



# Region of Durham Agricultural Strategy 2013 - 2018

Good things keep growing!  
Business...Health...Energy...Environment...



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## 1.0 **Introduction and Background**

The agriculture and agri-food industry in Durham Region (Durham) is very productive and diverse and is vital to Durham's economic health. It must not only be preserved, but enhanced to ensure long-term diversity of the regional economy. Agriculture and agri-food are also part of the social and environmental fabric of Durham. Environmental stewardship, economic prosperity and the health and security of our food supply are staples of a thriving agricultural community.

While many of the challenges facing the agriculture and agri-food industry are beyond the mandate and control of the Regional Municipality of Durham (the Region) and its area municipalities, the action items that will be developed from the Agricultural Strategy will focus on initiatives that can be influenced locally. It is the mission of the Region to work with industry stakeholders to be one of the leading agriculture and agri-food areas in Ontario.

This Agricultural Strategy provides a vision and guiding principles that will be basis for identifying key actions to support the growth and viability of the agriculture and agri-food industry in Durham, over the next five years.

### 1.1 **Background**

On February 19, 2010, the Region hosted a facilitated consultation with industry stakeholders. Over 25 participants took part, with representation from across the agriculture sector. During this session, four key priorities were identified for Durham, including:

- Industry Attraction, Retention and Expansion;
- Outreach and Education;
- A Supportive Policy Environment and Service Delivery; and
- Labour Force Development.

At the completion of the session, a steering committee was formed to work with Economic Development staff to provide input and further develop the key priorities to be addressed over the next five years. This group has continued to work with Economic Development staff to develop this Strategy and ensure that it reflects the issues and challenges of agriculture in Durham.

In December of 2011, Regional Council endorsed the Region of Durham: Food Processing Action Plan. The Food Processing Action Plan provides background information on the food processing industry, its strength in Durham and actions that can be taken to promote further opportunities and growth. The Recommended Initiatives identified in the Action Plan are incorporated into this Agricultural Strategy as the basis for economic activities aimed at enhancing the agri-food industry including: product development, business development; and investment attraction.

In March of 2013, Durham Region's Planning and Economic Development Committee approved Economic Development staff to proceed with further stakeholder consultation. The draft Agricultural Strategy was circulated to the various agricultural organizations in the region, as well as to municipal staff and the conservation authorities, along with an invitation to participate in one of two consultation sessions that were held in April, or to provide comment via email. The draft Agricultural Strategy was also presented to the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee and the Clarington Agriculture Advisory Committee. The feedback received has been incorporated into this final Agricultural Strategy.

## 2.0 Legislative and Policy Framework

Protecting and enhancing the agriculture and agri-food industry's "working landscape" is critical for building farm operator confidence and promoting conditions for profitable farming.

When developing policy, it is important to recognize that:

- profitability is a key component of a sustainable agricultural industry;
- there is a need to create a balance in protecting both agricultural resources and the environment; and
- agriculture and agri-food industry contributes to a way of life in the community, creating positive economic, social and environmental impacts.

There are a number of planning related regulations and policies in place at the provincial and regional level that farmers must operate within and adhere to. These are in place for a variety of reasons, including protection of agricultural lands and environmental features. It is important to have an understanding of the policies and regulations and how they impact agriculture and agri-food production. The following provides a brief overview of the various policies that pertain to agriculture in Durham.

### 2.1 Provincial Legislation/Plans

During the period from 2000 to 2006, the Provincial Government established a framework of legislation and policies for managing the land resources of the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and beyond. The Provincial legislation and Plans that have an affect on Durham's agricultural lands are:

- Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act and Plan;
- Nutrient Management Act;
- Provincial Policy Statement (PPS);
- Greenbelt Act and the Greenbelt Plan;
- Places to Grow Act and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe;
- Clean Water Act; and
- Lake Simcoe Protection Act and Plan.

#### **Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, 2001**

This Plan is intended to protect the ecological and hydrological features and functions of the Moraine. It provides specific land use policies that maintain allowances for development and connectivity through and within the area, while protecting prime agricultural areas.

