



# ProteinMB

MANITOBA'S SUSTAINABLE  
PROTEIN ADVANTAGE

## PROTEINMB EXECUTIVE FORUM WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

[ProteinMB](#) is focused on facilitating protein industry growth through value chain collaboration, providing representation and advocacy for the sector, measuring sustainability performance, supporting research and knowledge translation, and industry promotion and marketing. ProteinMB engages with the protein sector across 10 strategic areas outlined in the [Manitoba Protein Advantage Strategy \(MPAS\) action plan](#).

The objective of the ProteinMB Partnership Forum was to delve into the [ProteinMB Partnership Model](#) and identify priorities for industry that align with the protein strategy to support ProteinMB in identifying key collaborative initiatives for 2024-2025.

### ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

ProteinMB held an inaugural Executive Forum on June 17, 2024, at the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters office in Winnipeg. This forum brought together executives from nine diverse protein processing companies in Manitoba. This report summarizes the feedback received during the event.

### WHAT WE HEARD

Feedback was received on strengths and barriers to growth for protein processing organizations in Manitoba. Highlights and opportunities have been categorized by the themes included below.

## QUALITY

The industry produces higher cost and quality products, relying on high-quality and consistent labor to meet these standards. There is an increasing demand for high-quality meat, particularly from countries with developing middle-class consumers. Manitoba benefits from being a relatively low-cost jurisdiction with opportunities to import necessary raw materials like corn and soybean for pork product development.

## RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

- **Industry Engagement:** Participants expressed a strong desire to engage with universities. However, they find barriers to partnering with universities noting a disconnect from economically valuable research.
- **Collaboration:** Participants provided examples of successful industry research partnerships in the United States. It was noted that Canadian universities tend to focus on academic research and publications rather than industry collaboration. The University of Saskatchewan was noted as a good model of industry collaboration and suggestions to build similar linkages in Manitoba were brought forward.
- **Potential Partners:** The National Research Council (NRC) was identified as a potential partner, although not yet widely considered by attendees. EMILI was noted as a best practice example focused on precision technologies and AI in agriculture, primarily serving the primary agricultural sector.

## TECHNOLOGY/PRODUCTIVITY

- **Investment Needs:** There is a significant need for investment and research to advance the industry.
- **Adoption of Technology:** Some companies are introducing robotics and automation to enhance productivity.
- **Service Organizations:** A question was raised about the availability of service organizations to assist with modern digital technologies.
- **Reluctance to Invest:** There is a perceived reluctance to invest in technology in Manitoba compared to the United States.
- **Technology Tours:** A suggestion was made to organize technology tours or lunch-and-learn programs to raise awareness of advanced digital processing technologies. NRC was identified as a tour opportunity particularly regarding their focus on agriculture.
- **Lean Methodologies:** Lean methodologies were identified as helpful in improving manufacturing efficiencies and applicable to other areas of the protein sector.
- **Funding:** Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (SCAP) Building Sector Capacity, Growth and Competitiveness-Capital Infrastructure and Investments stream was identified as an opportunity for accessible funds available to assist with technology investments.

## LABOUR & SKILLS

- **Attracting Talent:** Concern was expressed about attracting Canadian students from universities, leading to reliance on foreign graduates.
- **Provincial Nominee Program:** The Provincial Nominee program has benefited organizations, but federal adjustments focusing on housing could impact uptake.
- **Demand for Skilled Talent:** There is a high demand for talent in technical positions, red seal trades, production roles, engineers, and graduates from agriculture and food programs. The skills needed must also consider what is needed five years from now and how to ensure that skilled labour is available. Data analysis skills were noted as being crucial.
- **Youth Engagement:** There is a need to better educate youth and college students about modern agriculture and its opportunities in diverse disciplines including marketing, technology, supply chain, finance. Trends were noted that young people share an interest in how good quality healthy sustainable food is produced which could be leveraged to promote careers in the value chain.
- **Co-op and Work Integrated Learning Programs:** Opportunities identified for students needing primary agriculture and processing experience.

## POLICY/REGULATORY BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

- **Regulation Modernization:** Participants shared feedback that regulations in the protein sector have accumulated over time to become unnecessary, overlapping, and contradictory. There is a need for modernization of agricultural legislation to ensure it is relevant, workable, facilitating growth, and not siloed.
- **CFIA Challenges:** The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) was frequently identified as a bottleneck due to lengthy approval processes and evaluation processes based on outdated methods, failing to keep pace with modern technological developments, adding costs and hindering competitiveness.
- **Waste Product Regulations:** Regulations prevent the use of waste products as animal feed, despite it being noted as a sustainable option. It was sited that CFIA has a two year approval process for animal consumption.
- **Transportation Efficiency:** A recommendation to advocate for adjusting truck trailer length regulations to match those in Quebec could improve delivery efficiency and sustainability.
- **Farm Fuel Costs:** Addressing the classification of farm fuel costs could improve cost-effectiveness for organizations that transport agricultural goods.
- **Customs Efficiency:** Efficiency with US customs remain a challenge.
- **Organic Certification:** Organic verification processes vary around the world positioning Canada at a disadvantage to the global market in cost and quality due to risk of contamination. There is a need to simplify the process and reduce paperwork and develop a form of certification of organic purity to reduce issues at the United States border.

# WATER AND WASTEWATER

- **Wastewater discharge:** Municipality wastewater restrictions due to regulations and infrastructure upgrades have led to a cost for organizations as wastewater is hauled off site. Ongoing negotiations were identified.
- **Municipality Advancements:** Municipalities have been investing in water and wastewater advancements however the timing is not meeting the needs of organizations. An expansion delay of two years was noted.
- **Water Quality:** The quality of water from sited municipalities do not meet necessary standards, requiring additional purification to decrease mineralization is required.
- **Investment:** Counts of investment at organizational level was noted as unplanned but a necessary in water and wastewater management.
- **Water Reduction:** Organizations ongoing reduction efforts. Future bottlenecks are foreseen because the solutions have been only enough to deal with current demand

## NEXT STEPS

Thank you to all who participated in the forum. Feedback provided will inform ProteinMB collaborations. ProteinMB is launching Sustainable Protein Consortiums to continue to align the industry, share best practice, help solve problems and pursue collaborative opportunities. [Become a ProteinMB associate](#) to stay informed and receive updates of opportunities to engage with ProteinMB.

## QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about this report, please contact ProteinMB at [info@ProteinMB.ca](mailto:info@ProteinMB.ca).



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