



SERIES 5

Building on previous research on local food procurement, this series is celebrating local food champions and their commitment to supporting Ontario's agri-food sector.



LOCAL FOOD CHAMPIONS: FACES BEHIND OUR FOOD

PROFILING:

DOUG ALEXANDER

(VICE PRESIDENT OF SUSTAINABILITY AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AT THE BELMONT FOOD GROUP)

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"We don't make progress until we talk" - Doug Alexander

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Doug Alexander's depth of experience spans four decades in the food sector and is exactly what makes his voice so influential today. Alexander is the Vice President of Sustainability and Government Relations at the Belmont Food Group. Belmont Food Group is an operating group within Premium Brands Holdings, a large Canadian owned food company servicing foodservice and grocery customers in North America. Ontario Food Companies included in the Belmont Group are Leadbetter Foods (Orillia), Yorkshire Valley Farms (Harriston + GTA), Belmont Meat Products (Toronto), Beechgrove Country Foods (Toronto) and GoCold Solutions (Brantford, Brampton, Montreal and others in Canada).

Alexander brings a rare, end-to-end understanding of the food system with experience across meat, bakery, pasta, sauces, and vegetable production. From plant floors to boardrooms, he understands how complex the supply chain truly is. "There's an entire ecosystem in between that people don't always see" he emphasizes. This perspective, grounded in both technical expertise and real-world leadership, has positioned Doug as a trusted advocate for strengthening Canada's food system from the inside out.

What truly sets him apart is not just what he knows it's how his mindset has evolved. Like many in the industry, in the past, competitors were viewed with caution, even suspicion. "Don't tell those guys", was a common phrase used to protect a perceived competitive advantage. But Doug's experience has changed that attitude for him.



"WHILE MANY WOULD ARGUE THAT WE DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH MEAT PROCESSING FACILITIES IN CANADA, WE ARE NOT USING THE INFRASTRUCTURE WE ALREADY HAVE" - DOUG ALEXANDER

Doug tirelessly advocates for practical steps: creating forums where industry players can meet, encouraging participation in associations, and fostering peer-to-peer dialogue across the supply chain.



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"We don't make progress until we talk" - Alexander explains.

Through industry engagement and collaboration, Doug quickly discovered that competitors often face the same challenges and by sharing those challenges, together they can unlock shared solutions. Today, he actively brings competitors together, fostering dialogue that replaces fear with progress. "When people actually talk," he notes, "they realize they're not that far apart." This shift from guarded competition to open collaboration has become a cornerstone of his leadership, a powerful driver of industry advancement and what makes him an exceptional mentor to others.

An example of how communication and collaboration can lead to transformative change is through Alexander's work with Belmont Meat Products. Once destined for landfill due to contamination, soiled meat packaging has been reimagined as a resource rather than waste. In just three years, under Alexander's leadership, used meat packaging now undergoes a process of "material transformation through incineration," turning into energy derived from waste.

This process turns a long-standing disposal challenge into a circular solution. During incineration, fly ash is captured and repurposed for use in cement production, while the static heat generated during incineration is harnessed to support neighbouring businesses demonstrating how innovation can convert even the most problematic waste streams into tangible assets with environmental and economic value. This change alone has resulted in a 100 percent diversion of meat packaging from landfill while having no impact on existing processes within the plant.



Today, Alexander is sharing and influencing other companies to follow suit, resulting in sustainable solutions that are shaping the food industry. By finding ways to better integrate provincial and federal systems while maintaining food safety standards Canada could increase throughput, improve efficiency, and expand available supply.



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"The Netherlands have spent decades working together across sectors, across disciplines," - Alexander explains.

Alexander often points to Food Valley in the Netherlands as a powerful example of what's possible when collaboration becomes culture. Centered around Wageningen University, Food Valley brings together farmers, food companies, researchers, technology providers and government to work collectively on innovation, sustainability, and productivity.

The numbers demonstrate the success of this model. Despite limited land and resources, in 2025, the Netherlands was considered the world's second largest exporter of agricultural products by value (\$219.25 Billion CAD), punching well above its weight when it comes to productivity. In comparison, Canada's agricultural exports were \$100.3 billion or less than half. The result is a system where knowledge flows freely and innovation accelerates across the value chain. For Canada, he sees enormous potential: by embracing similar collaboration, the country has enormous potential to drive productivity, build capacity, and unlock new opportunities in food production.

This same collaborative thinking shapes Alexander's views on one of Canada's most pressing food challenges: rising beef prices and limited processing capacity. He argues that the issue is not simply supply, but how the system is structured. Federal processing capacity is constrained, particularly for specialized cuts, while under utilized provincial capacity remains locked behind regulatory and structural barriers. Even small gains matter. "If we unlock even one percent more capacity," he explains, "that's a big number." Greater capacity would not only support producers and processors but could also help stabilize and potentially reduce consumer prices for beef by easing bottlenecks and improving overall system efficiency.



Doug continues to push the food sector forward. He believes deeply that "all boats rise with the tide," and that solving systemic challenges benefits everyone from farmers to processors and ultimately the consumer. He is driven by a commitment to building a stronger, more resilient food system. By championing dialogue, challenging assumptions, and connecting people across divides, he has become a true local food champion. In an industry often slowed by fragmentation, Alexander stands out as a unifying force proving that progress begins with a conversation.



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