
CANADA'S MAYORS AND REEVES ON SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

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CANADA'S MAYORS AND REEVES TELL US WHAT THEY THINK ABOUT SUPPLY MANAGEMENT'S ROLE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

For more than 40 years, the system of supply management in Canada's poultry and dairy sectors has worked behind the scenes to ensure the health and continued viability of farms across the country. Most Canadians don't understand how it works, or in some cases, that it even exists – but they do know that when they go to the grocery store they will always find fresh, locally produced chicken, turkey, eggs and milk.

As part of its larger research and public education initiative, Egg Farmers of Canada recently commissioned Ipsos Reid to survey municipal government leaders in all provinces and territories on their awareness of and support for supply management. In particular, we wanted to know if local politicians share the values of their constituents when it comes to the role supply management plays.

In total, researchers conducted 124 extensive telephone interviews with mayors, deputy mayors and reeves, whose jurisdictions represent 25 per cent of Canada's total population, the largest survey of its kind ever conducted by Ipsos Reid.

The survey sample was representative across the West, Ontario, Quebec and East, and included interviews in the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Many of Canada's largest cities responded to the survey.

Key Findings

About half of the mayors and reeves surveyed were already aware of supply management as a policy framework for the production of eggs and other commodities. Like many Canadians, what municipal leaders do overwhelmingly understand, is the need to keep local dairy and poultry farms healthy. They cited the importance of ensuring their citizens have access to fresh, safe and affordable food and that farmers get fair, stable producer prices. They also realize the important role farming plays in the local economy.

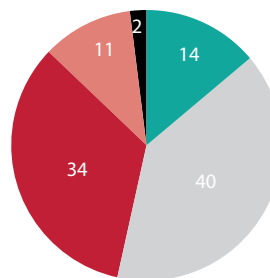
Awareness

Half (53 per cent) of mayors and reeves surveyed said they are familiar with the system of supply management. With prompting, which included a brief description, awareness rose to 74 per cent of all respondents. Total familiarity decreased as community size increased.

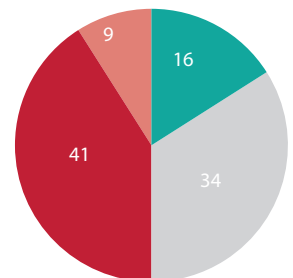
UNAIDED FAMILIARITY OF SUPPLY MANAGEMENT – COMMUNITY SIZE

As community size increases, respondents who are very familiar with Canada's supply management system decreases while those who are somewhat familiar increases. Overall, familiarity increases with an increase in community size.

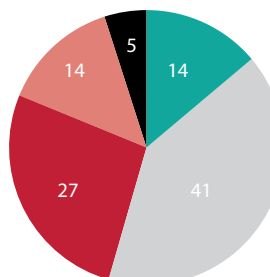
TOTAL
53% Familiar



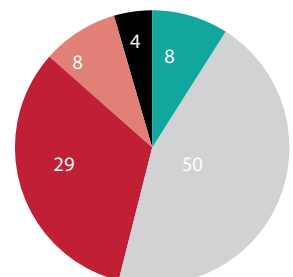
SMALL-SIZED COMMUNITIES
50% Familiar



MEDIUM-SIZED COMMUNITIES
54% Familiar



LARGE-SIZED COMMUNITIES
58% Familiar



● Very familiar
 ● Somewhat familiar
 ● Not very familiar
 ● Not at all familiar
 ● Don't know

Importance

The majority of mayors and reeves surveyed believe Canada's supply management system is very important for ensuring food safety (71 per cent), fair returns for Canadian food producers (70 per cent) and for Canada as a country overall (68 per cent).

Regionally, Quebec mayors and reeves were the most likely to rate access to quality farm products produced in Canada as very important (86 per cent). Ontario led the country with 85 per cent of respondents saying supply management is very important to communities that rely on farming. In the East, 93 per cent said the system is important to Canada overall, the highest ranking.

IMPORTANCE OF SUPPLY MANAGEMENT TO...

Majority of respondents indicate that supply management is very important to Canadian consumers (57%) as well their own community (52%) while seven in ten (68%) believe it's very important to Canada as a country overall.

ENSURING FAIR RETURNS FOR CANADIAN FOOD PRODUCERS

95% Important



CANADIAN FOOD PRODUCERS AS A WHOLE

94% Important



CANADIAN COMMUNITIES THAT RELY ON THE FARMING INDUSTRY

94% Important



CANADA AS A COUNTRY OVERALL

93% Important



ACCESS TO QUALITY FARM-PRODUCED PRODUCTS IN CANADA

91% Important



OVERALL FOOD SAFETY IN CANADA

90% Important



CANADIAN CONSUMERS

90% Important



AVAILABILITY OF FRESH AND LOCAL FARM-PRODUCED PRODUCTS

86% Important



YOUR OWN COMMUNITY

82% Important



● Very important ● Not very important ● Don't know
● Somewhat important ● Not at all important

Support

A large majority (87 per cent) support the system, with 40 per cent being very supportive. Support is strongest in Quebec with 59 per cent saying they are very supportive. Only four per cent are not at all supportive, and these responses came from communities in the West.

Among those who support the system, 39 per cent cite the need to support and protect local farmers as the most important reason for their support. Thirty-one per cent cite the need to create stable markets and food supplies and 26 per cent said that ensuring food quality was most important.

Of the 11 per cent of respondents who are not supporters, the leading reasons were the suggestion it hinders free market practices, a belief that the regulations are excessive and the opinion that it keeps consumer prices artificially high.

