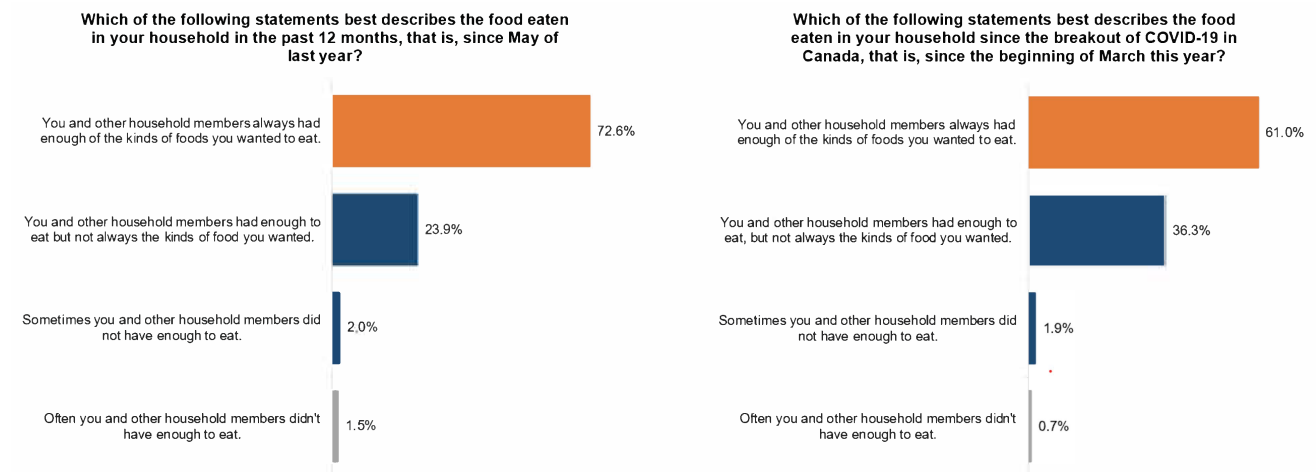


New survey on COVID-19 suggests majority of Canadians believe euthanizing animals should be illegal

HALIFAX, NS. (May 20, 2020) – Up to **50 million litres of milk** were thrown away in Canada in recent weeks, and more than **2 million eggs** were eliminated from the food chain. Pigs and chickens are being euthanized because they could not get harvested or temporarily stored. It was reported by **La Presse** that **200,000 chickens had to be euthanized** in recent days.¹ Last month, **Bloomberg** disclosed that more than **90,000 pigs had to be culled** and discarded in Canada. Farmers and other agricultural pundits have tried to explain their actions. The food service sector being idle and abattoirs temporarily closing are the arguments most often used. The different groups representing the farmers informed the public that they had no other choice. But food waste on the farm has been a recurring issue for many years, and not only with COVID-19.^{2,3,4,5}

We wanted to find out how Canadians feel about farmgate waste and what should be done about it. In partnership with **Caddle**, a research firm known for its work on consumer insights in the agri-food sector, the **Agri-Food Analytics Lab** at **Dalhousie University** is reporting on a cross-national survey on farmgate waste. A total of 1,563 Canadians were surveyed, between May 11 and 13, 2020.



¹ <https://www.lapresse.ca/covid-19/202005/05/01-5272331-200-000-poussins-euthanasies-et-2-millions-doeufs-detruits.php>

² <https://nationalpost.com/news/its-not-a-pretty-picture-ontario-dairy-farmers-dumping-skim-milk-into-manure-pits-and-sewer-lagoons>

³ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/milk-surplus-forcing-canadas-dairy-industry-to-dump-supply/article25030753/>

