

# Imported products a concern

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make up 60 per cent of the food consumed in Canada. Farmers in China, for instance, use seven times the pesticides and five times the amount of fertilizers than Canadians.

"However, the average consumer doesn't differentiate between local and imported food," he said.

Food safety is also the responsibility of the consumer who should be aware of where their food comes from. And once out of the store, food can still be a risk if not handled or prepared properly.

For their part, farmers have reduced their chemical inputs by 50 per cent in the last 10 years.

Porteous said Canadian farmers embrace reduction of chemical use simply on the basis of cost savings. But some chemicals are required to produce sufficient food at reasonable price.

As a cherry producer and a founding member of the Norfolk Cherry Company, Porteous said they have stiff regulations in their processing operation.

"Some are quite bizarre," he said, citing a requirement that the grass must be cut around buildings. "What's that got to do with safe food?"

Porteous insists there be balance and reason applied to regulations.

"There needs to be science-based proof of what we're trying to do," he said.

Because food safety benefits all society, Porteous reasons that the federal government should contribute to farmers' efforts. He pointed out the Canadian government balked at a request for \$2 million to implement the CHC food safety program. Yet, at the same time, the government gave \$20 million to China for a food safety system there.

Porteous argues that China should be responsible for its own food safety if it exports food. He pointed out that Canadian exports into Britain must conform to their standards.

"Why don't they do it (food safety inspection) in China if they're coming onto our market?" he said.

However, government is responding.

This year the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs is introducing an On-Farm Food Safety Program that would provide funding for food safety at

the farm, shipper and processor levels. While still in draft form, the program calls for \$5,000 for projects to improve food safety, including one-on-one instruction on food

safety. This would make the grower eligible for second stage funding up to \$20,000 for those who have a farm safety program and want to make improvements.

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