



Agriculture and
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Seed Sector Review: Highlights of the Final Report and Recommendations

The Report of the Seed Sector Advisory Committee is an assessment and analysis of the regulatory environment that governs the Canadian seed sector. It provides a comprehensive series of recommendations to modernize and streamline the entire seed regulatory framework. Together, these recommendations help provide a common understanding of the sector's future with an eye to improved regulatory responsiveness that will help Canada's agricultural industry keep pace in a global environment.

Among the key recommendations of the final report:

1. To implement a permanent, industry-wide consultative body that will:
 - provide advice on policy;
 - provide a mechanism for industry consultation and advice on priorities and proposals for regulatory and procedural change; and
 - provide a forum for industry/government dialogue on priority issues that involve many varied stakeholder interests.
2. To restructure variety registration to create a more flexible system of registration information requirements based on crop kind.

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3. To streamline the current body of regulations in order to transfer some of the technical standards from regulation into administrative manuals.
4. To ensure that Canada continues to provide a risk-based environment that supports and rewards innovation. For example, that Canada updates its Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR) legislation to conform to UPOV'91.

The 10-month consultation considered three main factors that will impact the sector's continued success:

A policy environment that supports a timely response to changing conditions,
 The collective capacity to manage change while maintaining a stable investment environment, and
 A seed production sector whose decision-making is well informed in terms of risks and rewards, and is responsive to domestic and foreign market opportunities/needs.

The Emerging Vision: Four Key Result Areas

The report identifies four key result areas representing what the sector needs to achieve, or help shape, to create the conditions for domestic and international competitiveness.

Under each of the four areas, the report offers recommendations categorized as follows:

Category A:	Category B:	Category C:
Consensus on the need and direction for change.	Consensus on need and direction for change.	Consensus on the importance of an issue, but no consensus on direction or need for change.
Consensus on how to proceed.	No consensus on how to proceed. Requires further discussion or research to plot strategies.	No consensus on how to proceed.

Key Result Area # 1: Regulatory Flexibility and Timeliness

The report identifies a number of reforms to the regulatory framework governing the seed sector – to enhance the competitiveness, innovation and responsiveness to market opportunities.

Three of the recommendations in this key result area are highlights of the report (as noted above): the establishment of a permanent consultative body, the restructuring of the variety registration process, and regulatory streamlining.

Additionally, the report calls for maintaining the current system of seed certification, industry leadership in quality management systems, and work to address policy inconsistencies across federal legislation that are impacting further down the food chain.

Key Results Area # 2: Bio-Based Environment for Science and Innovation

This result area is concerned with the environment for innovation, the need for an adequate framework for intellectual property protection, and the ability to take advantage of the opportunities presented by specialty products in all crop kinds.

The review notes the role of Intellectual Property Protection (IPP) in stimulating innovation and favours a move to update Plant Breeders Rights (PBR) legislation to become compliant with UPOV'91, the most recent internationally recognized convention on the protection of new plant varieties. This is meant to recognize the investment in research, thereby encouraging a positive working environment for research and plant breeding.

Further study of programs implemented in other countries for the collection of royalties and building support for Canada's Plants with Novel Traits (PNT) policy at home and abroad were areas of agreement that have yet to yield a consensus for action.

Key Result Area # 3: Profitability in the Sector

The Seed Sector Review views an increase in the use of Certified seed in all crop kinds as part of a positive move that will likely lead to a narrowing of the price spread between Certified seed and common seed, as well as growth in the higher value aspects of the grain system. Two such outcomes would help improve the competitiveness of the sector and Canada's agricultural producers.

Having said that, the advisory committee did not support mandatory Certified seed use, except in identity preserved systems that deliver higher returns based on the characteristics and assurances of a particular variety.

The report recognizes the need to work with the CFIA and the Canadian Grain Commission to explore alternatives to Kernel Visual Distinguishability (KVD) in the grain quality assurance system – as KVD restricts innovation and export opportunities. However, more work is required to determine the best path forward, including discussion of how to best defray the costs of such a change.

Key Result Area # 4: Consumer Acceptance and Confidence

The review recognizes the importance of meeting consumer expectations of the integrity of the food system as a whole, as well as Canada's regulatory process governing it. Ongoing communications is central to improving consumer acceptance and confidence – with emphasis on issues such as genetically engineered organisms, the benefits of new traits and the checks and balances of the regulatory system.

The report views the maintenance of a science-based, risk management decision process, supported by world class regulatory professionals as pre-requisites to improved consumer confidence. Recognizing that labelling alone does not constitute consumer communications, there was support for the government's labelling approach of mandatory for 'safety' and voluntary for 'non-safety' factors.

A number of specific communications initiatives are identified and discussed in the report. All are focused on relevant, science-based information – recognizing that the seed sector, government and the value chain must act cooperatively and in a coordinated fashion to achieve this.

Much Accomplished. More to be Done.

While the Seed Sector Review has made considerable progress in bringing together a pan-industry vision of the seed sector – the foundation of agriculture, there is still much work to be done. This is where the permanent consultative body will take up the recommendations of the final report as both an action plan to revamp the regulatory framework, and an inventory of areas for future debate and discussion.

For more information, or to read the complete report, visit www.seedsectorreview.com.

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