



**CANADA-IN-ASIA
CONFÉRENCE**
CANADA-EN-ASIE
Singapore 2026 Singapour

Food, Fertilizer and Foreign Policy:

THE NEW GEOPOLITICS OF AGRI-FOOD

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Food security is now a geopolitical issue

The era of assuming food will always flow through open markets is over. Governments are increasingly treating food and fertilizer like energy or semiconductors: strategic inputs tied to national stability, economic resilience, and diplomatic leverage.

Canada's advantage is trust, not just tonnes

Asian buyers value Canada for safe production systems, credible regulation, and sustainability standards. These and other 'intangibles' such as food safety, traceability, and reputation can be as commercially powerful as price competitiveness in winning long-term market share.

Non-tariff barriers are the real trade battleground

While tariffs attract headlines, shifting regulations, certifications, permits, and import approvals often block trade entirely. Strengthening government-to-government regulatory co-operation, increasing technical capacity-building, and speeding problem-solving mechanisms are essential to unlocking real market access in Asia.

Canada: moving up the value chain?

Exporting raw commodities can leave value on the table. Greater investment in food processing, branded consumer products, plant proteins, feed innovation, and ingredient manufacturing can create jobs at home while supplying Asia's growing demand for higher-value food solutions.

Opportunity to grow knowledge of Canada's brand in Asia

While Canadian agriculture and agri-food products are in many markets in Asia, competitors such as the U.S. and Australia frequently have higher market shares. This can be an opportunity for Canada to increase its contribution to food security in these markets through strategic engagement leveraging Canadian quality, safety, and reliability.

SPEAKERS

Moderator



Diedrah Kelly

Executive Director,
Canada's Indo-Pacific
Agriculture and
Agri-Food Office,
Philippines-based



Claire Citeau

Senior Vice President,
Canadian Meat Council,
Canada-based



**Kim Thanh
Nguyen**

General Director, Saky
Foods, Vietnam-based



Chris Lane

President & CEO,
Saskatchewan Trade
& Export Partnership
(STEP), Canada-based

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Food, Fertilizer and Food Security: The New Geopolitics of Agri-food* roundtable was premised on the importance of understanding that food is no longer just a commodity – it is a strategic asset. Decades-old assumptions that have underpinned the global agri-food system – namely that markets would work, trade would flow, and surplus producers would reliably feed and assist deficit regions – are under strain. Export controls, fertilizer disruptions, climate volatility, and geopolitical rivalry have quietly pushed food and fertilizer into the centre of foreign policy decision making.

For many governments, trading houses, and food companies across Asia, a central concern has shifted from price to access. That change has profound implications for trade, political stability, and international partnerships. As a major exporter of grains, pulses, meat, seafood, and potash, Canada is increasingly positioned as part of the solution. In this vein, Kim Thanh Nguyen, General Manager of Vietnamese processor Saky Foods, reinforced that for her company and other buyers in Asia, reliability, traceability, and consistency are now as valuable as price.

Speakers and participants highlighted that Canada's greatest strengths go beyond volume. They include trusted food safety systems, strong science underpinning regulatory regimes, environmental stewardship, and reliable supply. Claire Citeau, Senior Vice-President of the Canadian Meat Council, and others, noted gains for Canadian meat exporters in Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, and China, while Chris Lane, CEO of the Saskatchewan Trade & Export Partnership, identified how innovation in zero-till farming, seed genetics, carbon-efficient production, and potash exports give Canada a durable competitive edge.

The discussion also identified that non-tariff barriers – permits, inspections, licensing, and shifting rules – often matter more than tariffs, an important realization in the current protectionist moment. As one speaker noted: "Non-tariff barriers are the number one obstacle to getting products to markets. Tariffs will slow trade; non-tariff barriers will stop it."

“Canada's seafood comes with very clear documentation, strong traceability, and sustainability standards. We feel very safe when we import from Canada. And these factors are especially important when we serve demanding markets such as the European Union and Japan where compliance and credibility really matter.”

– Kim Thanh Nguyen, General Director, Saky Foods

While Canadian speakers and participants stressed that Canadian companies could do more to move up global agri-food value chains through processing in Canada and continued innovation – including in plant proteins and advanced animal feed solutions – the broader message was that ongoing Canada-Asia food partnerships should be grounded on deepened, long-term shared resilience that contributes to food security and economic security on both sides of the Pacific.