#### **Nutrient Management Act, 2002**

The Nutrient Management Act is intended to reduce the potential for the contamination of water and other natural resources, associated with some agricultural practices. The Act established the framework for best practices in

nutrient management and creates standards which give best management practices the force of law.

### **Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), 2005**

The PPS protects prime agricultural areas for the long-term use of agriculture. In prime agricultural areas, permitted uses include agricultural uses, secondary uses and agriculture-related uses. Any proposed new secondary uses and agriculture-related uses must be compatible with surrounding agricultural operations and limited in scale. Municipalities have the opportunity to provide more definitive and restrictive agricultural policies. However, all types, sizes and intensities of agricultural uses and normal farm practices must be permitted and protected.

### **Greenbelt Act and the Greenbelt Plan, 2005**

The Greenbelt Plan is intended to protect and preserve agricultural and natural system areas within the Protected Countryside. The Plan protects prime agricultural areas for normal farm practices and permits a range of agricultural, agriculture-related and secondary uses, consistent with the PPS. It also provides restrictions on non-agricultural uses in prime agricultural areas.

### **Places to Grow Act and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006**

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe is the Province's growth management strategy that calls for concentrating growth and increasing intensification in existing built-up areas. Compact greenfield communities are promoted to use land efficiently and reduce the rate at which land is consumed for urban purposes.

### **Clean Water Act, 2006**

The Clean Water Act helps protect drinking water, including municipal sources of drinking water, from source to tap with a multi-barrier approach that stops contaminants from entering sources of drinking water – lakes, rivers, aquifers. The Act requires local source protection committees to assess existing and potential threats to water and set out and implement the actions needed to reduce or eliminate these threats. This may have an impact on certain agricultural practices, if deemed to be a threat.

### **Lake Simcoe Protection Act and Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, 2009**

The Lake Simcoe Protection Plan aims to restore and protect the ecology of Lake Simcoe and its watershed. Some of the objectives of the Plan include:

- Protecting, improving or restoring the elements that contribute to the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed, including water quality, hydrology and key natural heritage features;
- Reducing the loading of phosphorus and other nutrients into the Lake Simcoe watershed; and
- Reducing the discharge of pollutants to Lake Simcoe.

This Plan may have an impact on certain agricultural practices, if deemed to have a negative impact on Lake Simcoe.

## 2.2 Regional Plans/Policies

There are a number of Regional plans and policies that affect agriculture in Durham.

### **2009-2014 Durham Region Strategic Plan Growing Together**

Agriculture and the rural community are addressed in the 2009-2014 Durham Region Strategic Plan Growing Together (Strategic Plan). Three of the Strategic Plan's five strategic themes incorporate an agricultural component; where agriculture is either integral to, impacted by, or supportive of the theme.

#### *Strategic Theme #1:*

Promote and strengthen a vibrant economy that will support prosperity for Durham residents, businesses and organizations.

- 1.2 Strengthen support for the agricultural sector.
- 1.4 Market the "Durham Advantage" of UOIT as a centre for high technology jobs, and Durham College as a skills training centre of excellence.
- 1.5 Advance Durham as the energy capital of Ontario.
- 1.6 Promote and market Durham, both inside and outside of the region.

#### *Strategic Theme #2:*

Protect and enhance our environment for today and tomorrow through stewardship of our natural resources.

- 2.1 Strengthen efforts to protect our rural resources.
- 2.2 Develop a strategy to enhance food security.
- 2.3 Enhance ecological health with a continuous natural heritage and Greenland system.
- 2.4 Protect the quality and quantity of both ground and surface water.
- 2.5 Demonstrate leadership in waste reduction and reuse strategies, while managing residual waste effectively.
- 2.6 Develop a community-based action plan to mitigate and adapt to climate change, implementing strategies to use energy efficiently, and reduce air and light pollution.

#### *Strategic Theme #3:*

Balance growth, enabling sustainable communities.

- 3.6 Reinforce the distinct character of our rural and urban areas.
- 3.7 Protect employment land, which include our agricultural lands.

