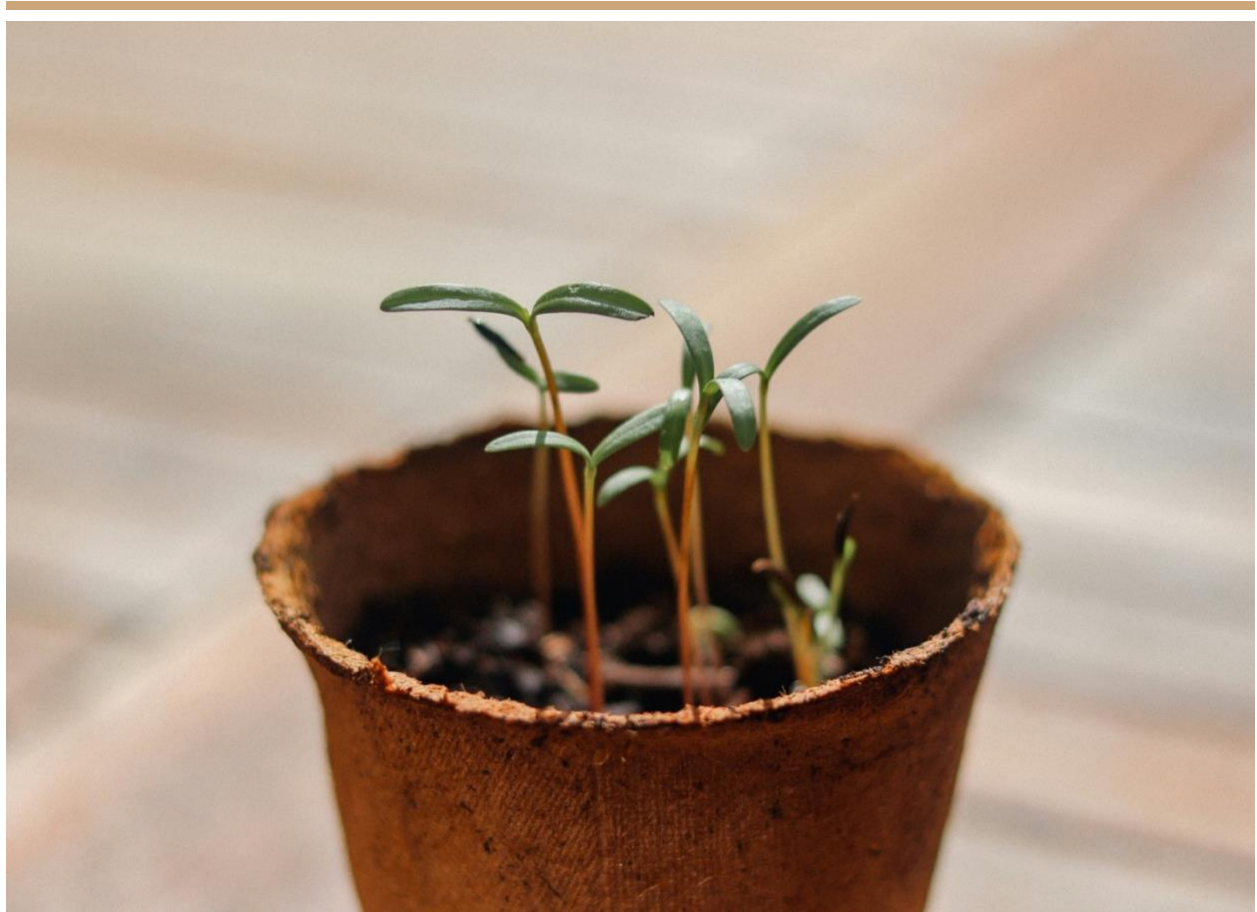


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## Acknowledgments

Thank you to all the participants for their time, thoughtful engagement, and insights to this research. The valuable contributions offered through this process will help provide relevant insights into participatory governance arrangements, for those both in Canada and abroad.

