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**SPEAKING NOTES
FOR**

**ALANNA KOCH
BOARD CHAIR
GLOBAL INSTITUTE FOR FOOD SECURITY (GIFS)**

**HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD:
FOOD PRICE INFLATION**

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ONLINE

Good afternoon Mr. Chair, and thank you for the invitation.

My name is Alanna Koch, Board Chair of the Global Institute for Food Security, or GIFS, at the University of Saskatchewan.

We are an industry-government-academic partnership that works with partners to discover, develop and deliver innovative solutions for the production of globally sustainable food.

Outside of GIFS, I operate a family farm in Saskatchewan with my husband and have proudly served in many other roles within Canada's agriculture sector.

It is concerning that the food security of Canadians is challenged by the rising cost of food. The causes, many of which are external to Canada, are multifaceted and the impacts are widespread.

At GIFS, we also recognize the significant challenges experienced by others across the agri-food value chain, including agricultural producers, who face rising input costs and other expenses due to the effects of inflation, the pandemic, geopolitics and more.

While these challenges impact agri-food today, they also highlight underlying issues that may continue to negatively impact Canadians over the long term.

To that point, I would like to speak from GIFS' vantage point as a scientific organization focused on advancing research through to the development and delivery of innovative, sustainable agri-food products.

Innovation has and will continue to be an important contributor to resilient food systems that are safe, reliable and affordable.

Indeed, inflation experienced today only increases the urgency for innovations that promote food affordability, farm sustainability and economic development.

Today, I would like to draw your attention to the importance of policies and regulations to these objectives through supporting access to innovation.

The agri-food sector is dependent on regulations that can enable or hinder access to technologies critical to its advancement, and Canada requires a regulatory framework that is transparent, predictable and science-based to enable and advance these innovations.

Access to and regulatory approval of gene editing, biotechnology and other advanced tools that have been tested and proven will accelerate the development of agri-food products that are resilient, higher yielding and more economically, environmental and socially sustainable.

This was recognized in a 2022 report by the Royal Bank of Canada, BCG Centre for Canada's Future and the Arrell Food Institute, which notes biotechnology's importance to a resilient and productive agricultural sector.

The same analysis called for regulatory reform streamlining the transfer and commercialization of ag technologies — and we echo that call today.

At this critical juncture, we cannot limit our capacity to increase food production by restraining access to needed and proven technologies that will enhance economic, environmental and social outcomes.

In Saskatchewan, for example, the widespread adoption of technologies like no-till farming, herbicide-tolerant canola and the variable rate application of fertilizer support enhanced yields while producing canola, wheat and pulse crops that are the least carbon-intensive agri-food products in the world.

Our regulatory framework must ensure continued access to proven and safe technologies including plants with novel traits, precision agriculture technology, fertilizers, crop health products and others.

These innovations will enhance the economic, environmental and social sustainability of farm operations and the agri-food sector. Indeed, any strategy to feed Canada and the world sustainably and affordably must consider and satisfy all three equally important pillars for sustainability.

Mr. Chair, to promote the delivery of affordable food, Canada also requires significant capital investments in infrastructure.

Infrastructure-related interruptions affecting the delivery of agricultural commodities contribute to price volatility, food insecurity, tarnished trade reputations and lost opportunities.

Investments in rural wireless connectivity, ports and rail systems will promote food systems that operate reliably, affordably and at scale for the benefit of people around the world.

The good news is Canada has the people and technology to support affordable, sustainable agricultural production that contributes to food security at home and abroad — and there is potential to do more in the future, provided we have the right supports.

As the world's fifth largest exporter of agricultural and agri-food products, Canada has the opportunity and the responsibility to do more to feed Canadians and the world. As a farmer and someone involved in the advancement of innovation for Canadian agriculture, I urge government to focus on science-based policy and regulation so that we can do our part to meet the need for plentiful, nutritious, affordable food sustainably produced.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and the members of the House of Commons' Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food for the opportunity to speak with you today.