### **Durham Regional Official Plan**

One of the key directions of the Durham Regional Official Plan (ROP) is the protection of agricultural lands. The ROP recognizes that significant amounts of Durham's land base are prime agricultural areas and designates them accordingly. The ROP, consistent with the PPS and Greenbelt Plan, permits agricultural, agricultural-related and secondary uses in prime agricultural areas. Agricultural-related and secondary uses that are accessory to the principal agricultural use of the property are permitted, provided they do not alter the

principal use of the property for agriculture. Small scale secondary uses to the agricultural use that produce value-added agricultural products, (e.g., wineries, agri-tourism uses, B&B establishments, farm tours) are also permitted, provided they are directly related to the existing farm operation.

The ROP also includes policies to support community food security, where community residents are able to obtain a safe, culturally acceptable and nutritionally adequate diet, through a sustainable food system and the ability of the agricultural community to support this system.

### **Durham Food Charter**

In November 2009, the Region endorsed the Durham Region Food Charter as a community document. The Food Charter reflects the communities' shared values and principals about community food security, to base future food-related policies and actions.

The objectives of the Food Charter are to:

- bring together stakeholders from the food system (which include: farmers/growers, processors, distributors, consumers, and waste recycling), as well as government representatives, civil society organizations, food interest groups, and concerned residents;
- promote the goals of the Durham Region Food Charter and oversee its promotion and implementation;
- educate and empower local residents about the food system, benefits of local food, and how to access/grow local food;
- promote a sustainable local food infrastructure that will support the economic viability of farmers and connect local food with the community in a safe, relevant, and affordable manner;
- support the promotion and development of local food initiatives;
- influence and advise on the development of personal, organizational, and government food policies; and
- create opportunities for youth to influence and advise on local food initiatives and policies.

### **Region of Durham: Food Processing Action Plan**

The Region of Durham: Food Processing Action Plan endorsed by Regional Council in December 2011, targets development of a value chain that includes businesses in the agriculture and agri-food industry. Opportunities exist to attract businesses that would complement those already in Durham. For example, the need for public cold storage and post-harvest handling facilities has been identified. Implementation of the *Region of Durham: Food Processing Action Plan* will be integral to implementing this broader Agricultural Strategy.

### **Integrated Community Sustainability Plan**

Other municipally driven plans are being implemented to support agriculture and agri-food in various parts of Durham. In 2010, the Townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge, in partnership with the Region, created a plan to address common



needs for economic, cultural, social and environmental sustainability. This Plan, known as the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP), was developed with significant consultation from the north Durham community and led to the creation of 13 implementation plans across 6 sustainability initiatives (ecology, economy, education, carbon footprint, sense of community and water systems). Agriculture was identified as a “Key Theme” and its importance to the north Durham economy is evident throughout the ICSP. A number of targets and actions for agriculture in north Durham have been identified and must be considered when developing an agricultural Strategy for Durham.

### **Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan 2021**

In the spring of 2012, Regional Council endorsed the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan 2021. Prepared in cooperation with all of the regions and cities in the Golden Horseshoe, the Plan focuses on opportunities to grow the food and farming cluster, including:

- Grow the Cluster – Grow the Golden Horseshoe cluster so it becomes the leading food and farming cluster in the world renowned for healthy and safe products.
- Link Food Farming and Health – Educate current and future consumers about the importance of locally sourced food and farming products for enhancing their health and well-being.
- Foster Innovation – Encourage and support innovation to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of the Golden Horseshoe food and farming cluster.
- Enable the Cluster – Align policy tools and their application to enable food and farming businesses to be increasingly competitive and profitable.
- Cultivate New Approaches – Pilot new approaches to support food and farming in the Golden Horseshoe.

## **2.3 Policy Context for Strategy Making**

Clearly, there are many provincial and regional plans and policies affecting the nature, extent and practice of farming, agriculture and agri-food sectors. These will inform a broad based Strategy to support the long-term viability and prosperity of this vital sector in Durham’s economy.

