



October 9, 2017

Mr. Philippe Massé
Director General, Temporary Foreign Worker Program
Department of Employment and Social Development Canada
philippe.masse@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca

Re: Meeting request to discuss the seed sector's access to Temporary Foreign Worker Program's Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program (SAWP), the Agricultural Stream and the National Commodity List (NCL)

Dear Mr. Massé:

The seed sector including the Canadian Seed Growers' Association (CSGA), Canadian Seed Trade Association (CSTA), and Seed Corn Growers of Ontario (SCGO) is seeking to meet with you and your Primary Agriculture team from the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) Directorate in order to discuss seed growers' access to labour and the National Commodity List related to the following areas:

- 1) **Urgent Priority:** Resumed access for seed corn to the Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program, which can be achieved through clarifying interpretation of current rules with Service Canada, to enable SAWP access for the 2018 crop season (seed growers used SAWP with approved LMIA's prior to 2014 TFWP changes);
- 2) **Ongoing Priority:** Retained access for seed canola to the SAWP and its place on the National Commodity List; and
- 3) **Immediate Priority:** Broaden access to the TFWP's agricultural workforce programming (SAWP and Agricultural Stream) for all seed growers' primary agriculture processes, for the 2018 crop season.

It all begins with seed. Innovation for the crop value chain starts with seed. Food processors differentiate their products and increase their marketing edge by choosing innovative grains and oilseed varieties produced from pedigreed seed. Seed is a high growth sector with a total economic impact (direct and indirect) for the Canadian economy estimated at \$5.61 billion. The seed sector creates 57,420 Canadian jobs and pays \$1.67 billion in wages and salaries which generates \$81.9 million in tax revenue. 3,500 Canadian seed growers produce seed for over 112,000 Canadian farmers who rely on seed to grow their commercial crops which becomes our food in the grocery stores.

Even though seed farms make maximum use of innovation and new technology, many processes still require a large amount of manual labour. Seed production is the most labour intensive segment of the crop value chain. Extra labour is needed to complete the activities that take place on seed growing operations. Besides working with heavy machinery such as tractors and combines, seed farm operations also have manual, labour intensive jobs such as roguing (removal by hand of off-type and other kinds of crop plants and weeds required to meet varietal purity standards set by the CSGA), corn detasseling, as well as, seed cleaning, conditioning, processing, sampling, packaging and labelling operations. These labour intensive activities are unique to seed growing operations and this manual labour is necessary to ensure seed quality and purity (genetic purity) which is certified and regulated through the *Seeds Act* and *Seeds Regulations*. Seed certification protects a Plant Breeder's investment and creation of a new innovative variety from the research stage to the commercialization phase.

Growth of the seed sector relies on a stable labour workforce. Unfortunately, the National Commodity List is creating obstacles for seed growers including: limiting diversification of farmers into seed crops, limiting expansion of seed operations, limiting environmental biodiversity, crop rotation, and production options. These obstacles are restricting innovation and growth. Without access to labour, there is **significant risk of Canada losing seed growing companies' investments**.

Seed growers hire Canadians first, expending significant effort to recruit Canadian employees. **New** research conducted by the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC) for the CSGA in the summer of 2017 clarifies that on average seed farms employ close to 16 Canadian workers including farm owner-operators and their families, paid employees, and contractors. Canadian seed growers also report significant recruitment strategies that include: advertisement, recruitment agencies, career fairs, connecting with colleges and university graduates through job postings on university and college job boards, usage of temporary agencies, and "word of mouth". Many growers continue to look for new ways to expand their recruitment strategies.

If Canadians cannot be found, broadening access to the SAWP and Agricultural Stream is an important part of the seed sector's workforce strategy. Seed farm sizes are increasing and demographics show that families are smaller. There is less and less of a labour pool to draw on for these sorts of manual farm labour jobs which most Canadians are not interested in doing. All seed growers would like access to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program's Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program's or the Agricultural Stream when Canadians cannot be found.

Canadian Seed Trade Association representatives met with Rodger Cuzner, Parliamentary Secretary for Employment and Social Development Canada, in February of this year, on this issue and he expressed an interest in following this file.

We look forward to meeting you in the near future to discuss the seed sector's access to the TFWP's Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program and the Agricultural Stream. At the meeting, we would like to discuss these urgent NCL issues that are putting the sector at risk and present the new **Seed Sector AgriWorkforce Research Paper** that includes survey data recently collected, that will clarify seed growers' labour requirements.

Sincerely,



**Glyn Chancey, Executive Director
Canadian Seed Growers Association**



**Ron Meulemeester, Chairman
Seed Corn Growers of Ontario**



**Dave Carey, Executive Director
Canadian Seed Trade Association**

Cc:

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