

that agriculture as a commercial activity is evolving and is now much more than mere growing of plants. Second they represent sound public management.

• (1600)

The agri-food element now added to the mandate of the department is important, because it reflects the interactions we must have with all our clients, from producing farmers to urban consumers. To prosper, the processing sector must rely on flourishing farms and, conversely, farmers need a healthy processing sector for their goods. We are mutually dependent for our daily bread.

[English]

Allow me to illustrate with a few examples. In 1993, \$10.5 billion worth of farm inputs such as seeds, machinery and fertilizers were transformed into farm production valued at \$21.5 billion. In turn that farm production was further transformed into processed foods and beverage products worth \$46 billion.

In 1993 Canada exported \$13.3 billion in agri-food products. That contributed to a surplus of some \$3 billion to Canada's balance of trade.

The recognition of these connections will be important as we plan for the future.

[Translation]

These amendments will contribute to better public management for the following reasons. The bill defines more clearly the department's responsibilities in research. The present legislation indirectly refers to research by mentioning experimental farm stations. The bill broadens this definition to include research in agriculture and its products specifically with respect to experimental farm stations. This is a wise clarification at a time when Canadian industry must compete on international markets dealing with food and non-food products, that is to say products resulting from research.

More amendments. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food will have the authority to designate inspectors for the purpose of the Food and Drugs Act, a responsibility which is presently his under several other acts. Contrary to what the opposition has been implying, this amendment does not add to the inspection functions of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. Rather, it is an amendment necessary to allow the minister to carry out responsibilities under the Food and Drugs Act he inherited from the former Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Government Orders

These amendments represent a sound management practice since they repeal three pieces of legislation which had become useless.

Finally, under this new bill, the department will publish only one yearly summary of its expenses and programs in a single document, namely Part III of the Main Estimates, instead of doing it in several annual reports. This will save a lot of time and money.

[English]

With the world trading environment opening up with new ways of doing business emerging, it is an opportune time to review the mandate of one of the country's oldest departments.

• (1605)

Over the next few months the minister will be working with producers and industry to hammer out a shared, comprehensive vision about where we want agriculture and agri-food to be in the year 2000, 2005 and 2010 and how we plan to get there.

The government is preparing to make some fundamental decisions about many longstanding and difficult issues in agriculture and agri-food. These decisions for the future will be part of a comprehensive plan for a modern, progressive industry.

The minister has spent a good deal of his time during the past month or so talking about the need for a long term vision. The minister's view is clear. Industry should be growing. Industry should be competitive. Industry should be market oriented and, of course, it should be profitable.

It should respond to the changing food and non-food needs of domestic and international customers. It should be less dependent on government support. It should contribute to the well-being of all Canadians and it should contribute to the quality of life in rural communities. Overall it should achieve farm financial security, environmental sustainability and a safe, high quality food supply.

As a New Brunswicker I am of course very interested in the vibrant farming community and agri-food industry. My province may be small, but it has developed a very competitive food sector. McCain Foods Ltd., Cavendish Farms, Ganong, Moosehead, Baxter Foods and Dairytown Products are all New Brunswick firms that have found success beyond provincial borders. In my own riding of Beauséjour, although concentrated in the fishery, food processing is a major activity and farming is as well.

I see in agriculture an agri-food industry that is leading the way in achieving growth, jobs and security, the three overriding themes of this government in the Atlantic region and across Canada. To achieve this, it is vitally important that everyone involved in this industry, from suppliers to producers to handlers and processors to consumers and governments, recognize that most of our issues cannot be dealt with in isolation.