### 3.0 Agriculture in Durham Region

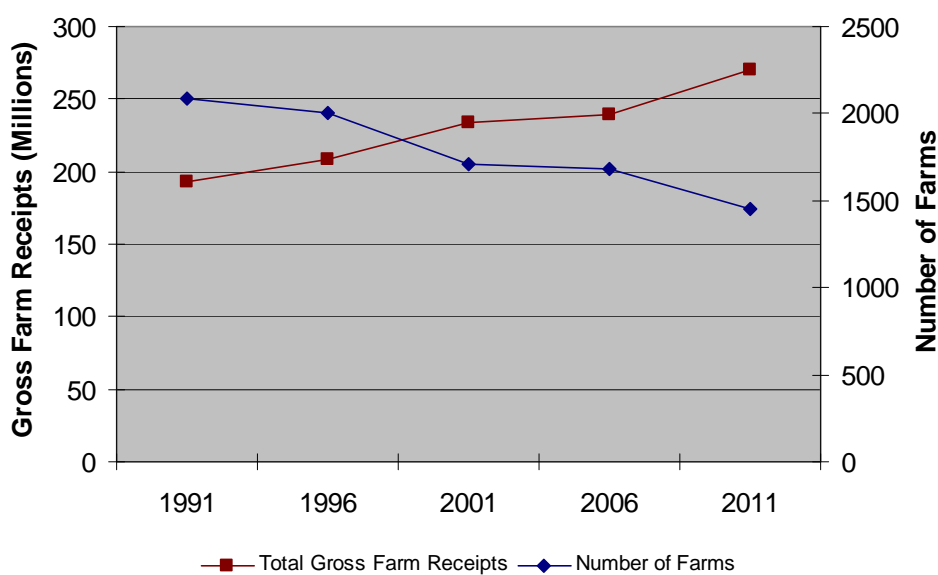
#### 3.1 Overview

Agricultural production in Durham generates significant returns and is the main economic activity in the rural areas of Durham. According to Statistics Canada data, the value of gross farm receipts (GFR) generated in Durham has risen constantly over time. Between 2006 and 2011, gross farm receipts grew by approximately \$34 million from \$240 million in 2006 to \$273 million in 2011.

In 2006, the \$240 million generated in GFR's was estimated to result in an annual economic impact in Durham's economy of \$713.7 million.<sup>1</sup> This impact grows every year as the amount of GFR's increases.

Despite the improved returns, agricultural production in Durham is facing challenges similar to those experienced by other regions in the GTA. As shown in Figure 1, the rise in the value of gross farm receipts is offset by an ongoing decline in the number of farms.

**Figure 1 – Gross Farm Receipts versus the Number of Farms for the Regional Municipality of Durham, 1991-2011**



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011

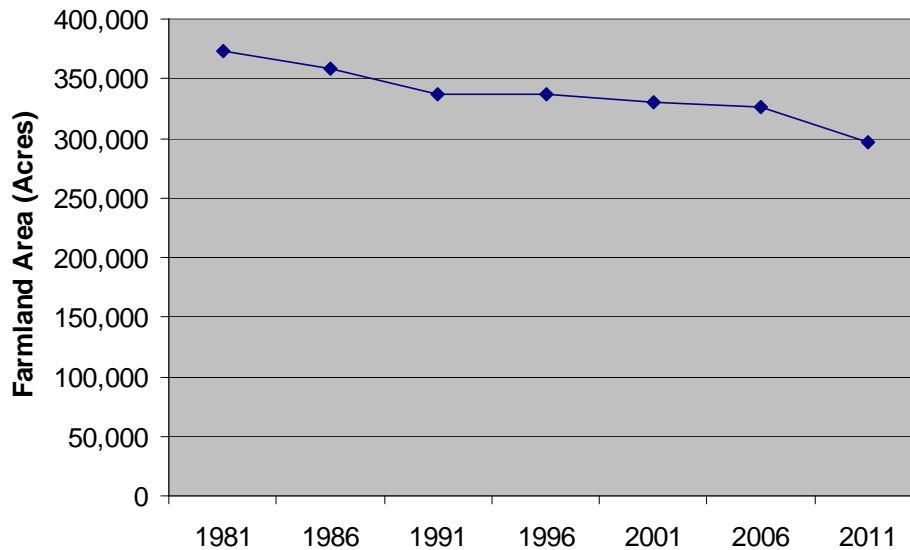
The decline in the number of farms is not necessarily an indicator of a declining sector. Typically, the decline in the number of farms is much higher than the

<sup>1</sup> Planscape, "Greater Toronto Area: Profile of Agriculture and Agri-Business Attributes in the GTA", March 2012, pg 87.

decline in area of land under production. This is usually due to the ongoing trend of farm amalgamations with individual operators farming larger and larger areas. However, Durham has also experienced a decline in farmland acreage between 1981 and 2011 (Figure 2). Total farm land area declined from 373,611 acres in 1981 to 297,702 acres in 2011.