## About the PFG Project

The Participatory Food Systems Governance (PFG) project aims to identify effective and collaborative approaches to building healthy, equitable, and sustainable food systems. Working with researchers from universities and community-based organizations across Canada and Indigenous territories, we aim to contribute to the development of strategies that facilitate more democratic and integrated engagement with food systems policy and decision-making. The project began in 2019 and includes analysis of survey data and interviews with leaders from civil society organizations and elders from across Canada and Indigenous territories, as well as a series of case studies. For more information about the PFG project, please visit <https://foodsystems.lakeheadu.ca/participatory-food-governance/>.

## Thank you to our funders



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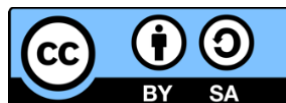
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## Executive Summary

In 2019, the [Food Policy for Canada \(the Policy\)](#) was established after a long history of advocacy work by civil society and industry leaders across Canada and Indigenous territories. The [Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council \(the Council\)](#) was established in 2021 to support and advise the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) on the issues relevant to the Policy, including its implementation. Our research aims to understand the experiences of Council members and AAFC staff as it relates to implementing the Policy's vision to ensure Canada's food system is "resilient and innovative, sustains our environment and supports our economy". Research findings indicate that the Council has been 'learning-by-doing' innovative participatory governance. By participatory governance, we mean relational approaches, grounded in principles of deliberative democracy, collaboration and inclusivity, that involve diverse voices in decision-making processes, particularly those directly implicated in, and affected by, the outcomes of those decisions.

The announcement of the Council by the Government of Canada was a significant step forward from previous efforts to launch an integrative, participatory approach to food systems governance at the National level in Canada. However, several key issues continue to linger. In particular, challenges of representation and asymmetrical resources across members, lack of transparency in agenda setting and evaluation mechanisms, and barriers to engaging or consulting with a wider audience were raised by Council members we interviewed. While challenges remain, the interviews reveal a sense that the Council has fostered substantive discussion among diverse stakeholders on important government policy issues. It is also fostering positive relationships with AAFC staff as well as building collaborative efforts between members themselves. Unfortunately, it is unclear how or if the Council will move forward. At the time of writing this report, the Council has not met since 2023, and no new appointments have been announced.

This research provides important lessons for governments and non-state actors to consider in an era of increased interest in participatory forms of governance, both in Canada and beyond.

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## Introduction

The [Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council](#) (the Council), is a 23-member body established in 2021 to support and advise the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) on issues relevant to [the Food Policy for Canada](#) (the Policy), including its implementation. The Policy and the Council were the first of its kind in Canada and signaled an effort to introduce broader participation in governance of federal food and agriculture policy processes than seen previously. In a shifting landscape of governance that seeks to incorporate non-state actors into government-led processes, Canada provides an important case study to explore how these new processes are experienced and what challenges and opportunities arise during their implementation.

Our research aims to better understand the experiences of Council members and AAFC staff as it relates to implementing the Policy’s vision to ensure Canada’s food system is “resilient and innovative, sustains our environment and supports our economy”<sup>1</sup>. However, it is important to note that there are limits to our data collection via interviews and a single written AAFC response. For example, due to confidentiality participants were not able to discuss specific achievements (e.g., specifics of what they may have advocated for as a Council versus the policy announcements of government). In addition, public policy is rarely linear which makes it difficult to decipher the overall impact of the Council on a particular policy area.

This report highlights the overall findings from the data and provides insights into what worked, where challenges arose, and what areas might be of importance when considering design for future participatory governance efforts. The content of this report is informed by interviews with some of the inaugural members of the Council as well as the written response provided by staff at AAFC to our interview questions.

## History of the Food Policy for Canada

The federal food policy in Canada was established through a long history of advocacy work by civil society and industry actors across Canada and Indigenous territories. While there had been previous efforts to create an integrated food policy<sup>2,3</sup>, these

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada. (February 14, 2025). The Food Policy for Canada.

