




CSF Operations Update

May 2025

As we move deeper into 2025, the Canadian sheep sector continues to navigate a shifting landscape shaped by political transition, international regulation, and ongoing discussions around animal health and sustainability. In this month's update, we take a closer look at what the recent federal election means for agriculture policy, how international frameworks like the EU's antimicrobial and deforestation rules may affect Canadian producers, and the work CSF is doing both at home and abroad to ensure that livestock production remains viable, competitive, and forward-looking. Each file we're engaged in—from disease surveillance to digital traceability—is grounded in a single goal: ensuring that producers have a seat at the table when decisions are made and that practical realities on the ground are understood by those shaping the future of agriculture.

 **by Corlena Patterson**

Agriculture in the Federal Election Spotlight

In the final stretch of the federal election campaign, representatives from Canada's major political parties took part in a national agriculture debate hosted by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. The event offered producers and stakeholders an opportunity to hear firsthand how each party intends to approach the key challenges and opportunities facing the sector. Now that the election has concluded and the Liberal Party will return to government, attention turns to how campaign commitments will translate into policy, and how competing visions from opposition parties will influence the debate moving forward.

Representing the Liberal Party was Kody Blois, who emphasized a continued commitment to partnership with industry, sustained climate investment, and improvements to existing programming. He pointed to programs like the On-Farm Climate Action Fund and the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership as examples of ongoing federal support, while also acknowledging that business risk management programs remain uneven in their delivery and uptake. Blois committed to working with provinces to improve fairness and accessibility. He also recognized long-standing concerns about the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, noting that system reforms are needed to improve both administrative efficiency and outcomes for employers and workers alike. Rural mental health and sustained support for applied agricultural research were also highlighted as priorities.

Opposition Parties' Agricultural Positions

John Barlow, representing the Conservative Party, offered a sharp critique of the current government's record, particularly around affordability and regulatory burden. He framed the carbon tax as a punitive cost on farmers and stated that his party would continue to push for broader exemptions and more predictable input costs. Labour reform was another major theme, with Barlow arguing that delays and red tape in the foreign worker system are hindering farm productivity. He also raised concerns about Canada's trade relationships, stating that a more assertive defence of market access is needed, and questioned whether current investments in research are meeting the practical needs of producers.

Heather Ray, the NDP's representative, focused on mental health, equity, and the need for stronger public supports in rural communities. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that federal programs are accessible to producers of all scales and that climate resilience measures do not leave behind those already facing structural challenges. Ray also stressed the need to expand regional capacity in areas where farmers are underserved by existing frameworks.

Yves Perron, speaking on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, reiterated his party's emphasis on Quebec's autonomy in agricultural policy. He underscored the importance of tailoring federal programs to respect regional differences and called for greater recognition of provincial priorities in decision-making processes.

Dr. Maria Rodriguez, representing the Green Party of Canada, framed agriculture as central to Canada's broader environmental and public health goals. Her remarks focused on transitioning to more sustainable production systems, supporting local food infrastructure, and ensuring that farmers are resourced to play a lead role in climate adaptation. She advocated for investments in ecological agriculture, soil health, and systems that support long-term resilience.

Post-Election Agricultural Landscape

While the tone of the debate was largely respectful, the differences in approach were clear. Across party lines, there was consensus that agriculture is facing rising pressure—from labour shortages to unpredictable weather and global market shifts—but the policy tools and timelines offered to address those pressures varied significantly. With the Liberals remaining in government, the task of implementation now sits with them, but opposition parties have signalled that they will continue to press on key issues like affordability, equity, labour, and trade.

For producers, this next phase offers both opportunity and uncertainty. The direction of federal ag policy will be shaped not only by campaign platforms, but by the capacity of all parties to engage constructively, and by the voices of industry partners who continue to bring practical knowledge and grounded priorities to the table.

Connecting CSF Priorities to the Federal Agriculture Agenda

As Canada's agricultural policy direction begins to take shape under a renewed Liberal mandate, the Canadian Sheep Federation's industry dossier presents several areas of strong alignment with stated federal objectives. These intersections provide a foundation for practical collaboration and policy implementation that supports producer resilience, economic competitiveness, and national food security.

Veterinary Product Access and Regulatory Alignment

Access to essential veterinary products remains a critical issue for Canadian sheep producers. The CSF has outlined the growing gap in product availability between Canada and key trading partners, particularly the United States. During the election campaign and in the CFA debate, there was recognition across parties of the need to modernize regulatory frameworks in ways that both protect public interest and ensure producers can access the tools they need to maintain herd health and welfare.

Given the Liberal Party's emphasis on strengthening domestic production and enhancing competitiveness, revisiting veterinary product approval pathways presents a practical opportunity to reduce structural barriers. The CSF is prepared to work collaboratively with the Minister and relevant federal agencies to identify solutions that maintain safety while improving availability through harmonized international practices and better alignment with producer realities.

