

# Pacific trade pact full ratification is not a done deal

Canada's ag industry representatives are urging the government that sooner is better

**BY ALEX BINKLEY**  
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Almost a month has passed since Canada ratified the CPTPP trade deal and there's no sign yet that the government is ready to introduce implementing legislation to approve Canada's participation in the Pacific trade pact.

A spokesman for Trade Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne said, "There is no time line yet on when we will move forward."

Parliament returns from a two-week recess on April 16 to an already crowded agenda including the government's budget bill and dealing with the transportation modernization sent back by the Senate with 19 amendments.

CPTPP approval has been overshadowed by President Trump's

renewed rantings about NAFTA being a bad deal as well as the looming trade war with China over steel and aluminum tariffs.

A NAFTA negotiating session was expected in Washington in early April to follow up on the one in Mexico in March that made some progress but no date was set.

The White House then talked about having a deal in principle ready for the Summit of the Americas in Lima, Peru starting April 13.

There was also reports of a late April meeting hoping to pressure Canada over a reprieve on the steel and aluminum duties they could be hit with on May 1. That fell flat when Canada and Mexico said they would be not be rushed on NAFTA.

Chris White, president and CEO of the Canadian Meat Council, echoed the feelings of much of the agrifood sector when he told the Senate agriculture committee recently that "if we don't have legislation really quickly on CPTPP,

we will lose the ability and the comparative advantages that we could have had.

"The six countries that ratify the soonest will be able to access those markets in a way that Canada won't be able to if we come late to it," he said.

The agrifood sector has been telling the Trudeau government "that the sooner you get legislation before the house, committee and then the Senate will only help Canadian industry.

"If there's anything you could do to encourage the government to get legislation in front of the Commons, that's imperative," he told the Senators.

"Our concern is that the longer it lags - you will be into the summer recess and then won't be back until the fall, so we might not see legislation and potentially ratification not much before the end of 2018-19. Who knows what that landscape will look like."

"Given the volatility of the American administration, it's quite

possible the Americans could decide to join the TPP deal, and then the advantage that Canada currently has would be lost."

John Masswohl, director of Government and International Relations for the Canadian Cattle-men's Association, told the committee, "we would certainly encourage the government to present a bill to the house, then have it come to the Senate and encourage swift passage of that because on Day 1 of the CPTPP being implemented, we will match the tariff access that Australia already has into Japan and, of course, we will have that advantage over U.S. beef."

Champagne signed the CPTPP deal for Canada in Chile on March 8 and since then virtually every agrifood organization and countless of other business groups have urged the government to move quickly on implementing legislation.

The deal will enter into force 60 days after six countries ratify it and

several members are expected to do so by this summer, says Brian Innes, President of the Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance. CAFTA wants Canada in the first wave to gain full advantage of the initial tariff cuts.

"Having preferential access for the first time to Japan, Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore will fire up the agrifood sector's engine and move us toward the government's ambitious target of \$75 billion in agri-food exports by 2025."

Implementing CPTPP will give Canada new free trade agreements with seven countries in the Asia-Pacific and update existing trade agreements in Latin America with Mexico, Chile and Peru.

The big prize in the deal for Canadian agrifood exporters is Japan, Canada's third-largest export market and a high value and stable market for agrifood products, importing \$4 billion of Canadian exports every year.

# Oil blends and organic acids could replace antibiotics

Research is looking at enriching cattle rations with compounds that could serve as antimicrobial alternatives

**BY LILIAN SCHAER**  
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There's an increasing focus on agriculture to reduce use of antibiotics in livestock farming, including beef production, as part of global efforts to combat antimicrobial resistance.

So the search is on for alternatives that will help beef farmers maintain the health, welfare and efficiency of their cattle.

University of Guelph Food Scientist Prof. Ben Bohrer is leading a multi-year project that is looking at essential oil blends and organic acids as feed additives that could be used in place of antibiotics and ionophores in cattle diets.

The two-part project, launched in 2017, includes a live animal component measuring growth performance and feed efficiency, as well as a focus on fresh beef, evaluating shelf-life in whole muscle and ground beef products, as well as sensory attributes.

"There are a lot of opportunities for beef, pork and poultry producers to stop sub-thera-

peutic antibiotic use in diets, but we need to know what we can best replace them with," says Bohrer. "We are trying our best to find substitutes with similar properties from a chemistry standpoint, which is the case with the products we are working with in this project."

Bohrer has just finished his first 98-day finishing study that involved 68 commercial finishing steers at the University of Guelph's research station in Elora. Five groups of steers were each fed a different diet: control, traditional ionophore/antibiotic, benzoic acid, essential oil, and a combination of both oil and acid.

The trial will be repeated at least once more with a second group of cattle this year, starting in early summer. Meat from the first block of cattle is currently being analyzed in the University of Guelph meat lab to evaluate meat quality and shelf life.

"It's too early to make any definitive statements as we have more blocks of cattle to come, but the results do look encouraging so far," says Bohrer.

"We are trying to find alternatives with similar antimicrobial properties; that's what led us to the essential oils and the benzoic acids. These products have already seen some suc-

cess in boosting immune systems in poultry and pigs."

The alternatives are a bit more expensive at this point than traditional antimicrobials, but the inclusion levels are fairly small – 1 gram of essential oil blend per head per day and benzoic acid at 0.5% of the dietary inclusion – so costs would not be significantly higher.

"In the future, it will be important for livestock producers to become involved with the initiative to enhance antimicrobial stewardship," believes Bohrer. "While the meat produced from animals given antibiotics is safe and no different than meat from animals not given antibiotics, antibiotic resistant bacteria is produced during livestock production in various forms, mainly in the manure of the live animal."

In addition to looking at impacts of these additives on livestock performance, researchers are also evaluating meat quality and shelf life. Specifically, they're measuring lipid oxidation of rib eye steaks and ground beef at different fat inclusion levels, as well as measuring discoloration – all through a simulated retail display.

"We want to know if the essential oil would alter oxidation, therefore potentially mak-



**University of Guelph researcher are encouraged by the results of their study so far.**

ing steaks more or less prone to oxidation, which could impact display life at retail," he says.

Two sensory panel groups – one with professionally trained testers and one with consumers – will evaluate attributes like tenderness, juiciness and flavour of the meat resulting from each of the cattle groups.

Beef Farmers of Ontario is funding the growth performance and carcass characteristics portion of the project, the OMA-FRA-University of Guelph Partnership is supporting the meat quality and shelf life work, and a Weston Seeding Food Innovation Grant is paying for the sensory panel work.