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Carney: don't gamble with Canada's food security

Inspectors, scientists, technicians, and support staff ensure the food we eat is safe, the farms we rely on are supported, and the agricultural economy remains strong—but they can't do more with less.



If the prime minister truly wants to build a stronger Canada, he must recognize that food security is foundational to a strong nation, writes Milton Dyck. *Unsplash photograph by Elaine Casap*

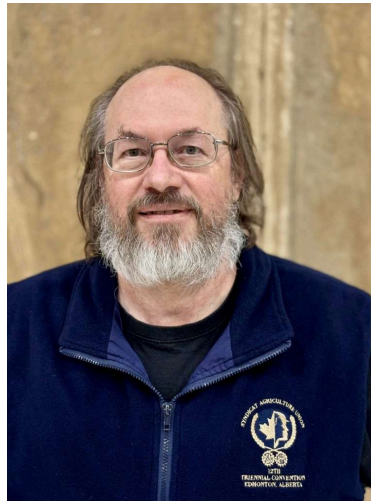
OPINION (/OPINION/) | BY [MILTON DYCK](https://www.hilltimes.com/ht_author/milton-dyck/) (https://www.hilltimes.com/ht_author/milton-dyck/) | August 4, 2025

As Canadians, we take pride in the safety, quality, and sustainability of our food. From coast to coast, we trust that what ends up on our plates has passed through rigorous

(<https://www.hilltimes.com>) inspection, backed by science and upheld by dedicated public servants. But that trust—and the system behind it—is now at risk.

Prime Minister Mark Carney's recent proposal to cut federal spending may sound like prudent economics, but for those of us on the front lines of food safety and agricultural development, it's a red flag. The Agriculture Union represents nearly 7,500 public servants, the majority of whom work for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC). Our members are front-line defenders of public health, supporters of sustainable agriculture and guardians of a secure food chain. Cuts to the CFIA and AAFC would not only undermine public health and food security, but they would also push already strained workers past the breaking point.

The federal public service did grow during the Trudeau years, largely in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the needs of a fast-growing population. But the story is very different for the departments that safeguard our food. Since 2012, staffing levels at CFIA and AAFC have steadily declined. In fact, these departments were better resourced under the



Milton Dyck is the national president of the Agriculture Union. *Handout photograph*

Conservative government of Stephen Harper than they are today. In 2012, the CFIA had 6,580 employees, compared to 6,380 today (<https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/innovation/human-resources-statistics/population-federal-public-service-department.html>). That's a three-per-cent decline, while Canada's population grew by 13 per cent in the same period.

(<https://www.hilltimes.com>) **This is not just a staffing issue—it's a national security issue.**

Food security was explicitly mentioned by King Charles III in the most recent Speech from the Throne. Canadians are increasingly rallying behind the “buy Canadian” movement, recognizing the importance of domestic food production while our sovereignty is being threatened from south of the border. But how can we protect our food sovereignty if we gut the very institutions that ensure it?

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The risks are real. In the United States, President Donald Trump's dismantling of the Food and Drug Administration has already raised alarms among food experts. As *The Globe and Mail* recently reported (<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/economy/article-us-fda-food-imports-cfia-canada-safety/>), Canada's food safety system is now under added pressure to catch what the U.S. no longer does. Weakening CFIA's oversight would leave us vulnerable to more frequent—and more dangerous—foodborne illness outbreaks, like the 2024 listeria incident that sickened Canadians and exposed flaws in our inspection algorithms.

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Meanwhile, AAFC plays a critical role in agricultural research and innovation. In the face of climate change, we need more investment in resilient crops, sustainable practices, and food system innovation—not less. Cutting AAFC now would be like slashing a local fire department during wildfire season.

And let's not forget the people behind these services. According to the [2024-25 Public Service Employee Survey](https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/innovation/public-service-employee-survey/2024-25.html) (<https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/innovation/public-service-employee-survey/2024-25.html>), stress and burnout are already widespread across the federal workforce. In departments like CFIA and AAFC, where staff are stretched thin and the stakes are high, further cuts would be devastating. Morale is low, workloads are high, and the risk of losing experienced professionals is growing.

Our members—inspectors, scientists, technicians, and support staff—are proud to serve Canadians. They ensure the food we eat is safe, the farms we rely on are supported, and the agricultural economy remains strong. But they can't do more with less. They need support, not austerity.

If Carney truly wants to build a stronger Canada, he must recognize that food security is foundational to a strong nation. It's about protecting our children, our seniors, and our communities. It's about ensuring that Canadian farmers and producers can thrive in a changing climate and a changing world. And it's about valuing the public servants who make it all possible.

We urge Members of Parliament to reject short-sighted cuts that would jeopardize our food system. Instead, let's invest in the people and programs that keep Canadians safe, healthy, and well-fed.

The Agriculture Union stands ready to work with any leader who shares that vision. But we will not stay silent while our food security is put at risk.

Milton Dyck has served as the national president for the Agriculture Union since being elected in 2020. He previously worked as a wheat-breeding technician for AAFC in Swift Current, Sask., working to help develop improved wheat varieties for Canadian farmers and the Canadian public that they feed.

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