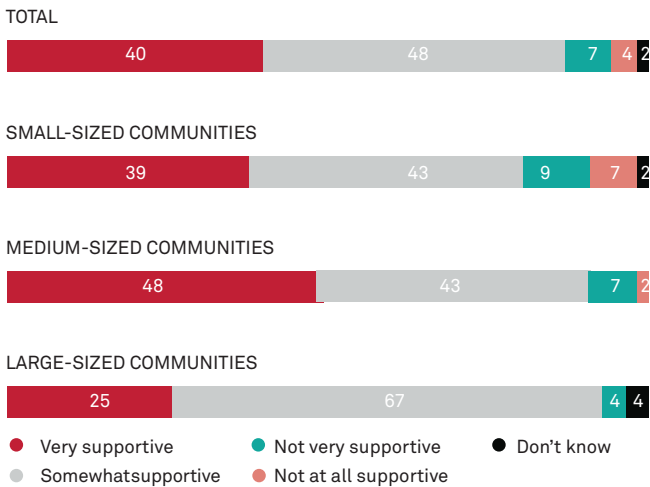
WHY ARE YOU SUPPORTIVE OF THE SUPPLY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM?

Among those who indicate they support Canada's supply management system, the top three reasons why include that it supports and protects local farmers (39%), it provides a stable market and supply (31%), and it helps provide quality products/food (26%).



SUPPORT FOR SUPPLY MANAGEMENT – COMMUNITY SIZE

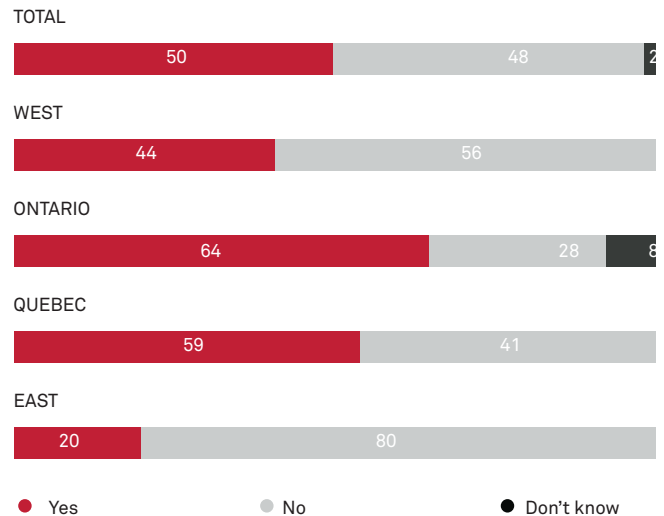
Medium (91%) and large-sized (92%) community respondents are slightly more likely than small-sized community residents (82%) to be supportive of Canada's supply management system. Half (48%) of medium-sized community respondents are very supportive of the system.



* Level of support was only asked of respondents that had aided or unaided familiarity of Canada's supply management system

SUPPLY MANAGED FARMED FOODS PRODUCED IN COMMUNITY – REGIONAL BREAKDOWN

Ontarian (64%) respondents are three times as likely to indicate the presence of supply managed, farmed food business in their communities compared to Eastern Canadian respondents (20%), although one in ten (8%) of Ontarian respondents don't know if such businesses exist in their town or municipality.



Local Economic Impact

Half (50 per cent) have supply managed farms in their communities, with 81 per cent citing dairy, 39 per cent chicken and 36 per cent egg farming.

Of the mayors and reeves with supply managed farms in their town or city, 90 per cent say they are important. Overall, 44 per cent says supply management is very important, steadily rising from 33 per cent in the West to 67 per cent in the East.

For those mayors and reeves with supply managed operations in their communities, 89 per cent say economic contributions are important. Other top reasons why local supply management operations make a positive impact in the community include food safety (89 per cent), ensuring fair returns to farmers (87 per cent), supporting locally farmed fresh foods (81 per cent), and employment (79 per cent).

Looking Ahead

Of all the mayors and reeves surveyed, 80 per cent agree that the system of supply management is an important part of the survival of farms and communities, with 48 per cent agreeing strongly. Conversely, only eight per cent disagree and two per cent strongly disagree with this sentiment.

A majority (74 per cent) also agree that there is no guarantee that discontinuing supply management would result in lower grocery prices. Also, 71 per cent agree that without supply management Canada's borders could open up and many family farms could be in jeopardy.

Conclusions

- While the vast majority of mayors and reeves surveyed support supply management, there is a clear opportunity for farmers and stakeholders to expand public education efforts. Dispelling myths and falsehoods will set the groundwork for more constructive dialogues.
- Farmers who operate under supply management do so with federal and provincial government oversight, but they otherwise act independent of government – receiving no funding or subsidies. That said, there is a clear opportunity to work more closely with regional and local government who share many common interests and concerns such as increasing local value-added economic activities and maintaining access to fresh, high-quality and locally-produced food.
- Supply management does enjoy tremendous support across all levels of government, but more work must be done to better understand the concerns of a small minority of elected officials who believe the system hinders the actions of the free market.
- Municipal leaders, like their constituents, understand that dismantling supply management poses tremendous risks, with no guarantee local farmers will survive. Further, they recognize that retailers set the grocery store price for eggs, poultry and dairy based on what the market will bear, not what the farmer is paid for producing it.
- A system worth protecting: Educating all levels of government about how the system works is vital to creating fuller and more insightful discussion about the role of supply management in the years to come.