<https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/department/initiatives/food-policy-canada>

<sup>2</sup> Andr e, P., Coulas, M., & Ballamingie, P. (2018). Governance recommendations from forty years of national food strategy development in Canada and beyond. *Canadian Food Studies/La Revue canadienne des  tudes sur l'alimentation*, 5(3), 6-27.

<sup>3</sup> Levkoe, C. Z., & Sheedy, A. (2019). A people-centred approach to food policy making: Lessons from Canada’s People’s Food Policy project. *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*.

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attempts were limited in impact on the national food policy landscape and had limited impact on government-led policy processes. The idea of participatory governance that involves active civil society engagement has gained significant traction in recent years<sup>4,5</sup>, and consultation on the Policy built expectations around more inclusive food systems governance processes. Announced in June 2019, after government-led consultations from coast to coast to coast, the Policy was launched “as a framework to align and coordinate federal food-related initiatives and address critical challenges facing Canada's food systems to improve social, health, environmental and economic outcomes.”<sup>6</sup>

However, even with momentum towards a national food policy there was still a critical issue of how governance would work, and support for its implementation. In 2017 individuals from academia, civil society, and the private sector came together as an ad-hoc working group to make the [case for a national food policy council](#)<sup>7</sup>. As part of the advocacy efforts of the ad-hoc working group, issues of resourcing, coordination and inclusivity were identified to be addressed. The ad-hoc working group proposed that the Council

1. Align purpose, expertise and actions to implement A Food Policy for Canada across sectors;
2. Advise government on critical food policy issues as they emerge while ensuring departments retain independent authority over their mandates;
3. Work to build consensus and engagement while fostering efficiencies among diverse stakeholder groups and government actors;
4. Provide research and expertise that incorporates data and analysis from across the food system to inform government policy-making;
5. Provide regular venues for dialogue and information-sharing, such as web platforms, conferences, workshops;
6. Set benchmarks to independently monitor progress on achieving the goals set out in Canada’s food policy;

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<sup>4</sup> Martorell, H., & Andrée, P. (2018). The commoning of food governance in Canada: Pathways towards a national food policy? In *Routledge Handbook of Food as a Commons* (pp. 266-280). Routledge.

<sup>5</sup> Levkoe, C. Z., & Wilson, A. (2019). Policy engagement as prefiguration: Experiments in food policy governance through the national food policy dialogue in Canada. In *Civil society and social movements in food system governance* (pp. 101-123). Routledge.

<sup>6</sup> Government of Canada. (February 14, 2025). The Food Policy for Canada.

<https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/department/initiatives/food-policy-canada>

<sup>7</sup> Andrée, P., Ballamingie, P., Bancarz, M., Bilyea, T., Bronson, D., Buckingham, D., Coulas, M., Fraser, E., Hunter, B., Johnstone, D., Koc, M., Kuhn, L., Leblanc, J., Lemaire, R., Loftsgard, T., MacRea, R., McAlpine, R., McInnes, A., McNicoll, S., Robinson, M., Ross, S., Sherman, T., Stark, D., Vanderkooy, P., & Yildirim, T. (2017). The Case for a National Food Policy Council. *Report by the ad hoc Working Group on Food Governance*.

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7. Provide support to resource-constrained stakeholders, enabling inclusive participation in relevant food policy discussions;
  8. Proactively engage stakeholders to facilitate coordination of activities, alignment and accelerate the pace of change towards the objectives of A Food Policy for Canada;
  9. Potentially, given adequate resources and coordinated support from private and philanthropic organizations, fund projects that meet food policy goals.

