



FEEDING THE FUTURE

Partnering.

Collaborating.

Innovating.





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Dr. Rene Van Acker



Dr. Shayan Sharif

A Message from University of Guelph's President and Interim Vice-President, Research and Innovation

In an era of extraordinary economic and geopolitical turbulence, strengthening food systems has never been more urgent. The global challenges of climate change, supply chain disruptions and shifting trade dynamics demand a bold, forward-thinking response. Canada, with its vast natural resources and world-class agricultural expertise, is uniquely positioned to lead.

As one of the most diverse and innovative agricultural regions in the country, Ontario is at the forefront of this leadership role. The province is home to a dynamic agri-food sector that spans livestock, fisheries, field crops, horticulture and greenhouse production — all vital components of global food security. In 2021 alone, Ontario accounted for over 25% of Canada's farms and more than

60% of national greenhouse production, making it a powerhouse in commodities like soybeans, corn, wheat, dairy and vegetable farming. One in nine Ontarians is employed in the agri-food supply chain, contributing \$51 billion to the provincial GDP. These numbers highlight not just Ontario's economic impact but its essential role in global food resilience.

At the University of Guelph, we believe that Ontario's agri-food sector has the potential to be the most innovative, sustainable and globally competitive in the world. This vision builds upon Ontario's strategic priorities to drive economic growth, advance innovation and reinforce long-term food system resilience in agriculture and food production.



Dr. Mary Ruth McDonald and colleagues at the Ontario Crops Research Centre in Bradford work with producers to address crop diseases and advance agri-food innovation.

University of Guelph is uniquely positioned to integrate cutting-edge research, interdisciplinary collaboration and industry engagement into real-world solutions. Our faculty, students and research partners are addressing the most pressing challenges in the sector — from climate resilience and digital farming to food systems resilience. By fostering collaboration between academia, industry and government, we ensure that a wide diversity of voices are heard as we work to ensure Ontario's agri-food sector is not just responding to challenges but leading the transformation.

Through our Feeding the Future engagement initiative, we are seeking to understand current challenges in the system and what is needed to unlock Ontario's full potential. As we move

forward, our goal is to position Ontario as a global leader in agri-food innovation, while ensuring long-term food security and economic prosperity. This is an ambitious vision, but with the support of our partners, we are confident that Ontario's agri-food sector will not just adapt to change — it will define the future.

We thank our partners and interest holders for their collaboration and insights. Together, we will build a thriving and resilient agri-food sector — one that is truly world-class.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rene Van Acker
President,
University of Guelph

Dr. Shayan Sharif
Interim Vice-President
Research and Innovation,
University of Guelph

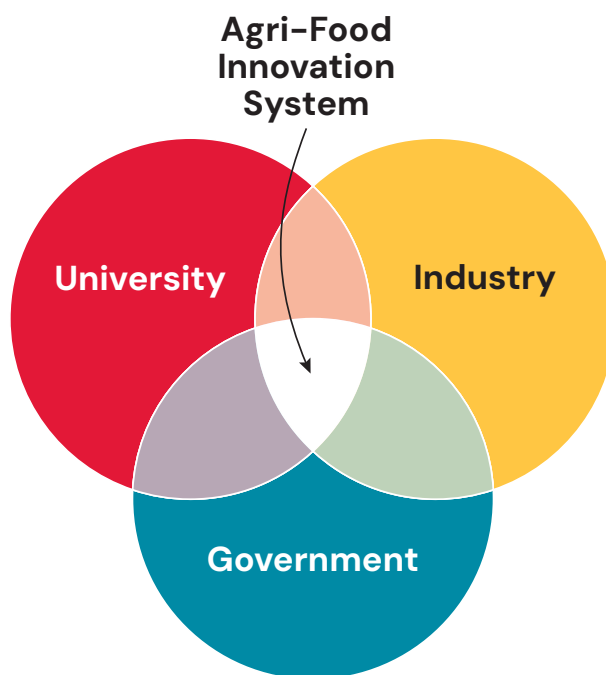


Rene Van Acker, former U of G Vice-President Research and Innovation, with then Minister Rob Flack at a Feeding the Future engagement event.