Climate Resilience and Sustainable Innovation

The Liberal platform reiterated its focus on climate resilience and environmental sustainability in agriculture. The CSF's leadership in developing digital traceability tools—such as AgroLedger—and biometric animal health monitoring through FaceIT technologies offers ready-made applications that align with national climate and sustainability goals.

Supporting Trade and Next-Generation Exporters

Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy and broader trade diversification agenda are core components of the Liberal government's international economic policy. The CSF has been active in building trade relationships and capacity, particularly through initiatives like the LambEx Exchange Program.

Food Safety, Biosecurity, and Assurance Systems

The CSF continues to maintain and evolve a suite of industry-led programs including the Canadian Verified Sheep Program (CVSP), the Scrapie Flock Certification Program, and on-farm biosecurity standards.

CSF's Climate and Innovation Initiatives

The CSF's leadership in developing digital traceability tools—such as AgroLedger—and biometric animal health monitoring through FaceIT technologies offers ready-made applications that align with national climate and sustainability goals.

These tools are designed to support early disease detection, reduce animal losses, and improve transparency across the supply chain. Their use contributes directly to reducing the carbon intensity of livestock production by improving health outcomes and minimizing resource waste. These innovations not only support the objectives of programs like the On-Farm Climate Action Fund, but they also demonstrate how producers can contribute to national climate goals through sector-driven solutions. The CSF would welcome the opportunity to explore targeted pilot projects that showcase how existing Canadian technologies can be integrated into federal programming.

Supporting Trade and Next-Generation Exporters: Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy and broader trade diversification agenda are core components of the Liberal government's international economic policy. The CSF has been active in building trade relationships and capacity, particularly through initiatives like the LambEx Exchange Program, which supports early-career exporters and positions Canadian lamb producers to engage meaningfully with international buyers and supply chains.

This work complements the government's focus on youth engagement in trade, skills development, and building globally competitive agri-food brands. As Canada seeks to expand its agri-food footprint in international markets, the sheep sector offers a unique opportunity to tell a story of sustainable, high-quality production supported by robust assurance systems and traceability.

CSF's Food Safety and Emergency Preparedness Programs

Food Safety, Biosecurity, and Assurance Systems: The CSF continues to maintain and evolve a suite of industry-led programs including the Canadian Verified Sheep Program (CVSP), the Scrapie Flock Certification Program, and on-farm biosecurity standards. These initiatives provide the foundation for on-farm assurance, risk mitigation, and international market confidence.

With the Liberal platform emphasizing domestic food security and defensible production standards, these programs offer an ideal model for building trust in Canadian food systems. Continued federal partnership in their delivery helps safeguard market access and supports Canada's reputation as a trusted supplier of ethically and safely produced livestock.

Emergency Preparedness and FMD Planning: Although the Animal Health Canada contract supporting FMD preparedness work concluded in March, the CSF-led Working Group developed a comprehensive Integrated Emergency Response Plan, identified critical roles and responsibilities, and flagged high-risk gaps in current national capacity. This work is ready to be built upon, particularly as Canada updates its emergency planning infrastructure in the face of increasing global risk.

As the new government continues to invest in national risk management, including through the lens of biosecurity and pandemic preparedness, the CSF offers a mature, sector-specific framework that complements broader federal initiatives. Engagement on this file supports not only the sheep industry, but cross-sector coordination in the event of a high-consequence livestock disease incursion.



Share practical examples of alignment

Share practical examples of alignment between CSF programming and federal objectives.



Explore opportunities

Explore opportunities to pilot existing sheep sector technologies within federal agtech or sustainability initiatives.



Discuss national-level planning

Discuss national-level planning for veterinary drug access, animal health, and emergency response.

The Canadian Sheep Federation looks forward to engaging with the incoming Minister of Agriculture in the early months of the new mandate. We remain committed to working constructively with all levels of government and with producer groups across the country to ensure the Canadian sheep sector continues to contribute meaningfully to the economic, environmental, and food security goals of Canada.

Advancing Global Standards: CSF's Work with DIASCA

This month, the Canadian Sheep Federation continued its involvement with the Digital Integration of Agricultural Supply Chains Alliance (DIASCA)—a global initiative working to improve the interoperability and transparency of digital traceability systems in agriculture. DIASCA's work has become increasingly relevant as countries and industries adapt to the European Union's Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), which sets new expectations for verifying the origins of agricultural products and land use change.

CSF's engagement in DIASCA is centred on ensuring that traceability standards support—not hinder—sustainable and inclusive production systems. This includes defending the role of agroforestry and mixed land-use models, which are commonly used by smallholders around the world, yet often overlooked in standardized forest mapping protocols. Concerns have been raised that current definitions used in the EUDR risk misclassifying these practices, potentially limiting market access for producers using climate-positive methods.

Throughout a series of working meetings in April, CSF emphasized the importance of preserving smallholder access to supply chains and ensuring that traceability tools reflect on-the-ground realities. Canadian experience in developing adaptive, offline-capable traceability platforms—such as PrüfIT Technologies' AgroLedger—was shared as a model for how data systems can remain robust in low-connectivity environments while still meeting rigorous traceability requirements.