To support the government's considerations for the Council's make-up and reporting structures, the diverse set of original signatories (roughly 75 organizations across industry and civil society) to the ad-hoc working group on food policy governance's proposal were polled. The results shared with AAFC showed that stakeholders preferred:

1. Nominations that included letters of support from diverse stakeholders;
2. The Council should be a collaborative effort between government, industry, and civil society (tri-partite);
3. The Council should integrate representatives from different scales, with a strong emphasis on provincial and federal;
4. There should both be Indigenous representation on the Council and a separate Indigenous Food Policy Council;
5. A smaller council with targeted work;
6. That members should have In-depth knowledge of one or more aspects of Canada's food system;
7. Agenda setting should be a collaborative effort between the Minister and Council members;
8. The Council should be connected directly with the new federal inter-departmental committee on food policy;
9. That the Council should set benchmarks to independently monitor progress on achieving the goals set out in Canada's food policy.

In response to such advocacy, [the Government of Canada announced the Council in 2021](#). Housed within the Department of AAFC, the Council supports the implementation of the Policy. The Council – as mentioned in the announcement - was meant to “bring together diverse perspectives to support the implementation of the food policy” and “incorporate diverse perspectives in its advice to contribute to building consensus on the nature of food challenges and solutions to address them, building greater trust among key food system stakeholders, and supporting the ability to collaborate across sectors”.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Government of Canada. (February 19, 2021). “Everyone at the Table”: Minister Bibeau announces members of the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council <https://www.canada.ca/en/agriculture-agri->

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The Council's efforts were supported by the Food Policy Division within the Department through the Council Secretariat.

Initially, there were 23 members. However, after early challenges and attrition from the Council, only 19 of the original members remain. In summer 2023, a second round of Council recruitment was launched, but by the end of 2024, no new members have been named. Council members were located across different regions and brought diverse perspectives to the table.

The Council is organized in the following way:

- reports to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food;
- advises on current and emerging issues;
- enables ongoing dialogue on food-related challenges and opportunities;
- shares information and best practices;
- assesses gaps in policies and data; and,
- advises on implementation of the Food Policy's action areas towards the priority outcomes.

While many of the considerations deemed important by stakeholders were incorporated (e.g., tri-partite governance, in-depth knowledge of one or more aspects of food, systems, small membership with more targeted work), several of the key structural components the ad hoc working group recommended were missing. For example, there was an absence of integrated reporting structures for cross-departmental and intergovernmental (e.g., provincial, territorial and federal) work, a separate Indigenous Food Policy Council was not created, and the Council was not mandated to set benchmarks or independently monitor the success of the Policy, and the Council had no dedicated funding in the 2019 budget.

## **Between Announcement and Now: what we know about the Policy and Council**

Several government announcements, most notably [the introduction of a national school food program](#), have been attributed to the Policy, but there has been little direct evidence of systemic governance change to the overall policy structures of food policy in Canada. After it was announced, the Policy also faced criticism for falling short on delivering a transformative, integrative change in Canadian food systems governance,

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[food/news/2021/02/everyone-at-the-table-minister-bibeau-announces-members-of-the-canadian-food-policy-advisory-council.html](https://www150.ca.gov/news/2021/02/everyone-at-the-table-minister-bibeau-announces-members-of-the-canadian-food-policy-advisory-council.html)

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but critics emphasized the potential of the Policy's governance mechanism (the Council) to address these shortcomings over time<sup>9</sup>.

These questions of Food Policy governance and systemic change towards integrated governance relate back to the original proposal by advocates. However, while records of proceedings, members information, and terms of reference are all [available online](#), little is publicly known about how the Council functions and how members experience this new participatory governance space. Given this gap, our research asked: *What are the experiences of the inaugural cohort of members of the Council regarding the process, relations, and outcomes of this participatory governance arrangement to date?* To investigate this question, we explored the experience of participants directly.

This report is based on interviews with Council members and a written response by the Government of Canada. The research provides both retrospective and forward-looking insights into where the Council has worked well and areas that could be improved upon. Insights can also help structure future participatory governance arrangements to be more equitable and effective.

This research contributes to broader scholarship on emerging participatory governance processes. Researchers have pointed to the need to better understand how food systems actors engage in participatory governance processes, particularly when non-state actors collaborate directly with governments<sup>10</sup>.