Executive Summary

In 2024, the University of Guelph launched the Feeding the Future initiative in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Ontario Agricultural College. This engagement process sought to assess Ontario's agri-food sector, reflect on its legacy and envision U of G's role in shaping its future. At the heart of this initiative was the critical question:

How can we help make Ontario's agri-food sector the best in the world?



Context Matters: Engagement Before the Trade Crisis

The Feeding the Future listening tour took place before the current escalation in trade tensions between Canada and the United States. At that time, stakeholders were already calling for stronger industry-academic partnerships, more applied research, greater support for commercialization and enhanced infrastructure.

Today, these priorities are more urgent than ever.

The recent introduction of new tariffs and shifting trade relationships have only reinforced the importance of a resilient, innovation-driven agri-food sector that can adapt to global volatility. While this report captures a pre-crisis snapshot of sectoral needs, its findings serve as a forward-looking foundation for navigating uncertainty and advancing food security in Ontario and beyond.

Engaging Ontario's Agri-food Community



Engaging with over 300 interest holders from across the province — including industry leaders, farmers and academic partners — the initiative provided deep insights into the current challenges

and opportunities within Ontario's agri-food system. The findings point to several key areas where U of G can leverage its expertise and resources to drive innovation and sustainability in Ontario's agri-food sector.

To build a comprehensive picture of the challenges and opportunities facing Ontario's agri-food sector, we engaged more than 300 individuals through a range of conversations. These included one-on-one interviews

A wide spectrum of voices were heard in shaping a vision for the future.

with 20 key informants across academia, industry and government — such as representatives from commodity organizations, agri-businesses, innovation

networks and the University of Guelph itself. We hosted over 90 participants in small focus groups across the province, including producers and researchers in regions including Guelph, Elora, New Liskeard, Emo, Winchester, Ridgeway and Prince Edward County. Additionally, more than 200 people joined informal conversations at events such as Canada's Outdoor Farm Show, the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair and sectoral conferences.

This effort was intentionally place-based and relational, grounded in the University's long-standing connections to rural communities, commodity groups and agricultural innovators. It ensured that a wide spectrum of voices — from students and alumni to greenhouse growers, aquaculture leaders and field crop producers — were heard in shaping a vision for the future.

Key Findings

1 Strengthening Industry–Academic Collaboration Interest holders emphasized the need for deeper integration between U of G’s research efforts and industry needs. There is a call for more collaborative research priorities, as well as a streamlined process for industry partners to more easily access the University’s research, technology and commercialization services.

2 Advancing Applied Research and Innovation The agri–food sector requires more priority-driven research that translates into tangible, real-world applications. Interest holders urged U of G (working with its partners and funders) to do even more to get research into practice to address urgent sectoral issues.

3 Enhancing Commercialization and Market Access U of G’s strong track record in commercialization needs to be expanded, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the agri–food sector (including farms). Interest holders highlighted the need for mentorship, funding and clearer pathways for taking innovations from the lab to the marketplace. This included not only inventions but new knowledge and new practices. Interest holders acknowledged that when any new knowledge was incorporated into their commercial enterprises, they



Stakeholders called for improved digital tools and modern facilities to support agri-food innovation.

considered that commercialization of research.

4 Building a Future-Ready Workforce There is growing demand for industry-aligned training programs to prepare students for the evolving needs of the agri–food sector, including skills for high-tech farming systems. Expanding experiential learning opportunities such as co-op placements and internships was seen as essential for bridging any gaps between education programs and industry practice. The sector also noted that it continues to need many more people trained in agriculture and food programs.

5 Infrastructure and Technological Advancements To support the adoption of new and innovative farming technologies, interest holders identified the need for enhanced digital and physical infrastructure. Modernized and digital enabled demonstration sites for new technologies and increased public investment in research infrastructure were also noted as critical to advancing innovation.



Workforce development is needed to address skills shortages in the agri-food industry.

