

## **Influencing Tomorrow's Plate**

The Tuesday morning plenary session was moderated by Minister Ralph Eichler of Manitoba, who introduced the first speaker, Ms. Erin MacGregor, founder of How To Eat, spoke on the topic of 'Effective Food and Ag Communication: It Takes A Village'. She discussed the trend for 'emotional based marketing' of food, in which consumers buy products based on how the claims make them feel. Also important to the millennial consumer are verified health claims, and, in direct correlation, the absence of verified health claims implies the food is unsafe.

MacGregor described Canada's National Food Strategy. There is a renewed effort to crack down on food fraud and mislabeling. There is also a new restriction on marketing of food to kids. New initiatives are in place for increased education for food and health – The Food Pyramid, My Plate, School Food Program, and others. The last focus is on communication for transparency, which includes the use of social media.

Dr. Kim McConnell, founder of AgFarm, spoke on 'Building Trust In Food & Farming, and the Role of Governments'. He reported that trust in farming is diminishing, and the reason is that people are confused. What can farmers do to counteract this confusion? They need to make sure that consumers trust the framework by 1) doing the right thing, 2) providing verification of claims and safety, 3) communicating with the consumer, 4) use youth as spokespeople.