## Research Methods

The research presented in this report is part of a broader collaborative partnership ([the Participatory Food Governance \(PFG\) project](#)) between researchers at Lakehead University, Carleton University, Queen's University, Saint Paul University and several civil society organizations. The work of the PFG project aims to identify effective, innovative, and participatory approaches to food governance for building healthy, equitable, and sustainable food systems<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Andrée, P., Ballamingie, P., & Coulas, M. (2021). Integrative governance for ecological public health: An analysis of 'Food Policy for Canada' (2015-2019). *Canadian Food Studies/La Revue canadienne des études sur l'alimentation*, 8(2).

<sup>10</sup> Amanda, K., & Liljeblad, J. (Eds.). (2016). *Food Systems Governance: Challenges for justice, equality and human rights*. Routledge.

<sup>11</sup> Levkoe, C.Z., Andrée, P., Ballamingie, P., Tasala, K., Wilson, A., & Korzun, M. (2023). Civil society engagement in food systems governance in Canada: Experiences, gaps, and possibilities. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 12(2), 267-286.

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The Council was identified as a valuable case study within the Canadian context with relevance to larger trends in governance. Researchers engaged with AAFC staff and Council co-Chairs to share the research approach and a draft question guide. This approach was adopted to provide insights for scholars, advocates, and the government. In particular, members of the Council are bound to confidentiality and operate under Chatham House rules. While participants were asked to reflect on their experiences, the research team were clear that we would respect those agreements between Council members and the government.

To support case study analysis, interviews with participating Council members were conducted between April 2023 and February 2024. The interview process and guiding questions were designed to explore how new governance arrangements were experienced and whether these processes empower and enable different actors to engage productively with government and other food systems decision makers. We invited all Council members for whom we could find contact information to be part of an interview. In total, over half of the Council members (n=13) participated and provided interviews. These insights shared by Council members allowed us to draw out unique and common experiences. In addition, the questions were shared with government officials for reflection and participation. As mentioned previously, a single written response from AAFC was provided and incorporated into the analysis.

Each interview was recorded and transcribed or detailed notes were taken. Interviews were then analyzed, and themes identified. The interviews were revisited to draw out specific experiences shared for each theme. When experiences diverged, this was noted and shared as part of the findings. When there was a larger degree of shared experience, we were able to draw stronger conclusions by triangulating the insights. These findings were then considered alongside AAFC staff response to the questions.

Findings were then shared with participants and AAFC for comment in May of 2024 to help ensure that findings adequately capture participant insights. No concerns were raised with the research team after preliminary findings were shared.

## **Insights from Council Member Participants**

Overall, Council Members reported a positive relationship with AAFC staff and were optimistic about the opportunity to be part of it. Many participants reflected positively on Minister Bibeau's (the Minister of AAFC from March 2019 to July 2023) engagement with the Council while also noting that the Council could benefit from further strengthening this relationship. Participants also felt that more could be done to better

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integrate the Council's work into the broader work of government (e.g., trade) and of AAFC (e.g., Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Meetings). These are important reflections on governance structures since the government chose to have the Council report directly to the Minister of AAFC rather than an inter-departmental body or intergovernmental body.

We heard that Council members respected each other and brought a variety of expertise to the table. In addition, many participants expressed a sense of ongoing hope that the Council has, or will have, an impact for food systems governance in Canada. Participants noted that they enjoyed learning from one another and some even embarked on new ventures with fellow Council members. There was also a general sense of empathy for the shifting context and challenging circumstances (e.g., COVID-19; labor disruptions) that the Council faced in its early days.