Opportunities for Action

1 Industry–Academic Collaboration

Clearly establish a “front door” for industry and government partners to easily access U of G’s research and commercialization services. Increase collaborative research projects to better align academic work with sector needs.

2 Applied Research

Develop priority-driven research aimed at finding solutions for pressing real-world issues. Co-create research agendas with industry to ensure alignment with sector priorities.

3 Commercialization

Lever the ARIO research centres to be Agricultural Innovation Hubs to support startups and SMEs with mentorship, funding and technical expertise. Strengthen intellectual property

commercialization efforts to ensure Ontario’s agri-food innovations are globally competitive.

4 Workforce Development

Expand co-op, internship and industry partnership opportunities. Offer industry-aligned professional development workshops to address skills shortages in the sector and promote agriculture and food programs and the sector to potential students.

5 Infrastructure

Advocate for investments in digital and physical research infrastructure to support ag-tech adoption. Further develop the ARIO Agricultural Research Centres as demonstration sites to showcase innovations and de-risk adoption for producers.



The Feeding the Future engagement event comes to a close, capturing insights from across Ontario's agri-food sector.

Conclusion

By listening to what the sector needs now, Feeding the Future provides the beginnings of a roadmap for strengthening Ontario's agri-food sector. U of G is well-positioned to lead in areas such as applied research, industry collaboration, workforce development and commercialization. By continuing to engage with industry, government and academic partners, U of G can help shape a vision for a resilient, sustainable, innovative and globally competitive agri-food system.

It should be noted that these conversations took place prior to the escalation in trade tensions with the United States, offering a valuable snapshot of sectoral priorities before the introduction of new tariff threats — priorities that may now carry even greater urgency as Ontario's agri-food sector navigates heightened global uncertainty.

U of G can help shape a vision for a resilient, sustainable, innovative and globally competitive agri-food system.

While additional data may be required to support the opportunities highlighted in this report, this serves as the starting point towards a vision and eventual action plan for the University of Guelph's ongoing efforts to refine and implement strategies that will drive the future success of Ontario's agri-food sector, ensuring it remains a global leader in innovation, sustainability and economic growth.



Feeding the Future team members gathered insights from community voices during listening sessions across Ontario, including at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

Introduction



In celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Ontario Agricultural College, Feeding the Future was established

as an interest holder engagement and visioning process to honor our legacy, assess the present and chart the University of Guelph's role in advancing Ontario's agri-food innovation system by answering the question: **How can we help make Ontario's agri-food sector the best in the world?**

This consultation process brought together hundreds of U of G's partners and interest

holders including industry leaders, farmers and other key actors within the agri-food ecosystem. Drawing on decades of relationships and a wide network of people and places connected to our work, our partners put forward ideas to reimagine the ways we work to build a better future together. From these discussions, it is clear that U of G has a vital role to play in addressing the sector's challenges and seizing new opportunities for growth.

This moment is a pivotal one for Ontario's agri-food sector. The global agricultural landscape is shifting rapidly, driven by changes in consumer demand, climate

challenges and technological advancements. Increasing pressure is being placed on producers to deliver sustainable, healthy and affordable food in a rapidly evolving marketplace. At the same time, Ontario is positioned to capitalize on emerging opportunities — such as technological innovation, expanding markets for plant-based and alternative protein products, and the growing global demand for sustainable agriculture.

These global shifts provide an urgent and unique opportunity for Ontario to enhance its role as a leader in agri-food innovation. For this to happen, however, the sector must adapt to both current and future challenges. From accelerating the adoption of new technologies and practices to fostering greater collaboration between industry, academia and government, the need for innovation in Ontario's agri-food sector has never been more pressing. The University of Guelph, with its unparalleled strengths in agri-food research, sustainability and policy leadership, is ideally positioned to help meet these demands, driving forward research and innovation that will benefit not just Ontario, but the global food system.

