

April 24, 2020

Dr. Gilles Saindon
Assistant Deputy Minister,
Science and Technology Branch, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.
1305 Baseline Road Tower 5, Floor 6, Room 343
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0C5
gilles.saindon@canada.ca

RE: Private Sector Support for AAFC Research

Dear Dr Saindon,

Thank you for the briefing earlier this week on the impact that COVID-19 is having on the Science and Technology Branch (STB) and the process underway to mitigate that impact. Canada's seed trade, and our farmer customers, rely heavily on the necessary research done by STB, and every action must be taken to limit the long-term consequences if research is not pursued.

Our members moved quickly to implement physical distancing guidelines and other measures that allow them to protect the health and safety of their employees while still carrying out their research activities. These actions have resulted in a situation where COVID-19 will have little impact on the research work done at private research facilities.

Fortunately, private seed companies in Canada are well-positioned to play an essential role in ensuring that public research continues in 2020. CSTA members have significantly increased investments in private sector innovation, investing over \$120 million a year more than they did ten years ago. Investments in cereals research alone have increased tenfold. These investments mean Canada's seed companies are well positioned to leverage their human and capital resources to ensure vital public research takes place in 2020.

CSTA members are ready to be essential partners in mitigating the impact of STB's reduction in research activities. I would like to reiterate our offer to have our network of private research facilities host or support public research projects that are unable to continue at AAFC sites.

This work should coincide with a comprehensive review of registration processes for varieties and seed regulatory systems to identify ways to further limit the impact of the loss of a research year. For example, the implications for variety registration could be mitigated if Recommending Committees took a more flexible approach to their data requirements. We look forward to working with STB, other government departments, and our partners to identify what possibilities exist.

We hope that by working together with other private and public research partners, we can limit the long-term impact of COVID-19 on Canada's seed industry and the farmers we supply.

Given the tight timelines, CSTA staff will follow up with officials in STB to continue this discussion. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler McCann". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tyler" being more prominent than the last name "McCann".

Tyler McCann
Interim Executive Director
Canadian Seed Trade Association

cc: Chris Forbes, Deputy Minister, Agriculture and AgriFood Canada