



# SUSTAINABILITY: A KEY DIFFERENTIATOR FOR CANADIAN PULSE GROWERS



By Jeff English, Vice-President of Marketing & Communications, Pulse Canada

The topics of sustainability and climate change have been on the forefront of national conversations for some time. And while pulse growers and the industry overall are able to take pride in the fact that pulse crops naturally help reduce carbon emissions, use less water than other sources of protein, and improve soil health, it is becoming increasingly clear that there is an opportunity to further expand global demand for *Canadian* pulses by identifying as a solution to meeting broader global climate targets.

Sustainability shed itself of being a trend long ago. Consumers are asking more questions about where their food comes from and how products are made, and companies are working not only to

align themselves with consumer demands, but to get ahead of the curve. As these conversations trickle up to government and policymakers, Pulse Canada is working to ensure our industry’s sustainability strategy evolves while ensuring value is brought back through the value chain right to the farmgate.

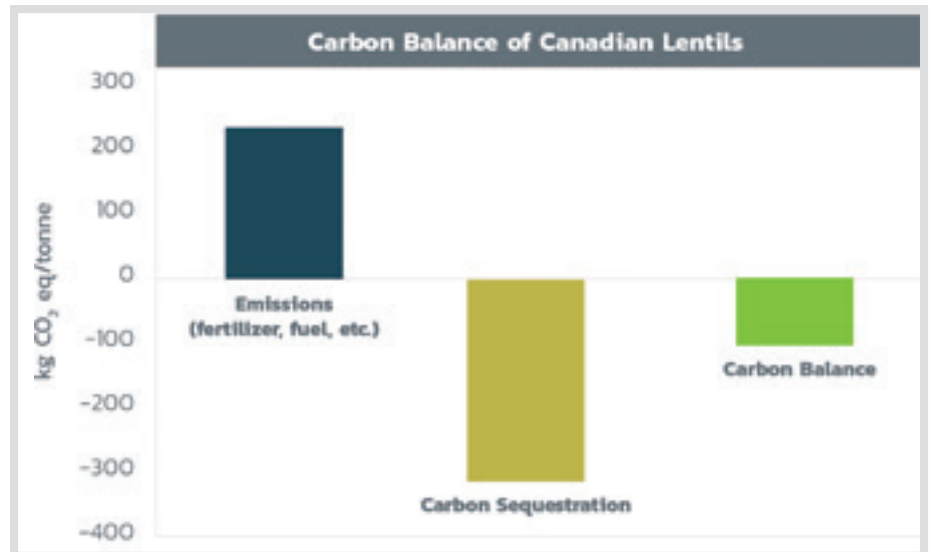
At Pulse Canada, we have two goals that drive our work on this file. Our sustainability initiatives work to:

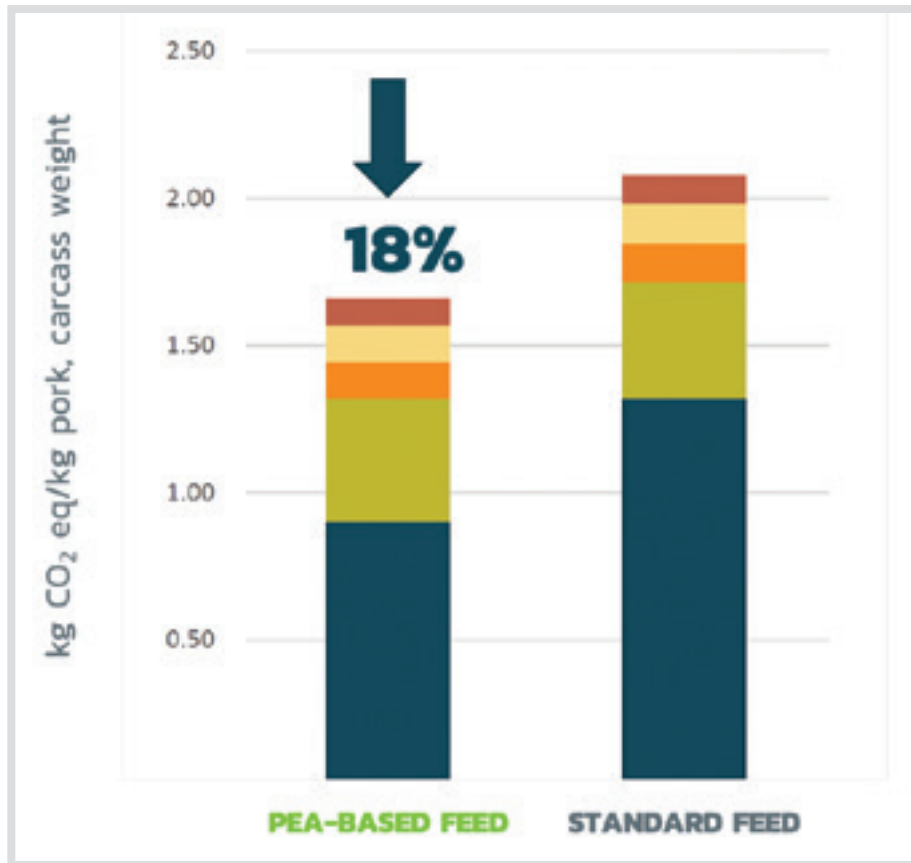
- Create conditions for growers, processors, and exporters to monetize commitments being made to global environmental sustainability; and
- Establish and solidify the Canadian pulse sector as a leader in providing food and ingredient solutions that decrease agriculture’s impact on climate change, effectively strengthening our global reputation and brand.

