

# AAFC Reaps the Benefits of SharePoint, Using harmon.ie



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*People are not going to change. If you want them to use SharePoint, you have to make it easy for them to capture, classify, and find emails and documents. harmon.ie is the key.*

Mario Gaulin, Director of Enterprise Information Solutions at AAFC

**Industry**

Governmental

**Location**

Canada

**Size**

More than 6000 employees

## Organization Background

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) is the department of the Government of Canada responsible for policies governing the production, processing, and marketing of all farm, food, and agri-based products. The department works closely with provincial and territorial governments in the development and delivery of policies and programs. The department is also responsible for ensuring collaboration with its portfolio partners which are also involved in regulating and supporting Canadian agriculture.

## Document Management

In the past, AAFC used an OpenText document system. A number of years ago, the decision was made to move to SharePoint on-premises. Now, SharePoint has been in use at AAFC for over 7 years by most of its 6000 users. The remaining OpenText repository will be migrated to SharePoint Online within 3 to 4 years. Presently, SharePoint is the main document repository and collaboration platform for inside collaboration and outside collaboration with other governmental departments. And since coordination of policies is a core responsibility of the department, SharePoint is a critical asset for the department. AAFC currently has over 8,000 MySites, almost 2000 internal collaboration sites, and nearly 100 external collaboration sites, the latter hosted by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC).

“A lot of different groups and committees are making use of SharePoint,” Says Mario Gaulin, Director of Enterprise Information Solutions at AAFC. SharePoint 2019 is widely used, with more than a thousand active sites; it is used to store emails and documents related to committee planning, opportunities for proposals, meeting agendas and minutes, and so on.

“We call it an all knowledge workspace,” says Gaulin. “To have a knowledge workspace, we’re able to collaborate on various documents, enable sharing of information. We depend on SharePoint, we use it on a daily basis... even more now during the pandemic, because it’s much easier to access documents through a link.”

# The Challenge

Mario Gaulin, Director of Enterprise Information Solutions at AAFC, explains about the challenges that AAFC was facing:

## Document versioning chaos

“There's nothing that drives me crazier than whenever you have attachments to your email then there're multiple versions. How do you reconcile all of them, keep track easily, and minimize what you have in your inbox?”

## Saving Emails to SharePoint

There is currently no practical way to save emails into SharePoint. harmon.ie gives users a clean and easy interface to save emails into SharePoint. Adoption was smooth because harmon.ie's interface is similar to our AgriDOC Outlook extension, with which our users are already familiar.

## Limited inbox space

“Our inboxes are limited in size. Right now, everyone has 4GB of storage, (temporarily upgraded from 2GB due to the COVID crisis), and with the amount of emails that we all

receive, especially when working remotely, well, it's very challenging.”

## Bulk Uploading of Content

“Due to the way we set up SharePoint content types, bulk uploading of content to SharePoint is difficult. Asking users to populate a lot of metadata was a non-starter. harmon.ie allows users to upload a lot of documents and emails to define the same metadata for multiple files in one operation. This is a huge timesaver.”

## Tagging

AAFC uses metadata extensively to classify forms and workflows. “Tagging content is a challenge when you're saving content in SharePoint. People routinely say 'I don't have time for this,' so they're either going to quickly pick metadata values and it's not going to be accurate, or they won't save it to SharePoint in the first place.”

# The Solution



AAFC was looking for a solution that would simplify how emails and documents are captured, classified, and accessed. “People are not going to change. If you want them to make use of SharePoint, you have to make it easier for them to access, search, and do auto-tagging.”, says Gaulin.

Like many other government departments, AAFC selected harmon.ie to simplify employees' interaction with SharePoint. AAFC started with a pilot, installing harmon.ie for a small group of users across a number of the organization's departments.

“We ran a pilot and it was very well received. And then more and more people wanted to get licenses and we just decided to buy harmon.ie for everyone”, says Gaulin. “It all evolved from the initial pilot program. People talk to one another and ask 'how can you do this?' or they receive an email with a link to a document that points directly to SharePoint, and they are amazed - 'how did you do this?' So harmon.ie adoption was very much word of mouth.”

**harmon.ie is installed now for 1500 users, and AAFC is in the process of extending harmon.ie to the 5000 SharePoint users.**

## The Results

Today, harmon.ie is used extensively by a diverse group of AAFC employees across many departments, to capture and classify documents and emails from Outlook and from Windows Explorer into SharePoint.

“If I receive something in my email that I want to save in SharePoint, or save an email in SharePoint, it's much easier to do this using harmon.ie. Even saving documents from my desktop; I just drag those to SharePoint using harmon.ie and put them on my site. I can easily do that, as well as drag links into emails,” says Gaulin.

With harmon.ie, links are now routinely sent instead of attachments, preventing version chaos while reducing already constrained Inbox volume.

“Our users send a lot of stuff by email. When we started to use harmon.ie, it was fantastic, because you just click harmon.ie, you just drag the link into your email, and you're sending a link over to the user that points directly into SharePoint”, says Gaulin.

harmon.ie is also used for tagging emails and documents uploaded to SharePoint. When there are required properties in the SharePoint library, harmon.ie automatically opens a Property Editor, prompting users to fill in the required properties. By making it easy to accurately classify content, harmon.ie helps fulfill AAFC's business objectives; namely, coordinating policy and collaborating internally, with local, provincial, and federal agencies, as well as with partners.



## The Future

Looking forward, AAFC plans to complete its rollout of harmon.ie to the entire SharePoint community within AAFC. It is also planning to move to Microsoft 365 / SharePoint Online. The move will advance external collaboration with even more constituents in the Canadian ecosystem. AAFC is tracking the potential for auto-tagging to classify documents and emails automatically. That is why they are excited about the recently announced Microsoft Syntex, which will enable SharePoint customers to leverage machine learning and AI to automatically tag emails and documents using SharePoint metadata.

**The bottom line is better results for the people of Canada.**

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