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Where Canada and Asia Meet:

Ideas, Investment, Impact



Note: This session took place before the Middle East conflict started on February 28, 2026.



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Strategic Investment Partnerships in the Agri-Food Sector

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Increasing Canadian value-added exports

While exporting agricultural commodities from Canada to Asia forms the backbone of Canada's contributions to food security in the Indo-Pacific, investing in processing, ingredients, and branded consumer products – such as plant proteins and functional foods – can capture more value for Canadian producers.

Growth-stage capital for Canadian companies improving, but still a bottleneck

While early-stage innovation funding is improving, many Canadian agri-food companies still struggle to access the scale-up capital needed for international expansion while remaining Canada-based. Public institutions like EDC and Farm Credit Canada are investing scale-up capital, although additional private investment is required to build globally competitive firms.

Partnership models must evolve beyond simple trade

Successful engagement in Asia increasingly relies on long-term partnerships with major regional players. Initiatives like EDC's Market Leader Partnership program demonstrate how aligning incentives can unlock broadened market access.

Supply chains and distribution are strategic assets

Control over logistics, storage, and distribution networks is as important as production itself. Panellists highlighted examples of companies in Asia succeeding in the region by owning or integrating supply chains, suggesting Canadians – whether producers or logistics and distribution companies – invest more heavily in infrastructure and regional networks to increase competitiveness and the reach of Canadian products.

Branding and storytelling are opportunities for Canada

Despite strong fundamentals and localized recognition of Canadian excellence, Canada lacks widespread brand recognition in agri-food in Asia. Building compelling narratives around quality, sustainability, and innovation is critical to winning trust and establishing differentiation in crowded Asian markets.

SPEAKERS

Moderator



Joseph Fung

Managing Partner,
Saltagen Ventures,
Hong Kong-based



Scott Moore

Executive Vice
President and Chief
Financial Officer, Export
Development Canada
(EDC), Canada-based



Tyler Groeneveld

CEO, Protein Industries
Canada, Canada-based



Kelvin Ng

Managing Partner
Asia Pacific, Green
Bridge Partners,
Singapore-based

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The panel "Strategic Investment Partnerships in the Agri-food Sector" explored how Canada and Asia can move toward deeper, investment-driven collaboration in food systems. Speakers emphasized that food security, climate resilience, and supply chain stability are no longer isolated challenges – they intersect with capital flows, innovation ecosystems, and geopolitical dynamics. Canada enters this space with clear strengths: scale of production (and the potential to scale production further), trusted food safety systems, and a growing agri-tech and innovation base. Panellists agreed that Canada has historically underperformed in translating these advantages into global investment partnerships and value-added exports.

Export Development Canada (EDC) highlighted a shift it is making toward more strategic engagement in Asia, including partnerships with major regional buyers, such as San Miguel of the Philippines and Masan Group from Vietnam, to create long-term demand pipelines. Meanwhile, Protein Industries Canada underscored the desire for Canadian producers to move up the value chain by increasing the proportion of high-value ingredients, plant proteins, and consumer-ready food products that comprise Canada's agriculture and agri-food export mix. Case studies like Three Farmers Foods illustrated how targeted investment and ecosystem support can transform prairie crops into globally competitive branded products.

Asian investors provided a candid perspective: Canada's opportunity throughout the Indo-Pacific is significant, with increasing success depending on understanding fragmented regional

demand, investing in branding, building localized supply chain linkages, and, where possible, exerting greater control over portions of international supply chains. Opportunities extend beyond traditional bulk commodity exports into areas such as waste valorization (e.g. converting seafood byproducts into high-value inputs), ready-to-eat meals, and functional food ingredients. Crucially, deals are driven as much by trust and relationships as by capital, and by infrastructure such as distribution networks and logistics capacity.



"In Singapore, we import 90 per cent of our food... we rely on imports to survive as a country. And we signed these huge G2G arrangements with New Zealand, Australia, Thailand, Vietnam for rice, for protein. Why didn't we do one with Canada? ...The timing is right. Because you have high protein, high fibre products. You can feed us."

