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Liberals' recently announced National Food Policy will help Leeds - Grenville

The recently announced, Liberal National Food Policy is a step towards addressing the concerns raised by both farmers and consumers of food in Leeds-Grenville.

Over the last months I have spend much time talking to farmers and consumers, and their top-of-mind concerns are increasing local food production, and the safety of the food we eat.

Farmers' key concern is that existing farm support programs do not work well for them. They also see the measures they must take to meet food safety requirements as being unnecessarily complex and expensive. This is particularly galling when they must compete with food from foreign sources which do not require similar tough measures.

This is an issue not only for those who produce food; consumers also are also uneasy about the quality of imported food, especially when poor product labelling makes it difficult to identify the source.

The Liberal National Food Policy, the first for Canada, identifies a complete set of measures to secure our national food supply, and to ensure that more local food will be put on Canadian tables.

Specific measures include a total review of the way we regulate food safety. This will include a rethink of the rules for small-scale processors to ensure that they are appropriate and cost-effective, and an investment of \$50 million to improve inspections of imported food to ensure that they meet our tough domestic standards.

The plan will promote farmers' markets so locally produced food is more accessible, and improve labelling so the consumer knows where the food comes from. This will open new businesses opportunities for local producers

Additional elements of the Food Policy include a \$40-million *Healthy Start* program to help 250,000 low-income children access healthy foods; *Healthy Choices* program to help Canadians make informed eating decisions. Tougher standards for the use of trans fats will improve our health.

Most importantly for farmers, Mr. Ignatieff has made a Clean Slate Commitment – a commitment to start over, to build practical, bankable farm programs for food producers. “We will work from the ground up in partnership with farmers and restore AgriFlex to offer regionally flexible programs that help meet the costs of production”, said Mr. Ignatieff.

“Importantly for farmers, we will work with them to build new programs from the farm up, not Ottawa down. We’ve listened to farmers who have told us that we must wipe the slate clean and work with them to create practical, bankable, regionally-flexible programs that work for them.”

This new Liberal policy will strengthen Environmental Farm Plans, improve fertilizer and pesticide management and help farmers benefit from renewable energy projects..

The National Food Policy is the second part of the Liberal Party's "Rural Canada Matters" initiative, which also includes a plan to help attract doctors and nurses to underserved rural communities.

"We're presenting Canadians with a clear choice," Mr. Ignatieff said. "The Liberal choice is to pay down the deficit and invest in priorities like a comprehensive National Food Policy, while Stephen Harper has chosen more tax cuts for corporations that our country and our families can't afford."

At the recent Canada at 150 conference, Liberals announced that a Liberal government will freeze corporate income tax rates in Canada. The Harper Conservative government's priority is to continue cutting Canada's corporate income tax rates – already among the lowest in the G7 – from 18% to 15% when our country can't afford it. A Liberal government would take the savings from a corporate income tax freeze – between \$5 billion and \$6 billion a year – and invest in Canadians.

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