

FCM Resolution and Backgrounder

FCM RESOLUTION – Reversal of Federal Agricultural Research Centre Closures

Title: Reversal of Federal Agricultural Research Centre Closures

Sponsor: Lacombe County, AB and City of Lacombe, AB

Co-Sponsors: Indian Head, SK; Cumberland County, NS; Municipal District of Tramping Hills, SK; and Scott, SK

WHEREAS the Government of Canada has proposed the closure of seven federally operated agricultural research and development centres across Canada; and

WHEREAS these federal facilities collectively employ hundreds of specialized researchers and technical staff, supporting national mandates in food security, climate adaptation, animal and plant health, and agricultural innovation—areas within federal jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS several of these research centres hold decades to more than a century of long-term scientific datasets essential to federal decision-making and national agricultural policy; and

WHEREAS the closure of these centres would negatively impact Canadian municipalities, agricultural producers, universities, and innovation partners across the country, demonstrating that this issue is a national municipal-federal matter beyond any local or regional scope; and therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Federation of Canadian Municipalities urge the Government of Canada and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to reverse the proposed closure of Canada's federally operated agricultural research and development centres, and maintain federal operations, staffing capacity, and long-term scientific programs at all affected facilities; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Federation of Canadian Municipalities request the Government of Canada collaborate with municipalities, provinces, researchers, producer groups, and Indigenous communities to develop a strengthened National Agricultural Research Strategy that preserves irreplaceable long-term datasets, ensures stable federal investment, and supports Canada's food-security and climate-resilience objectives.

Background Information

In January 2026, the Government of Canada announced the proposed closure of seven federally operated agricultural research and development centres across Canada, impacting hundreds of federal scientists and essential national agricultural programs.

This agricultural research supports the development of better crop varieties, resilient production systems, long-term farm profitability, and evidence-based responses to emerging threats, including climate extremes, pests, and diseases. Public sector science provides foundational research that private industry cannot replicate.

Additionally, federal research centres develop new crop varieties, enhance yield stability, improve grain and forage quality, and support both the livestock and grain sectors. Farmers rely on this work to meet evolving market demands, climate pressures, and sustainability requirements. The federal research scientists collaborate with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, producer groups, universities, and industry partners. They also serve on national regulatory and standards bodies.

The federal centres slated for closure contain years – from decades to more than a century – of continuous agricultural datasets essential for climate modelling, regulatory decisions, disease surveillance, soil health monitoring, and long-term studies. This research cannot be replicated in other parts of the provinces, as soil conditions, moisture levels and other data points cannot be mirrored at other research centres, making the government's plan of one centre per province ill-advised.

As highlighted in federal committee testimony, Canada's agricultural innovation system operates through a national research network, in which breeding programs, disease surveillance, variety development, and climate-adaptation trials depend on multi-location collaboration across federal centres. Researchers emphasized that the system cannot operate effectively if nodes in this network — such as Lacombe, Indian Head, Guelph, or Nappan — are removed, because long-term datasets and complementary regional trials are essential to ensuring national relevance and scientific validity.

In addition to the scientific impacts, the closure of these centres would result in significant economic and workforce consequences across multiple municipalities. These centres serve as major employers, and their closures would cause regional economic shocks across their respective communities.

The impacted municipalities have formed a national coalition to coordinate advocacy, engage in Standing Committee processes, submit resolutions to provincial associations, and prepare a unified national response.

Agricultural research is a federal mandate. The closures represent a national municipal-federal issue that meets all criteria under the FCM Procedures for Resolutions for emergent Executive Committee consideration.

The resolution seeks reversal of the closure decision and the creation of a National Agricultural Research Strategy to maintain a stable, federally supported research network for Canada's agricultural future.