Remuneration and representation were points of concern for most participants. In particular, issues such as resigning Council members not being replaced, and limited Indigenous representation, were widely noted. Some participants mentioned the need to respond to, and engage with, their respective communities (e.g., collaborators, stakeholders) more openly on their Council work and that there are no clear processes to consult with those outside the Council given the confidentiality agreements in place with AAFC. In addition, the findings suggest that ensuring members' feel their time and expertise are valued as well as establishing a more transparent feedback process on advice offered to the government may strengthen overall Council processes. Overall, there was a sense that the Council is 'learning-by-doing' in creating more innovative participatory governance processes.

Below, each theme identified is presented with additional details and insights from participants.

### Relationships with Staff

Interviewees noted that AAFC staff were attentive to the needs of members and responsive to the Council. Like most endeavors, logistics were a challenge at times. In particular, some procedural or planning aspects of supporting the Council could be improved, such as travel arrangements and agenda setting. These are important as they signal to participants how their time and expertise are valued.

While the Council has not been allocated significant financial resources, access to and relationships with key AAFC staff was mentioned as an important part of the experience of Council members. Overall, the positive relationship between Council members and staff was seen as an asset for most of the members we interviewed.

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### Member Expertise

While efforts to work across policy issues were cited, participants wanted to be more engaged with both AAFC and broader food system-related government processes. Many participants noted feeling that their expertise and time were not always used effectively as other processes in government were happening in isolation of the Council. For example, members mentioned an intergovernmental (Federal/Provincial/Territorial) meeting happening in the same location as the Council meeting with limited opportunities for Council to engage in those discussions. From a broader perspective, multiple participants felt it was not clear how the work produced by the Council was received and used by the government.

Understanding how and when Council advice was used for policy deliberations was noted as a way of increasing the value and impact Council members felt they could have. (These experiences are connected to the lack of feedback and evaluation mechanisms noted below). As one participant stated, strategically leveraging the lived experience and knowledge of Council members would help increase the value each member could offer during their tenure and ensure a larger collective impact.

### Representation and Participation

Participants noted several challenges that needed to be addressed to ensure diverse representation. They mentioned the challenge of addressing the needs of members who do not receive resources to participate (e.g., someone who is not paid a salary that includes their work on the Council) compared to those receiving resources from organizations they represent (e.g., who participate in Council as part of their broader policy work). In response to this noted inequity by members of the Council, the government offered non-compensated members an honorarium. The honorarium was given as a positive example for how the department tried, in part, to respond to this challenge. However, systemic challenges still remain to ensure all Council members are properly resourced.

For example, participants highlighted an asymmetric ability to engage in Council work based on available resources of time and salary. As one participant suggested, it is hard for members whose primary job is not policy or government relations to attend lengthy out-of-town or virtual meeting, as they are either in the field or working with the community. In addition, for members who the Council work is not part of their waged employment position or are self-employed, attendance and participation are at the expense of other wage-earning activities.

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### Role of the Council and Agenda Setting

Participants noted a desire for a better common understanding/transparency of what the role of the Council is within the government decision-making process of AAFC. This includes how members can most effectively use their time on the Council to support the successful implementation of government mandates and raise awareness of the challenges they see. This finding connects to the relationship with the Minister of AAFC (e.g., how often members are able to provide advice and in what capacity) and the need for a clear feedback and evaluation mechanism (e.g., what does the government do with the advice provided by Council).

In addition, some participants felt that clarity on how the agenda is set would be beneficial. Several participants expressed a desire to be more involved in priority setting, wanting to see Council work clearly tied to policy challenges the Minister/government is currently facing. Overall, participants expressed different understandings of how the agenda is set for each meeting. Challenges with the agenda not always being flexible and responsive to emerging issues was mentioned by participants as a limitation to the current process

### Feedback and Evaluation

Participants expressed excitement that Council represented a new governance opportunity. However, the desire for a clear and consistent feedback or evaluation mechanism was a widely shared sentiment. Participants want to better know what happens with the advice they offer.

While it was acknowledged that the Council is not a decision-making body, participants sought more clarity on how their time and contributions were translated into value for the government and impacted key policy issues. This was one of the most common themes across interviews, with a hope that more clarity could be provided in the future on how advice by members was used in public policy processes.

