



# CANADA-EU DIALOGUE SERIES: SHARING OUR SUSTAINABILITY STORY



By Nevin Rosaasen, APG Sustainability & Government Relations Lead



APG's Kevin Auch, Chair of Pulse Canada, was part of the closing panel, along with SPG's Corey Loessin, past chair of Pulse Canada. The Canadian pulse sector was well represented and engaged in advocacy with the EU and the UK during this trip.

I was extremely humbled to have the privilege to represent Canadian farmers at the culmination of the EU-Canada Sustainable Agriculture dialogue in Brussels, Belgium.

The dialogue was a series of virtual exchanges between farmers and policymakers who came together to understand differences and similarities between EU and Canadian cropping systems. The series focused on soil health, greenhouse gas emissions from livestock, fertilizers, organics and pesticides.

Canada had great representation in Brussels and the goal is to continue to engage through dialogue to maintain market access and share our sustainability story.

I was lucky to be summarizing the previous virtual meetings related to pesticides, an area where there has been immense pressure for the EU to cut pesticide use by 50% by 2030. This target was part of the EU Farm to Fork strategy as well

as the Convention of the Parties on Sustainability, a target farmers in the EU and Canada are pushing back against for good reason.

I was concerned I may be perceived as the bogeyman in the room; however, my presentation was well received, and I was able to convince Members of the European Parliament, representatives from the organic industry, ag ministers and diplomats that pesticides will continue to have a role in feeding the world. The following is an excerpt from my presentation in December.

There is an adage that if a farmer makes a dollar, the farmer will spend a dollar. At the same time, farmers are inherently cheap. A farmer will not spend an additional dollar unless they see an economic return. Efficiencies are inherently embedded in economic sustainability for every farm operation. One might say economic cents and environmental sense go hand in hand.

The costs of everything, from machinery, inputs, land, and rents have reduced the net income per acre, which remains a challenge. When farmers are making decisions, they look at every cost through three lenses: Economic, agronomic and logistics. It is often a balancing act between these areas, and the formula is different for every farm. This includes sustainability.

What constitutes sustainability? There is no single approach or formula for every region, every farm, every piece of land. Crop rotations remain one of the key practices in environmental sustainability. An effective crop rotation greatly reduces the need for fungicides, insecticides, and herbicides, by using integrated pest management to disrupt disease, insect and weed pressure.

Environmental sustainability, as it relates to crop protection products, is an area where there has been a large focus in Canada in the past decade. Not only have

farmers reduced overall pesticide applications, they also recognize the value of ecosystem services wetlands, woodlots or forests, stone piles and shelterbelts provide.

The last course of action a farmer ever wants to take is spraying an insecticide and will only do so as a last resort. Insecticides are also expensive. The number of acres in Canada that receive a non-selective foliar insecticide application continue to decrease over time. Targeted approaches such as seed treatments have greatly reduced the environmental impact of controlling pest outbreaks.

Crop protection products are important in food security, quality and safety, and are important tools in a farmer's toolbox. Pesticides are rigorously tested and regulated. The Canadian Pest Management Regulatory Agency is well respected around the world. Sound scientific regulation and empirical weight


of evidence approach must be the course of action when approving and reevaluating pesticides. The risk assessments must continue to assess chemistries based on risk, and not employ a hazard-based approach. Where possible, real-world data should be used, rather than modelling.

Human and ecosystem health must continue to be the mandate and we need to ensure there is no socio-political interference that is based on emotion rather than grounded in science. Scientific literacy was apparent when the Covid-19 pandemic struck. People did their own research. We have seen this in the food and agriculture space for decades and it continues to represent a challenge. Only through telling our sustainability story can farmers help educate consumers on how crop protection products are being used, how access to new plant genetics is important, how crop rotations, reduced tillage,

technology and ag machinery, along with new environmentally smart fertilizers all play a role in increasing efficiency and sustainability of agricultural practices.

Sustainability in agriculture is not only environmental, but also economic, social and includes succession and intergenerational knowledge transfer. The formula is different between farm neighbours, regions and across continents. The sustainable journey must be outcome focused rather than practice based. It is imperative the EU and Canada take steps forward to understand different systems and how a multipronged approach, through dialogue, can help us better understand areas of difference and opportunities to collaborate.

More information regarding the dialogue series can be found here: <https://www.wiltongroup.ca/eu-canada-agriculture-dialogue-workshops>



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