



CANADIAN GOVERNMENT MAKES A STRATEGIC INVESTMENT

During the recent downturn in the North American economy, governments on both sides of the U.S. – Canadian border have invested vast sums of money to try and stimulate economic activity.

Much of the capital expended is directed at short term projects. Every once in a while, however, governments make strategic investments with long-term objectives.

Last Wednesday, Canada's Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Gerry Ritz announced a CN\$6.5 million funding award to set up Canada's Organic Science Cluster (OSC).

The Canadian government has been warm to the idea of creating "clusters" of excellence and therefore this announcement is not surprising. The intent of the OSC is to support the growth of the organic sector within Canadian agriculture by strengthening the science supporting organic farming and food production.

The Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada will manage the OSC which will draw together some 80 lead and collaborating scientists to work on specific projects. The funding is matched by CN\$2.2 million from industry partners and should allow the OSC to run well into 2013.

Some 20 industry partners are currently involved, and some 30 areas are identified for research, including animal agriculture.

For Canadian agriculture to place a high priority on organic food production makes sense and could be a good way to differentiate Canadian meat and poultry in the marketplace. This is one government expenditure for which the benefits could well outweigh the costs.