

Beyond the Basics: Guaranteed Livable Basic Income & Bill S-233

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How Guaranteed Livable Income Benefits and Supports Farming and Fishing Industries

Farmers, fishers and ultimately all Canadians can benefit from easing pressure and stress on the food production and supply chain through guaranteed livable basic income (GLBI).

Canadians working in the fishing and agricultural industry face financial uncertainty due to various natural events and circumstances that are outside their control, but which can greatly impact and vary income, all of which can cause significant stress. In addition to the costs of operating farms and fisheries, these industries rely on favourable weather for lucrative crops, as well as economic factors such as tariffs and trade agreements.

Farmers and Fishers: Mental Health and the Lack of Supports

While research on the connection between GLBI and food production is in its early stages, a starting point has been the mental health crises experienced throughout the Canadian agricultural industry. According to the [Mental Health Commission of Canada](#), the major reason for these crises is financial instability. Approximately half of all farmers regularly experience depression, anxiety and stress. In a 2022 study, one third of farmers [reported](#) that they thought about suicide within the past year.

In a 2023 report, the National Farmers Union Mental Health Working Group made six [recommendations](#) to implement policies which enhance economic stability for farmers and farm workers and to continue to enhance supports to farmers transitioning to sustainable farming practice.

National income support programs could work to address these issues by providing a safety net to relieve farmers of some financial pressure, as the current Employment Insurance (EI) program tends to leave out many fishery employees and there are no real, concrete support services or programs targeted at supporting food producers and their employees in their fight against income insecurity.

EI fails most employees, especially those whose income comes from inconsistent hours, and those who do not work a more traditional, five-day work week.¹ As a result, workers are turning to existing forms of incremental support from provincial and federal governments. A GLBI could work with, not replace, existing supports, to ensure that upon coming into force, no beneficiary of social programs would be worse off and most would be substantially better off.

Better Conditions in the Food Production Industries

GLBI could sustain the livelihood of food producers in addition to improving labour conditions for their employees and improving product quality for farmers and fishery owners. With the safety net provided by GLBI, food producers could be granted crucial freedom of choice and decision making in their production.

Fishery and agricultural producers are under immense pressure to meet food supply demands in order to produce revenue. When working conditions along the food supply chain become healthier, Canadians can expect the quality of food supply to follow the same path.

Future of Food Production

Income support programs can be one aspect of a national strategy for supporting the future of the Canadian food industry. By 2033, [40% of Canadian farm operators will retire](#), placing agriculture on the cusp of one of the biggest labour and leadership transitions in the country's history.

GLBI could create a safety net for new and incoming producers. It can serve rural communities across Canada as startup support for entering the fishing and farming industry, ultimately supporting industry growth and sustainability.

A program that substantially reduces poverty can enhance financial security across all industries, generally relieve our agricultural producers of financial stress, as well as improve labour conditions and produce quality in our national food industries.

¹ Employment Insurance benefits for farmers have strict requirements: <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/ei-farmers.html>

Key References

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