This is an especially exciting time because of the accelerating pace of change in the sector. Technological advancements — such as automation, digital agriculture and precision farming — offer the potential to dramatically improve productivity and sustainability. These innovations, coupled

with the urgent need for climate-resilient food systems, the entire range of activities, actors and infrastructure involved in producing, processing, distributing, consuming and disposing of food, demand that the University of Guelph continue to lead in applied research and solutions development. Ontario's agri-food industry is increasingly looking for tangible, actionable insights and de-risking new technologies to remain competitive in a time characterized by environmental and market uncertainties.

Advances in agricultural technology will boost industry productivity by increasing yields, reducing labour costs, and extending growing seasons.

Advances in agricultural technology will boost industry productivity by increasing yields, reducing labour costs and extending growing seasons. Also, leveraging artificial intelligence and data analytics will enhance efficiency in food production and distribution, reducing waste, improving accessibility and reducing cost. These technologies can also be used to mitigate the risk of emerging diseases for plants and animals.

Ontario's agricultural sector can serve as a model for sustainable food production globally, including practices that enhance soil health, conserve water, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, support biodiversity,

We have a tremendous opportunity to leverage world-class expertise in food systems research, agricultural production practices and ag-tech innovation to set the standard for others to follow.

as well as ensuring farming remains viable and profitable, while enhancing labour rights, equitable access to food and the well-being of farming communities. As environmental and societal expectations evolve, we have a tremendous opportunity to leverage world-class expertise in food systems research, agricultural production practices and ag-tech innovation to set the standard for others to follow.

The University's deep experience and leadership in these areas are a crucial asset in addressing the sector's evolving needs. By taking a proactive role in shaping Ontario's agri-food innovation ecosystem, U of G can help ensure the province remains at the forefront of global agri-food innovation.

This consultation process has highlighted key areas where U of G can

make a meaningful impact, including advancing sustainability, enhancing research translation, fostering stronger industry-academic collaborations and developing new approaches to workforce training. Each of these areas aligns with U of G's core mission to drive excellence in research and teaching and improving life. Furthermore, they directly respond to the evolving demands of the agri-food sector, which requires nimble, responsive solutions to stay competitive in the global market.

As Ontario's agri-food sector faces mounting pressures and exciting new opportunities, the University of Guelph's role in the sector has never been more crucial. This report summarizes the insights gathered from interest holder consultations and offers a roadmap for how U of G can leverage its existing strengths and resources to propel Ontario's agri-food sector to advance our global impact and reputation. By continuing to foster collaboration, drive innovation and engage deeply with industry and government partners, U of G can help shape the future of Ontario's agri-food sector, ensuring it remains a leader in sustainability, economic growth and global competitiveness.

Feeding the Future Listening Tour



Feeding the Future sought to engage diverse interest holders to uncover and seize emerging opportunities

to strengthen Ontario ag innovation ecosystem. Employing a relationship-centred approach to tackle key challenges and chart the sector's future course, we embarked on an Ontario-wide listening tour, meeting interest holders where they work and live — in barns, on tractors, at lab benches and in local diners. This approach provided a rich understanding of sector challenges while energizing relationships. Our efforts included:

- Conducting 20 one-on-one key informant interviews
- Hosting 90 individuals through small focus groups and kitchen table meetings including in New Liskeard, Emo, Winchester, Ridgetown, Kitchener-Waterloo and with representatives of all of Ontario's commodity groups
- Organizing a province-wide listening tour from Ridgetown in the east to Emo in the north, through central Ontario and to Winchester in the east
- Engaging in more than 200 conversations with interest holders about how we can help make Ontario's agri-food sector the best in the world at events including, for example: Canada's Outdoor Farm Show, International Plowing Match, Ontario Agricultural College's Alumni Weekend, Canadian Agri-food Policy Institute conference, Canadian Science Policy Conference, Ontario Farmland Trust Forum, Livestock Research Innovation Corporation's Getting Research Into Practice roundtable, Arrell Food Summit and the 2024 Royal Agricultural Winter Fair
- Five surveys submitted via online portal
- In total, we've engaged with more than 300 individuals

The What We Heard section of this report thematically summarizes the feedback received through the Feeding the Future Listening Tour and online insights portal.