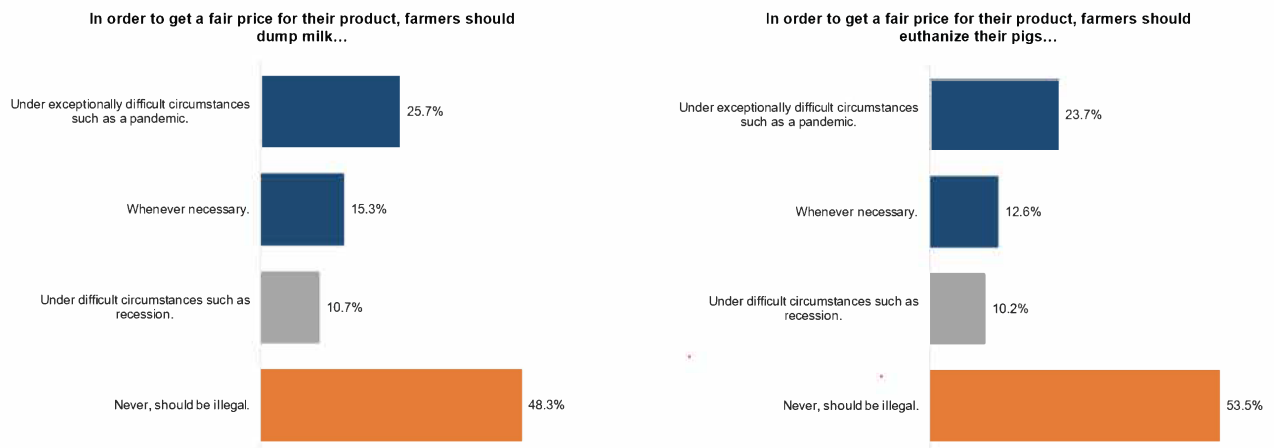
⁴ Vansickle, J. (2005). Handle with Care: Farm to Fork. *National Hog Farmer*, 50(9), 18-20.

⁵ Doll, C. (2006). An end to spoiled milk: A tradition of strict protection for Canada's dairy farmers may soon be coming to an end. *Western Standard*, p. 24.

For this survey, we first looked at how Canadians felt about food security and access to the proper food they needed to be healthy, before and during the pandemic. A year before the pandemic, 72.6% of Canadians felt they **had enough of the food they wanted** and did not consider access to food an issue. That sentiment fell to 61.0% in May of this year, a drop of more than 11%. **Alberta** saw the largest drop between the two periods, 21.2%. Given that more than 3 million Canadians have lost their jobs in recent months, we did expect that percentage to drop, and it could drop even further in months to come as financial worries start to sink in.

Feelings around perceived food security have changed since COVID-19 began, and the impact on how Canadians see food is palpable. The survey continued by asking respondents how they felt about **farmgate waste**. The instrument looked at all commodities which have made the news of late: milk, hogs, and chickens. All three commodities garnered somewhat similar results.

We chose to ask specific questions related to price fairness, so respondents understand that farmers are responsive to a market they barely control. The results were interesting.