Pulses and pulse ingredients are some of the most sustainable foods

around due to their capacity to fix nitrogen, their water-use efficiency, and their contribution to soil health. But because of the world-leading stewardship practices of our producers, Canadian pulses are a leader among sustainably grown crops. When it comes to addressing Canada’s and our planet’s climate goals, our sector could easily pat itself on the back and lean on the fact that pulse crops naturally leave the earth better than they found it. But not only is that mentality not aligned with the innovativeness of Canadian pulse growers, it would also leave dollars on the table.

As this conversation around sustainability grows, so should the expectation of Canadian pulse growers and the trade to realize and monetize the opportunity that exists for sustainably grown crops and ingredients that can transform diets and food products. So, rather than allowing decisions that impact our industry to be made for us, we’re working with our





in the global marketplace, giving growers the credit they deserve while increasing demands and the return back to the farm gate. Recently, growers from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario participated in a dry bean and faba bean LCA survey, and we are hopeful to see similar results.

In the same vein, in 2020 Pulse Canada commissioned a research project investigating the environmental impacts and benefits of including Canadian peas into animal feed rations for Western Canadian pork and egg production. The punchline was that not only do peas lower the carbon footprint of the feed itself, but can reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of the final pork product by roughly 18%. While there is more work to do, there is tremendous potential provided we put this research into the hands of companies that are focused on meeting their sustainability targets. These findings will impact much of the work undertaken by the Pulse Canada team on members' behalf as we work toward the realization of the 25 by 2025 strategy – finding new, lucrative markets and new uses for Canadian pulses.

As consumers continue to demand more from their food and products, pulses and pulse ingredients will continue to be recognized as the most sustainable options. The Canadian pulse industry has the opportunity to showcase Canadian pulses as the leader in sustainability and to capitalize on an opportunity that benefits the grower, the consumer, the Canadian economy and the global climate. And at Pulse Canada, we will continue to work on behalf of pulse growers and the entire value chain to turn this opportunity into a reality. If you have any questions on any of Pulse Canada's work related to marketing the sustainability of Canadian pulses, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at [jenglish@pulsecanada.com](mailto:jenglish@pulsecanada.com).

members, the pulse industry, food companies, ingredient processors, and governments to ensure we can collectively evolve Canadian pulse's sustainability story. For example, Pulse Canada is actively working to bring value to the pulse value chain by facilitating research that builds life-cycle assessments (LCAs) for Canadian pulses. This work will position Canadian pulses as the **definition of sustainable food and ingredients** in the global food industry.

Our life-cycle assessments for individual pulse crops are ongoing, but are already proving their worth. A recent study in cooperation with the University of British Columbia created the first Canadian LCA for peas and lentils. This research confirmed that peas and lentils have a much lower carbon footprint than other crops, and provided us with an objective, robust dataset to prove that story to companies here in Canada, across North America, and around the world. But more than that, this research

holds up Canadian farmers' vision of modern agriculture as necessary to meeting consumer and company expectations on sustainability. It won't surprise growers that the main contributors to the life-cycle environmental impacts of pea and lentil production were fertilizer and fuel use. With pulses' nitrogen fixing capabilities, their contribution to emissions is naturally lower. And with growers' commitment to using the latest technologies and adoption of no-till, there are fewer passes being made annually and less fuel use. This is translating not only into savings at the farm gate, but a more sustainable end product.

Now this may seem like common sense – and to a point it is – but without the science to back it up, our industry was much like others, trying to quantify and substantiate sustainability in a crowded sea of marketing-driven claims. We are taking the guesswork out of the equation and will use the pea and lentil LCA to properly position pulse crops and pulse ingredients