Minister Sohi announces investment in the future of farming

From: Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada

News release

New innovation competition will bring together eight partners to accelerate Canadian leadership in digitization and automation in agriculture

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The Government of Canada continues to invest in the agriculture and agri-food industry to create good middle-class jobs and ensure the sector punches above its weight in a competitive global market.

Today, the Honourable Amarjeet Sohi, Minister of Natural Resources, on behalf of the Honourable Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, announced an investment of up to $49.5 million in the Canadian Agri-Food Automation and Intelligence Network (CAAIN), a network bringing together the private sector, academia and research institutions to accelerate automation and digitization in Canada's agricultural sector.

CAAIN's $108.5 million project will build on Canada's strengths in artificial intelligence (AI), robotics and precision agriculture to develop exportable farming solutions that will reduce reliance on temporary labour, increase global competitiveness and improve profitability for Canadian farmers.

Thanks in part to this investment, Canadians will benefit from the creation of highly skilled jobs and new businesses, improved food safety and livestock traceability, and smarter agriculture that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and land, water and pesticide use.

Quotes

"Our government is proud to invest in the future of farming to ensure we continue to punch above our weight in the global market. Thanks to this investment, Canadian farmers will have new technologies and systems—things like robotic harvesters and computer networks—that will help make their farms more efficient."
– The Honourable Amarjeet Sohi, Minister of Natural Resources

"The future of farming will require farmers to adopt new technologies and processes in order to stay competitive. By investing in Canadian agricultural innovation, our government is acting to maintain our global leadership in agriculture, while also helping to create and maintain highly skilled jobs across the country. The Canadian Agri-Food Automation and Intelligence Network's work to build on Canada's strengths in artificial intelligence, robotics and precision agriculture to develop exportable farming solutions will be critical to ensuring this vital sector continues to grow for years to come."
– The Honourable Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development

"Automation and digital technologies such as artificial intelligence and robotics are changing the face of the agriculture and agri-food sector. Our government is committed to ensuring our farmers are at the forefront of technological change. With this investment, we are helping the sector gain the competitive edge it needs to continue to thrive at home and in global markets."
– The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food

"Demand is growing for Canada to help feed a hungry planet, and our new technologies, approaches and processes, in conjunction with meaningful partnerships, will strengthen our agricultural sector and help meet that demand. CAAIN will build on innovation within the agricultural sector by bringing technology to market, applying data and new problem-solving technologies like artificial intelligence, and identifying opportunities for collaboration across the value chain between sectors."
– Laura Kilcrease, CEO, Alberta Innovates

Quick facts

- Spearheaded by Alberta Innovates and the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre, together with Alberta's Olds College and Lakeland College, CAAIN is expected to begin with eight partners from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec. The network will use the Olds College Smart Farm as a hub to develop and test new technologies.

- More than 2 million Canadians are employed in the agriculture and agri-food sector.

- This project supports investment in increased automation and digitization in the agriculture and agri-food sectors to boost competitiveness, as recommended by the Agri-Food Economic Strategy Table.

- This investment is being made through Stream 4 of the Strategic Innovation Fund, a program designed to attract and support high-quality business investments in Canada's most dynamic and innovative sectors.

- CAAIN is one of two winning projects to receive Strategic Innovation Fund support following a rigorous competition that was first announced on December 14, 2018.

- In addition to the Strategic Innovation Fund, there are hundreds of programs and services to help businesses innovate, create jobs and grow Canada's economy. With a simple, story-based user interface, the Innovation Canada platform can match businesses with the most fitting programs and services in about two minutes.

Associated links

- Strategic Innovation Fund
- Canadian Agri-Food Automation and Intelligence Network (CAAIN)

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