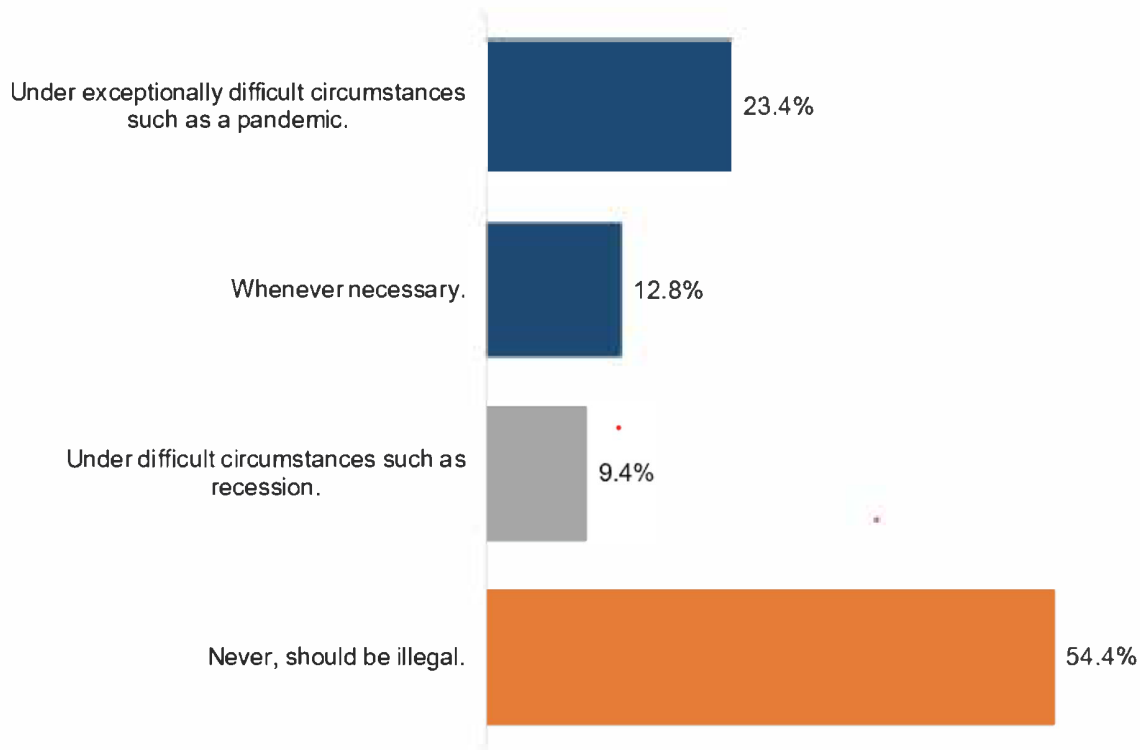


For milk, **48.3% of Canadians felt that discarding milk should be illegal**. A total of 25.7% felt that a pandemic does give farmers and the industry a valid excuse for discarding milk. As for **hogs/pigs**, the percentage of Canadians who are against euthanizing healthy hogs/pigs was slightly higher. **A total of 53.5% of Canadians felt the act should be illegal**. In total, 23.7% of Canadians felt a pandemic was a valid reason to euthanize pigs.

The highest percentage against euthanizing was regarding **chickens**, with **54.4% of Canadians saying it should be illegal**. A total of 24.4% believe COVID-19 or a pandemic is a good reason to discard chickens, a slightly higher percentage than with hogs. The Province of **Quebec** showed the highest rates of consumers who think that throwing away all three types of commodities should be illegal. Rates were 54.1% for milk, 56.9% for hogs, and 57.0% for chickens.

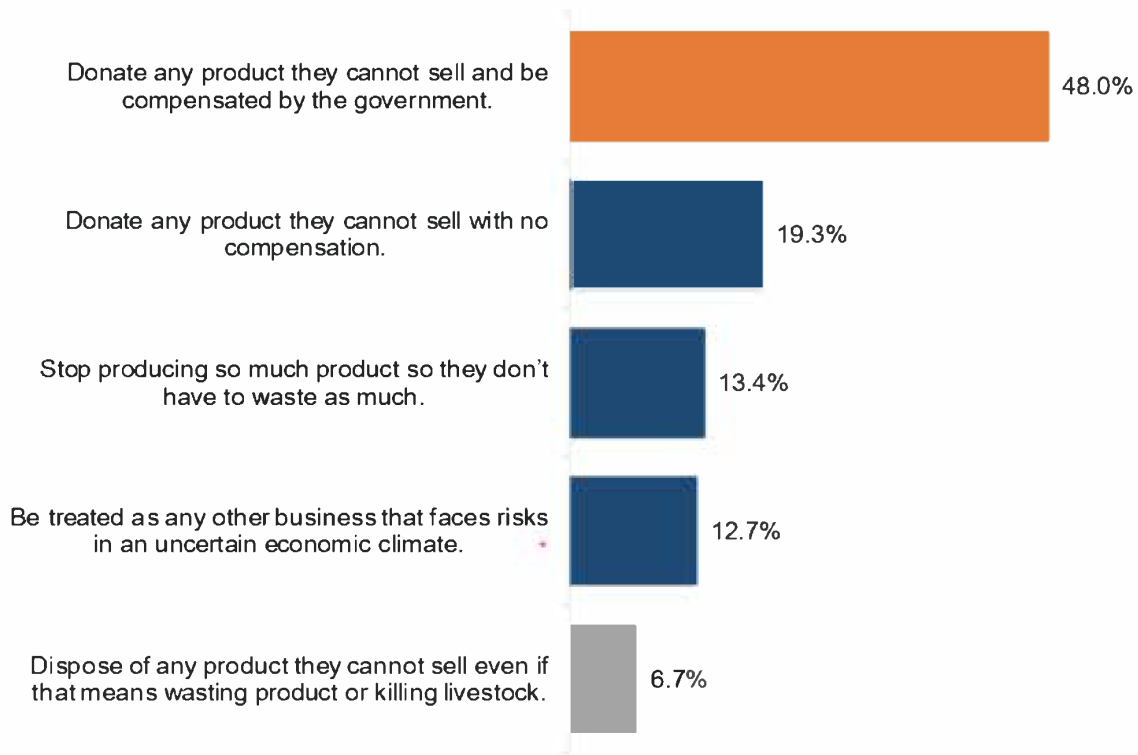
Baby boomers (1946-1964) feel much more strongly about farmgate waste and farm animals being euthanized. A total of 65.0% of boomers feel milk waste on the farm should be illegal. For pigs, the rate is 68.3%, and for chickens, 68.9%. These percentages are very high compared to **Millennials** (1981-1996). Only 40.1% of Millennials believe discarding raw milk should be illegal. For pigs, that percentage goes up to 45.5%, and for chickens, 45.3%.

