

Engaging Manitobans on our Agri-food Industry

February 5, 2021

Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP) is Manitoba's general farm policy organization, providing a unified voice for farmers on issues that affect agriculture. KAP represents and promotes the interests of 4,500 farmers and 21 commodity associations.

As the voice of Manitoba farmers, KAP's democratic and grassroots decision-making process is essential. The input received from individual members and commodity groups drives KAP lobby and advocacy efforts.

Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development is surveying Manitobans to better understand and identify public perceptions about the agri-food system, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The submission below is guided by KAP policy.

KAP believes it is important for industry and government to proactively raise awareness about the value of agriculture and the contributions of farmers to Manitoba, particularly during COVID-19. This includes responding to misinformation about farm practices and working to correct inaccuracies that arise.

In 2020, KAP members passed a resolution noting that farmers are increasingly attacked in social media and mainstream media for regular, science-based farm practices, even though they have adapted and adopted new technologies and techniques. Providing consumers with facts breaks down false assumptions and promotes evidence-based viewpoints.

Manitoba has an increasingly urbanized population with varying levels of knowledge about food production. Accurate and science-based information must be made accessible to the public. This includes information about food production, processing, property rights, technology, trade, and the economic and environmental contribution of farmers to Manitoba.

KAP supports initiatives that build public awareness and confidence in Manitoba's agriculture and agri-food system, such as Open Farm Day, Farm and Food Awareness Week, Discover Ag in the City, and Ag in the Classroom. These partnerships and initiatives are valuable for farmers and the public, given the positive outcomes and capacity for increased public trust.

KAP recommends that the Government of Manitoba continue to support these initiatives, along with the Bruce D. Campbell Farm and Food Discovery Centre. It is also vital that government promotes sustainability initiatives like the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program and facilitates opportunities to connect the hospitality industry with local farmers.

KAP encourages the continued development of partnerships between government, agricultural stakeholders, and the public to create a dialogue about agricultural issues. Proactively promoting agriculture in the media, providing accurate and science-based information to the public, and facilitating educational opportunities will help build awareness and confidence in farmers and the agriculture and agri-food system.

KAP is focused on providing a sustainable and profitable future for all Manitoba farmers and will continue to advocate for the valuable role the agriculture industry has in Manitoba.