



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 13, 2018

Education programs critical to improve youth perception of agri-food careers

(Winnipeg, Manitoba) If you want to effectively market agri-food careers to youth, start by connecting those careers to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math).

A new study, commissioned by Agriculture in the Classroom Canada (AITC-C), found that Science, Technology/Innovation, and Engineering/Mechanics careers were the most appealing areas of work for Canadian teenagers. However, STEM and business careers were the areas least associated with agriculture and food.

"A lot more work needs to be done to improve the perception of agri-food careers with youth," said AITC-C Ag Careers Program Manager, Becky Parker. "We have to start by 'mainstreaming' these careers through the lens of STEM and connecting youth with interesting examples of agri-business, ag science and ag engineering jobs."

The *thinkAG Teen Career Inquiry Survey* was conducted by Kynetec Canada as part of the AITC-C **thinkAG** initiative. This project was funded through the Fostering Business Development Stream of the AgriCompetitiveness Program under Growing Forward2 (GF2), a federal, provincial, territorial initiative.

High school students across Canada (n=1002) completed an online questionnaire about agri-food careers, and their preferred methods for learning career information. According to the survey, the three most appealing attributes of a career are a good salary, work that is rewarding/meaningful, and work that helps others. Teens also indicated that experiential methods such as hands-on activities, job shadowing, and internships are their preferred way to learn about career opportunities. Insights from this survey have informed the approach of resources and programs within AITC-C's thinkAG initiative

The *thinkAG Teen Career Inquiry Survey* has also increased understanding of teens views related to public trust in the food system. Through a partnership with the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity (CCFI), the teens were asked questions from the CCFI Public Trust research to compare their views to the general public.

When asked whether the food system in this country is moving in the right direction, or is off on the wrong track, 30% indicated right track, 18% wrong track, and 52% were unsure. The teens that believe the food sector is on the right track are more interested in certain agriculture careers than those who think the food sector is on the wrong track.

"The connection between increasing trust in agriculture and food and opening young peoples' minds to options for careers in this field is clear, stated Crystal Mackay, CCFI President. "There is



a great opportunity to connect with half of teens who are unsure what to think when it comes to their food and how it's grown."

"The results of this survey continue to support AITC-C's mission to engage students and educators to enhance their knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of agriculture and food," added Johanne Ross, AITC-C's executive director. "It is clear that even though hundreds of unique and dynamic career options are literally lined up for young people in this sector, that we all need to keep turning up the volume to reach the ears and peak the interests of Canadian students. AITC-C's initiatives like thinkAG, delivered through provincial AITC organizations, have never been more critical."

Agriculture in the Classroom Canada (AITC-C) is a not for profit, charitable organization that harnesses and fosters the energy, intelligence, skills and passion that exists in Canadian students. Nine provincial organizations are represented through membership in AITC-C and collectively, they deliver on national agriculture education initiatives for all grade levels. AITC-C capitalizes on Canadians' interest in how their food is produced, by providing accurate, balanced and current; curriculum linked teaching tools and outreach programs on Canada's agriculture and food story.

-30-

For more information, contact:

Christa Wright
Operations Manager, AITC-C
709-743-4917
cwright@aitc-canada.ca

Becky Parker
Ag Careers Program Manager, AITC - C
613-743-2716
bparker@aitc-canada.ca

www.aitc-canada.ca