Ontario Swine Research Centre supports leading-edge agri-food research. PHOTO: RICHARD SEC.

What We Heard

1 Strengthening Industry-Academic Collaboration

A core strength of the University of Guelph lies in its research excellence and long history of collaboration with the agri-food industry. Throughout our listening tour, interest holders consistently emphasized the need for deeper integration between research priority setting and industry practice. U of G is already well-regarded for fostering innovation through partnerships, and these conversations confirmed the importance of strengthening these ties to better enable and accelerate knowledge transfer and technology adoption.

Key Insights

- Interest holders affirmed the University of Guelph's longstanding leadership in research collaboration and emphasized opportunities to further build on this strength. They highlighted a growing desire to co-develop research priorities and foster even deeper strategic integration — signaling strong confidence in U of G's role as a trusted partner for innovation.
- The University's cross-disciplinary expertise is seen as a significant asset, and interest holders called for more centralized access to U of G's research, technology and innovation services to better support industry needs.

Opportunities

- Leverage U of G's existing network and expertise to create a dedicated "front door" for industry and government partners to access research, technology and commercialization services, making collaboration more seamless and responsive. A senior position within the University would hold this responsibility.
- Deepen partnerships with industry through more collaborative research projects, applied problem-solving initiatives and technology transfer programs that leverage U of G's established relationships in the agri-food sector.
- These opportunities directly align with U of G's knowledge mobilization priorities.

2 Advancing Applied Research and Innovation

The University of Guelph has a long-standing reputation for excellence in applied research in agriculture, food and veterinary sciences. Our commitment to addressing real-world challenges and getting research into practice has been demonstrated through leadership in areas such as sustainable agriculture, food safety and ag-tech innovation. Partners and interest holders emphasized the importance of continuing this tradition by expanding applied research initiatives that

focus on real world and emerging issues and topics such as adapting to extreme and unpredictable weather patterns, automation and the application of artificial intelligence and emerging plant and animal disease.

Key Insights

- Interest holders praised U of G's global reputation in applied research and knowledge mobilization and called for expanded, agile research programs that can address today's most pressing agri-food challenges. This recognition of U of G's deep expertise affirms the University's readiness to lead in developing climate-smart solutions, digital tools and innovations in food systems resilience.

Opportunities

- Capitalize on U of G's strong research foundations by developing responsive, challenge-based research teams that can address urgent specific sectoral and cross-sectoral issues. For instance, the creation of a Protein Institute may be envisaged, a cross-sectoral topic of interest for the interest holders.
- Strengthen co-creation of research agendas with industry, building on U of G's existing collaborations with agriculture interest holders to align academic work with sectoral priorities.

These actions will further bolster U of G's reputation as a leader in getting research into practice, positioning the University to lead Ontario's efforts to become a global hub for agri-food innovation and sustainability.

3 Enhancing Commercialization and Market Access

U of G's research excellence is paired with a strong focus on commercialization, particularly through our Research Innovation Office and the Ontario Agri-food Innovation Alliance, which support the translation of research into market-ready products, systems and technologies. Interest holders identified support for commercialization as a crucial area for growth, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the agri-food sector and emphasized the importance of clearer pathways for getting innovations from the lab to the marketplace.

Key Insights

- Stakeholders underscored U of G's strong foundation in commercialization and innovation support. They expressed enthusiasm for scaling this impact, particularly through expanded services for SMEs. These insights reflect confidence in U of G's entrepreneurial infrastructure and its potential to catalyze growth across the full spectrum of Ontario's agri-food value chain.

Opportunities

- Expand on existing strengths by establishing an Agricultural Innovation Hub or hubs, where U of G can provide both startups and established industry players with mentorship, funding opportunities and technical expertise to bring innovations to market.
- Enhance intellectual property commercialization efforts, leveraging U of G's strong track record in technology transfer and helping ensure that Ontario's agri-food innovations are globally competitive.

By utilizing its established commercialization infrastructure, U of G can play a key role in advancing Ontario's position as a global leader in agri-food technologies and innovations.

