



November 14, 2024

Emergency Management Framework Feedback

Letter sent by email: [AAFC.AgEM-GUAg.AAC@agr.gc.ca](mailto:AAFC.AgEM-GUAg.AAC@agr.gc.ca)

Dear Sir or Madam,

**Re: Ontario Pork response to the 2016 Emergency Management Framework for Agriculture in Canada**

Ontario Pork appreciates the opportunity to provide input on the 2016 Emergency Management Framework for Agriculture in Canada.

Ontario Pork represents the province's 1,919 pork farms and is a leader in the agriculture industry. Led by producers, Ontario Pork is committed to sustainable growth in the pork sector, delivering government representation, research investment, and industry improvements in areas including animal care and environmental sustainability, while growing the brand and reputation of producers and their product. Ontario's pork sector represents a significant part of the Canadian economy, combining - from "farm to fork" - \$1.34 billion in GDP, over 18,347 full-time jobs and \$3.51 billion in economic output.

Considering this document is eight years old, and we have since faced human and animal health emergencies, along with climate emergencies, a thorough review of the Framework is critical. The 2016 Framework lacks consideration for impactful non-climate related emergencies. This includes human diseases like the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly disrupted agriculture by hindering agri-food workers' ability to fulfill their duties. Additionally, we recommend incorporating cybersecurity as a potential emergency, given that cyberattacks can severely impact agriculture and food security.

Over the past six years, with significant support from both the provincial and federal governments, Ontario Pork has devoted significant time and resources to develop a comprehensive emergency preparedness and response plan. The industry has proactively been developing a robust response toolkit and has worked diligently to define its roles and responsibilities in emergency situations. However, a key concern remains around a lack of understanding regarding the preparedness levels of other stakeholders, including government agencies and related industries. This knowledge gap could hinder a coordinated and effective response to an emergency. It is through this lens that we provide our comments.

While the framework identifies stakeholder responsibilities, there is no mention of actionable items regarding emergency preparedness and management. There does not appear to be any mention of how government and industry will be held accountable to ensure that we are collectively prepared for an emergency. Understanding who is responsible for overseeing that the roles are being filled and what actions are being taken would be helpful.

As part of Ontario Pork's emergency preparedness efforts, specific roles and responsibilities have been defined for government and industry partners involved in the response. For instance, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) is tasked with non-food safety activities, which encompass economic and trade

issues, consumer protection, and animal and plant health. AAFC plays a crucial role in supporting the agricultural sector's preparation for, response to, and recovery from emergencies, providing the financial support necessary for the industry to respond effectively and recover from any crisis. More specifically, our concern is that the lack of understanding regarding how farmers will be supported may limit preparedness efforts and undermine confidence in the government's commitment to facilitate a robust response.

Additionally, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is responsible for monitoring, controlling, and eradicating federally reportable diseases. In the context of animal health emergencies, the CFIA has the authority to implement stop movement orders, establish disease zones, and issue movement permits. However, information on how the CFIA will issue stop movement orders, generate movement permits, and plans for cleaning and disinfecting are limited. As an industry, developing a comprehensive emergency response plan is challenging without a clear understanding of how to engage with the CFIA on these issues and what the Agency's intentions are. For instance, will stop movement orders restrict the movement of hogs across provincial borders?

One key gap identified by Ontario Pork through this process is the lack of human resources needed to implement an effective emergency response. Our planning has revealed that a successful response will require a large number of personnel to staff a Command Centre, operations (or in-field) teams focused on hog depopulation, planning teams, health and safety teams, communication and information teams. Human resource needs are also required for the market interruption and disease response, e.g., it does not include truckers, staff at processing plants, veterinarians and veterinary technicians and service people (i.e., counsellors).

Critical to the management of an agricultural emergency are coordination and communication. The Framework, though, does not address who is responsible for coordinating efforts among the various stakeholders identified in the document and who is responsible for communications and information sharing among government and stakeholders.

To be able to effectively prepare for and respond to an emergency, we believe that the above areas must be addressed.

### **Background: Ontario Pork's Emergency Preparedness Efforts To-Date**

Emergency preparedness is a key priority for Ontario's swine sector and in 2018, the Ontario Swine Incident Command Centre (OSICC) was established by Ontario Pork, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA), and key stakeholders in the Ontario pork industry to ensure a coordinated and effective industry response to significant swine specific diseases and industry incidents.

This work has been necessitated by an urgent need to address African swine fever, a disease that has destroyed swine herds in other parts of the world, and the devastating impact it would have on animals, food security, trade, producer and employee mental health, and our economy, if it were to be found in Canada and in North America.

To-date Ontario Pork's has:

- Completed over 1,000 Emergency Farm Plans
  - These plans help farmers plan out how they will manage a major market interruption on their farm
  - Develop site maps with all major components identified
  - Has helped the industry identify that on-farm burial and composting options are limited due to tile drainage
- Developed the Swine Health Area Regional Control Program (SHARC)
  - Voluntary swine disease information sharing system
  - Tracks and maps status of barns for diseases such as PRRS, PEDv and PDCoV
  - During a foreign animal disease, SHARC can be used to map all sites (including hobby farms) on the administrative level. This includes radius mapping any distance from any premises and multiple premises concurrently
- Created a toolbox to assist with the depopulation and disposal activities occurring outside of processing facilities
- Developed an ASF communication strategy with key messages which include:
  - Crisis communication tools
  - Pet pig website
- Ontario Pork has also been:
  - Working with processing plants to understand their capacity to assist with humane depopulation of animals
  - Working with industry organization's to identify key contact people to help with communication and response activities. Integral to this is aiding with the triaging of farms based on animal welfare and producer mental health
  - Organizing small stress tests with veterinarians, feed companies, and processors to ensure the assumptions that have been made regarding roles, responsibilities and actions are true
  - Collaborating with pork organizations in other provinces, including participating in national tabletop exercises

Ontario Pork believes it would be beneficial if an updated Emergency Management Framework for Agriculture in Canada clarified whether it is a document that is meant to provide guidance or whether it is actionable.

On behalf of Ontario's pork producers, thank you again for the opportunity to participate in this consultation.

Sincerely,



Tara Terpstra  
Board Chair