Forest Monitoring and Agroforestry Classification

The conversation has also focused on the use of forest monitoring data. The European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) presented updates to its global forest cover map, which underpins how the EU assesses deforestation risk. While the updated map improves on earlier versions, agroforestry and diverse perennial systems are still frequently misclassified. This poses a compliance challenge for producers using integrated systems that don't conform to standard monoculture models.

A formal feedback process on the JRC map is now open, with submissions due by May 12. Encouragingly, there is now an opportunity to propose the creation of an "agroforestry" category within the mapping framework, which would better reflect ecological practices on the ground and provide a more balanced compliance pathway for smallholders and diversified farms.

As DIASCA continues to refine its traceability architecture and guidance, the Canadian Sheep Federation is contributing to a technical note that articulates the importance of inclusive standards, context-aware definitions, and flexible traceability models that serve both sustainability and equity. The next round of engagement is planned for mid-May, where CSF will continue to advocate for policies and digital tools that reflect the realities of livestock producers and allied sectors, both in Canada and globally.

Understanding EU Regulation 2019/6: Ionophores, Antimicrobials, and Export Implications

On April 28, the Canadian Sheep Federation participated in a multi-sector discussion convened by the Canadian Animal Health Institute (CAHI) regarding upcoming changes under European Union Regulation 2019/6, and more specifically, the implications of Article 118 for Canadian livestock exports. The meeting brought together representatives from across animal agriculture to examine how the regulation's antimicrobial use restrictions may affect market access to the EU beginning in September 2026.

Under the regulation, the EU will prohibit the import of animals or animal-derived products if the animals have been treated with antimicrobials for the purpose of promoting growth or increasing yield—even if such uses are permitted in the country of origin. While this reflects a broader EU strategy to curb antimicrobial resistance (AMR), it introduces a significant layer of complexity for exporters in countries like Canada.

Ionophore Classification Concerns

A key point raised during the discussion was the classification of ionophores, which are technically grouped with antimicrobials in EU regulation but differ meaningfully in their mode of action, spectrum, and AMR implications. Ionophores are not used in human medicine and are widely regarded as having a negligible risk in terms of resistance transfer. Despite this, their presence on product labels with growth promotion claims may still bring them under the scope of Article 118, depending on how EU regulators interpret their use.

Implications for Sheep Producers

This distinction is of particular relevance to the sheep sector. Ionophores are used for disease prevention and to support feed efficiency, but not typically for growth promotion in Canadian flocks. Nonetheless, if product labels reference growth promotion—even where not the primary purpose of use—there is concern that EU authorities may interpret this as non-compliant under their import rules. Several stakeholders in the meeting suggested that ionophores should not be treated the same as medically important antimicrobials and that Canada should consider engaging with EU counterparts to clarify this position before enforcement begins.

What emerges from this discussion is a broader issue facing animal agriculture: the growing overlap between domestic veterinary practices and international regulatory expectations. Canadian producers could find themselves caught between a product label approved under Canadian rules and a market access challenge under EU law. This underscores the importance of alignment not only in stewardship practices, but also in how antimicrobial categories are defined and communicated across jurisdictions.

The Canadian Sheep Federation will continue monitoring the development of this file and working with partners across species and value chains to assess potential impacts. We'll also support efforts to ensure that Canadian regulatory frameworks—particularly regarding label claims—do not unintentionally trigger trade disruptions for producers.

CSF's Policy Alignment with Federal Objectives

With these political dynamics in play, the Canadian Sheep Federation is focused on ensuring that the sector's priorities are well understood and meaningfully reflected in federal programming. Our policy and innovation agenda is closely aligned with many of the new government's stated goals—offering immediate opportunities for constructive engagement.

As federal policy begins to evolve under a new mandate, international regulatory changes are also shaping the environment Canadian producers operate in. One such development comes from the European Union, where new rules on antimicrobial use are prompting careful review of how Canada manages veterinary product labels and trade compliance.



Regulatory Alignment

CSF is working to ensure Canadian regulatory frameworks don't unintentionally trigger trade disruptions for producers, particularly regarding antimicrobial labeling and use.



International Standards

While EU Regulation 2019/6 poses specific questions about antimicrobial use and labeling, a broader conversation is unfolding around how traceability and land use classification will be assessed under Europe's deforestation regulation.



Animal Health Networks

Beyond regulatory readiness, the Canadian Sheep Federation continues to engage with national and international animal health networks to strengthen disease surveillance, improve early warning capabilities, and support evidence-based decision making on farm.

CSF's Comprehensive Approach to Industry Challenges

The Canadian Sheep Federation's work spans multiple fronts to address the complex challenges facing the sector. From political advocacy to international regulatory engagement, CSF is ensuring that sheep producers' voices are heard in key decision-making forums.



While EU Regulation 2019/6 poses specific questions about antimicrobial use and labeling, a broader conversation is unfolding around how traceability and land use classification will be assessed under Europe's deforestation regulation. CSF is actively contributing to that conversation through its participation in the DIASCA alliance.

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