### Collaboration and Continuity

Participants provided examples of emerging or existing collaboration between members. In addition, members who did not have historical relationships (e.g., agricultural or food processing organizations) with the government (namely food movement actors and other civil society representatives) noted increased access to government processes. In addition, some members mentioned that being a member of the Council helped grow their relationships locally through the recognition of their new role.

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Yet, when it came to building relationships between AAFC staff and Council members continuity was a concern. It was clear how respected AAFC staff were and the effort that staff put into engaging with Council members. However, high rates of staff turnover were mentioned as a limiting factor for the overall relationship between the Council and government. Finding a way to build relationships and trust between the Council and government officials was mentioned as a path to strengthen future continuity. At the same time, continuing to foster positive individual relationships between staff and members and promote cross-member collaboration is a way to maintain this positive outcome.

### Connecting with Community

While a terms of reference was established for the Council, there remains a lack of clarity on how participants can engage with their communities - e.g., a member's respective organization(s), neighbour(s), colleague(s) - on issues coming before the Council. Several participants expressed an interest in consulting external actors or creating working groups that could invite additional participants into the Council's processes, but the terms of reference do not currently have that flexibility.

This resulted in confusion regarding the limits of consultation with those outside of the Council and was seen by some participants as a barrier on what insights members could bring with them during meetings.

## Insights from AAFC Staff

The AAFC staff provided a seven-page response to the questions posed, which were similar to those asked to the Council members but slightly modified to reflect the role of staff. In many ways, the AAFC staff recognized some of the issues identified by Council members (e.g., challenges with representation) while also pointing to how processes such as recruitment could be changed in the future (of note, these shifts were reflected in the 2023 call for nominations).

In addition, AAFC staff responses reflected a shifting structure of agenda setting that went from a working group style where members presented their research to the Minister to a presentation style where staff would set the agenda and prepare presentations for comment. This was to both avoid uneven workloads between members and ensure topics were relevant for the Council's overall mandate.

The AAFC response stressed the influence the Council had on the United Nations Food Systems Summit process (an international multi-stakeholder initiative undertaken by the United Nations in 2021), including that it:

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1. Helped shape the approach and objectives of the member state dialogues (the vehicle for consultation between states and their citizens);
  2. Participated in the member state dialogues;
  3. Facilitating the summative dialogue; and,
  4. Assisted in the development of Canada's National Pathways Document.

The response by AAFC staff also illuminated where the Council has provided advice in support of policy development, including the Local Food Infrastructure fund and the National School Food Program, as noted in Council minutes. Similar to members, the government response highlighted the opportunity for other departments to present to and engage with Council members but fell short of outlining any interactions that could be considered systemic integration of Council members into processes beyond ad-hoc engagement.

## **Other Questions and the Future of the Council**

The findings included in this research were shared with Council in May of 2024. It is our hope that this report will continue that conversation. As part of our commitment to have this research be an interactive process of learning, we would like to engage with Council members, the government, and the stakeholders who helps advocate for the initial proposal on broader implications and questions related to the Council. Additional questions for the future may be:

- What are the Council's internal expectations?
- How does the make-up of Council membership impact outcomes?
- How does resourcing impact Council effectiveness?
- If the council is 'learning-by-doing', how is what they are learnings being incorporating what along the way?

As for the future of the Council, this has yet to be seen. Following the call for new members in 2023, the Council has not met, nor has there been any announcement of a selection. The minutes reflect this lapse of activity with the last [record of proceedings](#) dating back to September 2023. At that meeting, ten of the remaining 18 Council members attended. As for the selection of new members, the record of proceedings for the last meeting state that the government received 146 eligible applications, and that AAFC was in the process of evaluating applicants based on a number of factors including geography, expertise, and demographics.