While the decrease in farmland acreage is not surprising given the urban growth and expansion of Highway 407 that has occurred in Durham, there is a commitment expressed in the various strategic plans and the ROP, to maintain as much land as possible in production. To do this, appropriate support must be provided to farm operators to ensure that the remaining acreage continues to be farmed in a manner that enables viable farming.

**Figure 2 – Farmland Area in the Regional Municipality of Durham, 1981 - 2011**



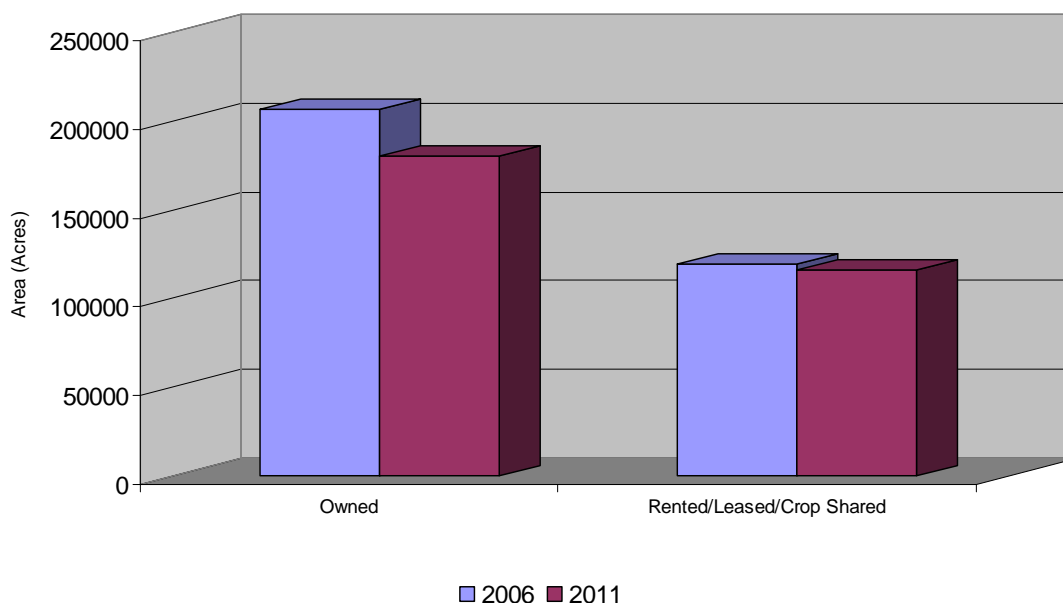
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011

A variable typically used to assess the stability of an agricultural area is the rate of rental versus owned land that is being farmed. A higher percentage of owned land is usually an indicator that there is a stable agricultural community that is invested in the land. Higher rental rates can be due to a tight land supply typically caused by competition for land; speculation pushing the price of land beyond production value; and a reluctance to make capital investments in farm infrastructure in areas where the future of agriculture is uncertain.

Historically, the rate of rented, leased and crop shared lands have been lower and less variable in Durham, than in the other regions of the GTA. The proportion of agricultural land that was rented in Durham was 37% between 1996 and 2006.

However, in 2011 the rental rate increased to 39% (Figure 3). While this remains lower than the rate in the other Regions in the GTA and not yet a cause for concern, it should continue to be monitored.