4 Building a Future-Ready Workforce

The University of Guelph has a rich history of preparing students for leadership roles in agriculture and food. Our interdisciplinary programs, experiential learning opportunities and emphasis on real-world training have already made a significant impact on the agri-food workforce. Interest holders emphasized that U of G graduates are well-trained and highly skilled but highlighted that workforce development remains a priority, particularly as the sector faces challenges attracting skilled workers



At the Ontario Aquaculture Research Centre, research and training equip the next generation of the agri-food workforce.

in that can meet the evolving needs of high-tech production systems.

Key Insights

- The University of Guelph was consistently recognized as a key contributor to Ontario's agri-food talent pipeline. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of expanding U of G's already impactful experiential learning, certification programs and outreach efforts to meet the sector's evolving needs — especially in high-tech and sustainability-focused careers.
- Strengthen workforce development by offering industry-aligned certification programs, professional development workshops and specialized training that address both immediate and long-term skill shortages in the sector.

Opportunities

- Expand experiential learning opportunities by increasing the availability

of co-ops, internships and industry partnerships that immerse students in real-world agri-food projects and allow them to contribute directly to industry needs.

- Strengthen workforce development by offering industry-aligned certification programs, professional development workshops and specialized training that address both immediate and long-term skill shortages in the sector.

These initiatives will leverage U of G's existing leadership in education and training, ensuring that future generations of agri-food leaders are equipped with the skills needed to drive innovation and success in Ontario's agri-food sector.

5 Infrastructure and Technological Advancements

The University of Guelph's world-class research infrastructure¹, which is bolstered by our access to and role in operating the ARIO-owned research centres², along with our commitment to technological innovation are key assets for Ontario's agri-food sector. Interest holders highlighted the need for long-term sustained public investments in the maintenance and replacement costs of existing research infrastructure. We also heard that enhanced physical and digital infrastructure is needed to support research and innovation in ag-tech, precision farming and sustainable production systems. U of G's existing research facilities and partnerships with the ag-tech community put it in a strong position to help address these infrastructure gaps, but resources to do this are scarce.

Key Insights

- Interest holders highlighted the University's pivotal role in advancing ag-tech and digital agriculture. They identified U of G as an ideal partner in the next generation of infrastructure investment — ensuring Ontario remains on the cutting edge of precision farming, climate resilience and smart food systems.

Opportunities

- Develop sites where U of G can partner with producers and industry leaders to showcase and de-risk new technologies and help ensure they are effectively implemented in practice across Ontario.
- Advocate for targeted infrastructure investments, focusing on both digital connectivity and physical research facilities that will allow U of G to lead the way in agri-food innovation.

1 For example, Biodiversity Institute of Ontario and the Centre for Biodiversity Genomics, Ontario Veterinary College Veterinary Clinical Research Facilities, John F. Wood Centre for Business and Student Enterprise, Guelph Food Innovation Centre, Canadian Research Institute for Food Safety, Meat Lab, Plant Agriculture Growth Facilities, Bioproducts Discovery & Development Centre, [Controlled Environment Systems Research Facility](#), etc.

2 Thirteen research centres across Ontario owned by Agricultural Research and Innovation Ontario are operated and managed by the University of Guelph through the Ontario Agri-food Innovation Alliance.

Charting a Path Forward

Sector Priorities and Opportunities for Partnership



The following three pillars represent areas where the University of Guelph is uniquely positioned to lead

alongside our partners — leveraging decades of experience, deep-rooted relationships and a globally recognized research and education ecosystem. The insights shared through Feeding the Future reflect not only a strong appreciation for U of G's contributions to date, but also a shared optimism about what we can achieve together through expanded collaboration, investment and innovation.

1 Workforce Development: Preparing Tomorrow's Talent

What We Heard

Stakeholders consistently recognized the University of Guelph as a cornerstone of Ontario's agri-food talent pipeline. U of G graduates are known for their deep expertise, practical skills and leadership potential. Partners emphasized the need to scale this impact by expanding student-industry engagement and growing the next generation of professionals prepared to

lead in a high-tech, sustainability-focused food system.

