

# Qualitative Research on Consumer and Producer Views Towards Sustainability in Agriculture



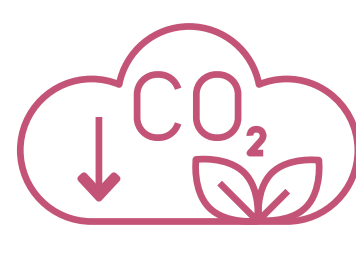
## Key findings



**Sustainable agriculture** is important for **both consumers and producers**



The definition of sustainability differs: **producers consider economic sustainability**, while many consumers do not



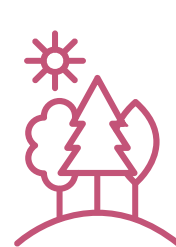
Many consumers are **unable to assess the impact** of agriculture on the environment or **identify sustainable practices or products**



Many producers think **consumers are misinformed**, and many consumers agree **they lack knowledge about the agriculture and food sector**



Many consumers associate **locally produced foods with environmental sustainability**; buying local is an easy action to support sustainability and local businesses

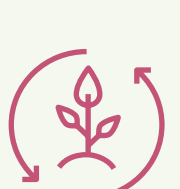


**Both consumers and producers** say producers in Canada are doing at least the minimum to **mitigate environmental impacts**

## Consumers

## Producers

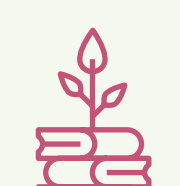
### Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture



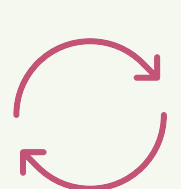
Most found it **difficult to name** environmentally sustainable agricultural practices



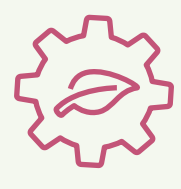
Some feel **smaller farms are more environmentally responsible** than larger operations



Most are aware of their **lack of knowledge**, but many are **interested in learning** more, especially from farmers



**Environmental practices are deeply engrained** in producer operations; it is better for the sustainability of their business



**Barriers to implement new environmental practices:** cost, labour, time, lack of consistent application of government regulations

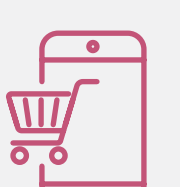


**Misinformation** needs to be challenged

### Consumer Preferences and Assurance Systems



Most say it is **difficult to identify sustainable food**; those who buy it most often look for organic



Many are torn on **credibility of assurance systems**; some question if they are just marketing tools



**Criteria for purchase:** Price, quality, ingredients/health, product origin



**Some use assurance systems**, others think the claims are marketing tools rather than evidence of sound practices

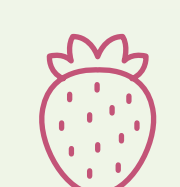


According to producers, consumers say they want sustainably produced food, but **always choose the cheapest or most perfect looking option**

### Supporting Sustainable Agriculture



**Majority would sacrifice convenience** by reducing packaging and processing



**Some would sacrifice variety** (eat in season) for sustainability, especially youth

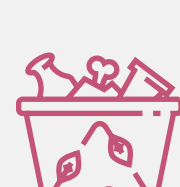


**Few are willing to pay more** for sustainably produced food



**Many producers are trying to reduce packaging**, but some are limited by cost or impact of different packaging on product quality

### Food Waste



**Near consensus that food waste is a problem** and most are taking action at home (freeze foods, composting)



Desire to **reduce food waste is driven by economic and social values**, not just environmental values



Producers felt food waste was often attributable to **consumers only willing to buy the most perfect looking produce**



Many producers think **consumers are most responsible for food waste**, followed by grocery stores and restaurants

## Consumers from remote, Northern communities



Less ability to be selective based on environmental responsibility **due to less options on shelves**



Canada's agriculture and food sector is **not top of mind**



Sustainable agriculture means **having the ability to secure your own food**



**Many eat wild foods and meats** as a way to reduce environmental impact

## Methodology

FEBRUARY - MARCH 2022



**12** Consumer focus groups  
Some responsibility for household grocery shopping



**12** Producer focus groups  
Farmers and ranches with at least **\$10,000 in sales**



**20** Consumer interviews  
Living in a remote, Northern community supported by **Nutrition North Canada**



Qualitative research results are **not representative of all** consumer and producer opinions, but bring more depth to research findings