– Kelvin Ng, Managing Partner Asia Pacific, Green Bridge Partners

The panel concluded that the moment is ripe for Canada to position itself not just as a supplier of agricultural commodities to Asia, but as a strategic partner in building resilient, innovative, and integrated food systems.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Canada and Asia have complementary strengths in agricultural innovation

But partnerships must move beyond simple technology exports toward genuine co-creation. Panellists emphasized that successful solutions are locally adapted, culturally informed, and designed alongside farmers, co-operatives, and regional partners.

Smallholder farmers remain central to the global food system

Producing the majority of food commodities across Asia and beyond. Co-operatives and producer associations can act as powerful 'aggregation platforms' that help farmers access traceability systems, financing, technology, certification, and premium markets while lowering risks for investors and agribusiness.

AI and digital agriculture are reshaping food systems, particularly in areas such as predictive maintenance

Agro-intelligence, supply chain traceability, and sustainability reporting. Major opportunities lie in practical, affordable applications that solve production and logistics challenges for farmers and food companies.

Blended finance and patient capital are increasingly necessary to scale climate-smart agriculture

Examples from regenerative rice production and sustainable sourcing initiatives showed how partnerships among development banks, corporations, governments, and private investors can de-risk innovation and support long-term sustainability transitions that traditional venture capital alone cannot finance.

Canadian agri-tech companies can have significant opportunities in Southeast Asia

If they are open to engaging with the region's complexity. Participants noted that success in Asia requires deep local partnerships, field-based learning, strong government engagement, and business models tailored to smallholder systems.

Regulatory pressures such as the European Union's deforestation rules are accelerating demand for traceability, certification, and sustainability verification technologies.

This is a major opening for Canadian expertise in agri-tech, data systems, AI, and sustainable finance to support Asian supply chains seeking compliance and premium market access.

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Where Canada and Asia Meet:

Ideas, Investment, Impact



Technology to Feed 10 Billion:

03

DATA, TRACEABILITY AND INNOVATION

SPEAKERS

Moderator



Bev Postma

Executive Director, Grow Asia, Singapore-based



Chanèle Boulet Gauthier

Director of Strategy and Development, Socodevi, Canada-based



Nick Parker

CEO, CleanAI, Canada-based



Siddhartha Joshi

General Manager, Sustainability Finance, Olam Agri, Singapore-based

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The panel "Technology to Feed 10 Billion: Data, Traceability and Innovation" explored how technology, blended finance, and cross-sector partnerships can transform global agri-food systems amid rising geopolitical uncertainty, climate disruption, and food insecurity. Panellists came from Grow Asia, a multi-stakeholder partnership platform for smallholder agriculture in Southeast Asia; Socodevi, a Quebec-based international co-operation organization focused on co-operatives; Clean AI Initiative, a Toronto-based global clean technology/AI ecosystem promoting clean economy transitions; and Olam Agri, a Singapore-based agri-food company focused on food trading and processing.

The discussion emphasized that feeding a rapidly growing global population – estimated to reach 10 billion early in the second half of this century – will require more than incremental technology-enabled productivity gains; it will demand new and enhanced models of collaboration that facilitate on-farm technology uptake facilitated by connecting governments, investors, co-operatives, innovators, and farmers.

Speakers stressed that technologies designed for Canadian industrial agriculture often fail in Asian contexts unless they are adapted to specific regional conditions and co-developed locally. World-leading technology can help, but maximizing agricultural production and sustainability is rooted in local growing conditions and local knowledge; appropriately adapted advanced technology that leverages local knowledge of local growing environments is a must.

Case studies from India, Vietnam, and Africa demonstrated how AI-powered technologies such as agro-intelligence, solar irrigation systems, co-operative-led traceability systems, and regenerative rice production are already generating measurable sustainability and productivity gains. Throughout the discussion, participants returned to one central idea: the future of food security depends on "silo-busting" partnerships that blend local knowledge, patient capital, inclusive governance, and practical technology deployment to broaden and deepen resilient and scalable agricultural systems.

“Canada doesn't really shine its light strong enough on its own success in Asia with development capital. Canada has invested development dollars into Southeast Asia and Asia for 40 plus years. And I think that is allowing this conversation to happen. I don't think many of the investors or innovators would be in the room if it wasn't for that foundational capital.”

– Bev Postma, Executive Director, Grow Asia

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