**Figure 3 – Tenure of Land, 2006-2011**



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture, 2006, 2011

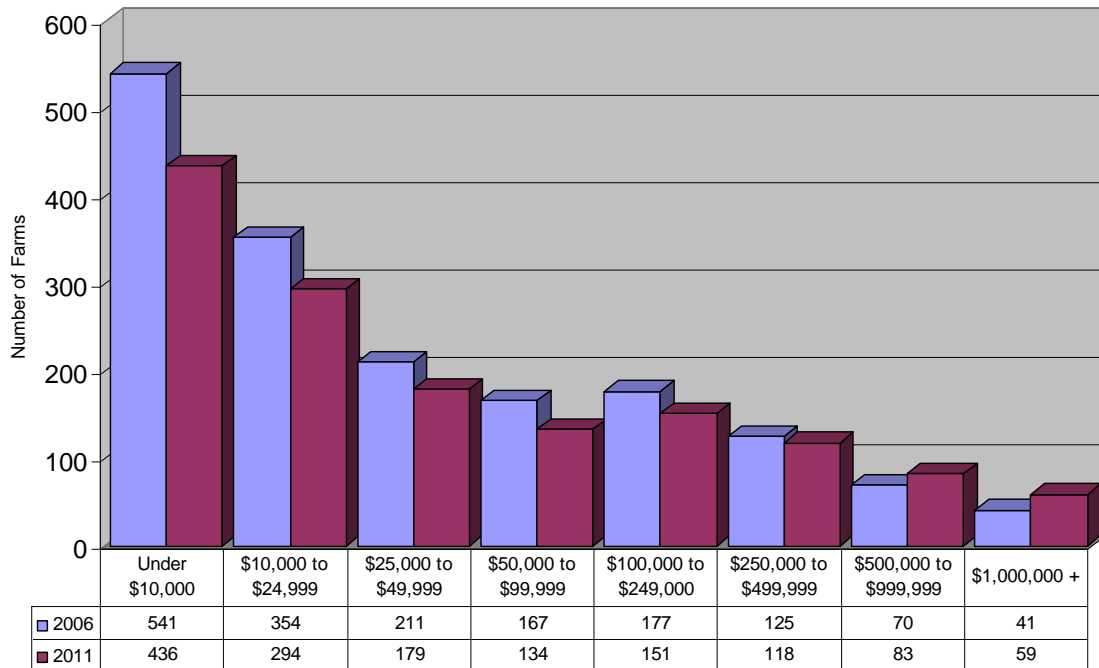
Another statistic used to assess the stability of the agriculture and agri-food industry is the classification of farm operations based on the value of annual gross farm receipts. Those operations generating less than \$25,000 per year (and perhaps to as high a \$50,000) are typically life style or hobby farms where agriculture is not the primary source of income. The number of farms in those categories is decreasing in Durham.

The number of farms in the categories generating from \$50,000 to \$500,000 in annual GFR's has also decreased over time (Figure 4). However, the number of farms generating in excess of \$500,000 increased between 2006 and 2011 (Figure 4). This is a good indication of a stable industry, as larger operations are generally run by operators working full time in the agriculture sector.

Despite the increase in large farms, the majority of operations are still family-owned and operated. According to Farm and Food Care Ontario, 98 per cent of Canadian farms are family-owned and operated, and are often handed down from generation to generation.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ontario Farm Animal Council, "The Real Dirt on Farming", 2010