Opportunities

- Build on U of G's proven strengths in experiential learning by expanding co-op and internship placements across Ontario's agri-food value chain.
- Co-develop new professional certification and microcredential programs focused on emerging competencies (e.g., precision agriculture, regenerative practices, food safety innovation).
- Promote agriculture and food careers to the next generation through bold, student-centred outreach and immersive experiences.
- These opportunities reflect broad confidence in U of G's leadership in education and position the University to shape the future of Canada's agri-food workforce.



Stakeholders suggested using the Dairy Research Centre and ARIO research stations as regional hubs to support applied research and innovation.

2 Commercialization and Infrastructure: Scaling Innovation for Impact

What We Heard

Stakeholders praised the University's commitment to translating research into real-world solutions and its track record in supporting commercialization. There was particular excitement around U of G's potential to scale these efforts — especially to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and accelerate the adoption of agri-food technologies province-wide.

Opportunities

- Strengthen pathways for research translation by expanding commercialization supports, mentorship and early-stage funding programs for SMEs.
- Position U of G campuses and the ARIO research centres as regional Agricultural Innovation Hubs — offering testbeds, business case development and peer-to-peer learning opportunities.
- Champion sustained public investment in digital and physical infrastructure, enabling wide-scale innovation and tech adoption in both rural and urban settings.

These efforts will build on U of G's innovation capacity and ensure Ontario remains globally competitive in food systems transformation.

3 Applied Research: Partnering for Real-World Solutions

What We Heard

Stakeholders view the University of Guelph as a trusted research partner capable of tackling today's most pressing agri-food challenges—from climate adaptation and protein innovation to biosecurity and automation. Interest holders emphasized their enthusiasm to co-develop research agendas and work shoulder-to-shoulder with U of G researchers to ensure outcomes are relevant, scalable and actionable.

Opportunities

- Launch new applied research initiatives that are co-developed with industry, government and producers, addressing cross-sector priorities with urgency and relevance.
- Embed knowledge transfer and commercialization planning into

research design from the outset, ensuring greater uptake and real-world application, getting research into practice.

- Create a streamlined “front door” for partners to access U of G's expertise, supported by dedicated staff and a user-centred approach to collaboration.

These actions will reinforce U of G's reputation as a global leader in applied research and deepen its role as a driver of agri-food innovation in Ontario and beyond.

These three pillars—Workforce Development, Commercialization and Infrastructure, and Applied Research—highlight actionable areas where the University of Guelph, working with partners across the province, can accelerate progress in Ontario's agri-food sector. Together, they form a blueprint for focused investment, policy alignment and shared innovation that reflects both the urgency and the optimism voiced by those we heard from. With these priorities as our guide, U of G is committed to turning insight into action and helping Ontario lead the world in sustainable, resilient and competitive food systems.



Conclusion

The Feeding the Future engagement process has marked a crucial first step in developing a shared vision for the future of Ontario's agri-food sector. The insights gathered through conversations with a broad range of interest holders have highlighted the University of Guelph's central role in addressing the evolving challenges and seizing emerging opportunities within the sector.

While there is still much work to be done, it is clear that U of G's strengths in education, innovation and research offer a solid foundation for advancing Ontario's agri-food sector. Interest holders have identified key areas—such as enhancing industry-academic collaboration, driving applied research, fostering commercialization pathways and addressing workforce development—that hold potential for transformative change.

This report serves as the beginning of an ongoing process to refine and develop concrete actions that will guide the sector toward greater sustainability, innovation and competitiveness. By continuing to engage with industry, government and academic partners, U of G can help shape a collaborative vision for the future, ensuring Ontario's agri-food sector remains resilient and adaptable to global shifts.

The journey ahead will require sustained effort, investment and innovation, but the Feeding the Future initiative provides some direction for moving forward. Together with industry, government and our academic partners, we can chart a course that supports Ontario's aspiration to lead in agri-food innovation, while remaining responsive to the sector's evolving needs and opportunities.

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