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## Insights for Future Participatory Governance Structures

These findings indicate that the Council is ‘learning-by-doing’ through innovative participatory governance. The announcement of the Council by the Government of Canada was a significant step forward from previous efforts to launch an integrative, participatory approach to food systems governance. In an era of increased interest to engage with non-state actors in new ways, the insights from inaugural members of the Council can provide important lessons for governments and non-state actors to consider when developing these arrangements. In particular, the experiences of Council members highlight:

1. *Representation cannot be thought of separately from remuneration.*

To ensure diverse representation, remuneration must be a central consideration during the early stages of development for any multi-stakeholder governance arrangement such as the Council. In addition, asymmetrical resources, such as time, need to be considered when planning the structure of engagement to ensure active farmers, community workers, and other non-policy staff can be in attendance.

2. *Being part of setting the agenda holds power.*

Setting the agenda for a meeting can put guardrails on what is discussed and when. This is an incredibly powerful tool which can help members be more involved in shaping the discussion. While the working groups offered a way for members to take more of a lead role, there were barriers to participation and a lack of clarity on what was expected. However, government setting the agenda and presenting to members leaves little room for collaborative agenda setting. Options such as making the next agenda a conscious discussion item in the previous meeting allows for input from members while also provide staff the required time to prepare.

3. *Feedback and an evaluation mechanism is intimately connected to participants feeling valued.*

Mapping out expertise of members can be a critical first step to ensure every member’s unique contributions are honored. Then, thinking about how the experience and knowledges of each member can offer a unique contribution in a participatory governance process can help members feel connected and valued. Lastly, reporting back on how these contributions are integrated into policy processes helps show members how their time is being valued. When



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participants have little clarity on how their time and expertise are being used, their interest and engagement in participation falters.

4. *Outcomes are more than policy.*

In addition to policy change, outcomes from participatory governance processes need to be thought of more broadly. In the case of the Council, strengthened relationships between members and between members and government staff were a consistent positive outcome that added value. In addition, being seen as more legitimate in one's own community was an added outcome for some civil society and less connected actors.

5. *Offer opportunities to engage.*

Members bring a wealth of knowledge and experiences with them, but they do so in concert with their communities of practice. There should be ways of building in structures or unstructured ways for members of participatory governance arrangements to engage with individuals outside of the formal process.

These insights can help civil society and government actors think about different considerations when building out participatory arrangements. They also help identify critical elements that could bolster value for both the government and participants. With limited resources and the urgent need to address converging crises in food systems, ensuring governance structures are built for effective, inclusive solution building is critical.

As suggested by the survey data of the original proponents of the Council to government, the need to set benchmarks and independently monitor progress on achieving the goals set out in Canada's food policy was seen as an important element to implement. However, this was not included in the structure and objectives set forth by government.

Our team will continue to analyze these research findings, bringing them into further dialogue with the visions non-state actors had of this advisory council before it was established, as well as the way Food Policy Councils are organized in other jurisdictions in Canada and around the world.

If you would like to stay connected to our ongoing research and publications, or to share your feedback on this report, please reach out to the team through our website at <https://foodsystems.lakeheadu.ca/participatory-food-governance>.

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## Other Resources

- Case for a National Food Policy, the original proposal put forward to the federal government by organizations advocating for a national food policy.  
<https://arrellfoodinstitute.ca/policy-council/#:~:text=We%20propose%20a%20governance%20structure%20that%20will,and%20regulations%20at%20different%20levels%2C%20over%20time.>
- The Food Policy for Canada, the officially announced policy by the federal government after consultation,  
<https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/department/initiatives/food-policy-canada>
- The Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council, the official announcement of the Council. <https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/department/initiatives/food-policy/advisory-council>
- Announcement of Members to the Council, the announcement of selected inaugural members of the Council. <https://sustainontario.com/2021/02/19/aafc-announces-members-of-canadian-food-policy-advisory-council/>
- Publications and outputs from the PFG project, more information of the research team and overarching participatory food governance project.  
<https://foodsystems.lakeheadu.ca/participatory-food-governance/>