In order to get a fair price for their product, farmers should euthanize their chickens...



When asked what farmers should be doing to reduce waste, **48% of Canadians believe farmers** should do whatever it takes to give their products to charity but should be compensated for it. In other words, almost half of Canadians recognize that farmers are not solely responsible for the waste at farmgate.

I think farmers should...



A total of 19.3% of Canadians feel that farmers should donate without any compensation. Interestingly, 6.7% are comfortable with the idea of killing livestock and discarding products, regardless of circumstances.

Possible solutions

Waste at farmgate can never be eliminated entirely but results of this survey suggest **Canadians have little tolerance for avoidable waste**. The **\$50 million buy-back program for commodity surpluses** presented by the Federal Government was creative, but it would be challenging to implement. Governance and priorities would be difficult to set, let alone the fact that non-profit organizations need funding.⁶ The program does not achieve that goal. Most commodity groups are already very generous and provide a wealth of donations to food banks and people in need.

But without clear incentives, sectors will not be motivated to change and reduce the amount of waste at farmgate. It is often cheaper just to discard a commodity than to redirect or repurpose it, one way or another. For **supply managed commodities** for which public-sanctioned quotas are required, the government should consider these commodities as a public good. For **poultry, eggs, and milk**, very few can produce these commodities in Canada, in addition to the fact that high tariffs on imports are imposed to protect our producers. We essentially produce what we need under supply management.

Therefore, surpluses are a rarity, but not impossible. Making discarding supply managed commodities illegal would get stakeholders to work together to find better solutions to surpluses. Should an infraction occur, **marketing boards should be held responsible since boards are the ones ordering farmers to discard their products**. In milk production, for example, the **Canadian Dairy Commission** should be charged with the task of expanding its current strategic reserve. The Canadian Dairy Commission is a crown corporation⁷, owned by Canadians. The Federal Government recently provided a **\$200m credit to support the Commission**, which is a good start but more ought to be done. The management of the **reserve** could be given to brokers, owning a new class of quotas for export markets exclusively. Technologies like **UHT (Ultra High Temperature)** can be used to store milk for up to a year. Milk can also be diverted for the **bioenergy sector**, or other types of products. Options do exist, but a strategy would need to be fostered by the entire supply chain. **All efforts would need to be conducted jointly with processors**.

As for **non-supply management commodities**, better **vertical coordination with processors** is key. These commodities operate within a free-market environment and are exposed to tremendous external pressures. Making wastage illegal would not serve these sectors well. However, leadership is needed by processors. **The anchor point for any agri-food value chain strategies should be processing**. Producers would need to work jointly with processors, as we see in many countries around the world.

It will be imperative that government look to support the processing industry moving forward either through **enhanced partnerships** or **funding incentives** that support greater research and development. All signs point to COVID-19 becoming a **regular part of daily life moving forward**. This is not a situation that can be passed off as a one-time event.

⁶ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/thursday-food-surplus-purchase-plan-1.5568074>

⁷ <https://cdc-ccl.ca/index.php/en/canadian-dairy-commission-2/>

Lastly, to provide more flexibility within the system, interprovincial barriers would need to be revisited. Provincially licenced facilities could trade outside provincial borders to allow more options for producers to use, should a federally licenced facility be idle.

End of report.

Methodology: A total of 1,567 Canadians were surveyed in May 2020. Omnibus panel, Caddle, May 11-13, 2020. The sample carries a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. Data was collected by **Caddle**.

Disclosure: Funding for this survey was provided by **Caddle** (<https://getcaddle.com/partners/solutions/>) and Dalhousie University.

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