

urbanization pressures on rural areas. The federal government has established a National Agriculture Environment Committee that has representation from national and regional farm organizations. This committee has a valuable role to play in addressing the environmental issues that face the agricultural sector.

Broad consultation led to the draft National Environment Strategy for Agriculture and Agri-Food. It includes an inventory of environmental challenges facing the sector. Industry, provincial governments, and the federal government will finalize and act on strategies to address these issues.

Federal-provincial programming for sustainable agriculture has contributed \$56 million over the past year to help the sector make the transition to more environmentally sustainable practices. Many activities involved education and evaluation of technologies and management practices that focused on issues such as water quality, waste management, chemical management, and soil conservation. Nationally, another \$7 million went to agricultural research related to air and climate, energy, and genetic resources.

There has been significant progress in the work under way to develop national agri-environmental indicators. A core set of six indicators are being developed. They will provide an ongoing capability for evaluating the sector's environmental performance, provide information on key trends, and aid the integration of environmental considerations into decision-making processes. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada released its first indicator-based document, "The Health of Our Soils—Toward Sustainable Agriculture in Canada".

Forests

In last year's report to the CSD, Canada noted that it was developing domestic criteria and indicators for the sustainable management of its forests.

In October 1995, the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers released "Defining Sustainable Forest Management: A Canadian Approach to Criteria and Indicators". This framework outlines six criteria and eighty-three indicators. They reflect an approach to forest management that is based on the following:

- the need to manage forests as ecosystems to maintain their natural processes;
- the recognition that forests simultaneously provide a wide range of environmental, economic, and social benefits to Canadians;
- the view that an informed, aware, and involved public is important in promoting sustainable forest management; and
- the need for forest management to evolve to reflect the best available knowledge and information.

These criteria and indicators were developed through a comprehensive two-year consultative process. It involved a variety of forest interests, including Aboriginal peoples, nongovernmental organizations, small woodlot owners, industry, and the