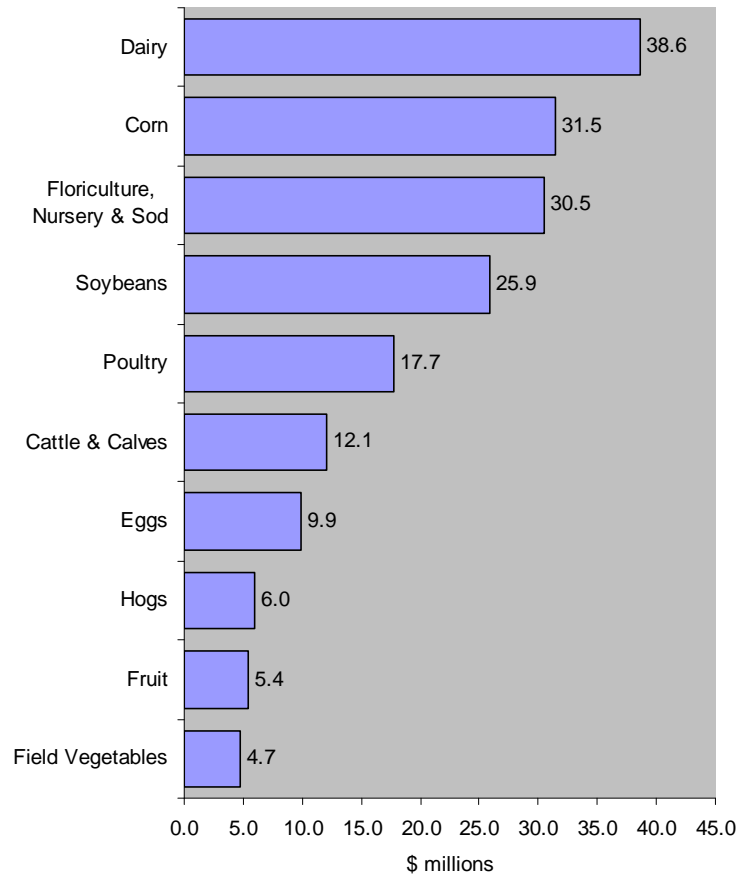
**Figure 4 – Farms Classified by Total Gross Farm Receipts, 2006-2011**



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture, 2006, 2011

The agricultural production profile in Durham continues to be diverse (Figure 5). Producers take advantage of good soils and climate, to produce a wide range of agricultural products. Based on farm cash receipts, dairy continues to dominate production, with corn as the second largest commodity grouping, nursery and sod is the third largest category, followed by soybeans and poultry. Fruit and vegetable production rounds out the list of the top ten commodities in Durham.

**Figure 5 – Share of Farm Cash Receipts for Main (Top Ten) Commodities, Durham 2010 (Total = \$217.9 Million)**



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture, 2006, 2011

This diverse production profile includes traditional commodities and specialty crops. In addition to being able to respond to the demand for different food products, the industry is well positioned to grow new crops for the generation of energy and development of bio-based products, including functional foods and nutraceuticals. The *Durham Region: Food Processing Action Plan* states that Durham’s multi-dimensional agriculture and agri-food industry has the potential to generate significant spin-off benefits associated with new technologies and projects. Appropriate actions will help support the industry as it explores new crops and markets.

### 3.2 **The Agriculture and Agri-Food Industry**

The agriculture and agri-food industry consists of the following components:

- inputs to agriculture;
- agricultural production;
- food processing and distribution;
- food service; and
- food retail.<sup>3</sup>

Each of these components is vital to sustaining a profitable value chain and are mutually interdependent. By growing these components, the industry will continue to thrive.

Durham is home to a many agri-food and agriculture-related businesses, including a number of food processing and packaging companies. Research completed in the area<sup>4</sup> has confirmed that Durham is a recognized centre for providing farm services to the area east of the GTA, including feed and seed suppliers, farm equipment dealers, grain handling and storage facilities, abattoir and equine service providers.

Durham has the potential to expand as a food and farming cluster, as indicated in the Region of Durham: Food Processing Action Plan.

### 3.3 **Benefits of a Healthy Agri-Food Sector**

The contribution of the agriculture and agri-food industry to the prosperity and quality of life in Durham is multi-faceted and significant.

#### **Economic Benefits**

As noted previously, the value of the gross farm receipts generated by agriculture in Durham has increased steadily over time. The contribution of agriculture to Durham's economy in 2006 was \$713.7 million<sup>5</sup>. This is an annual impact that grows as the value of gross farm receipts grows.

When the economic impact of agriculture and food processing is combined, the impact of the agriculture and agri-food industry on the overall economy rises exponentially. In a study completed in 2012, it was estimated that the annual economic impact of agriculture and food processing in the four Regions of the GTA, including Durham was \$35 billion in total output, \$16 billion in GDP and \$7 billion in labour income<sup>6</sup>. The food and farming cluster in the Golden Horseshoe is the second largest in North America with tremendous potential for growth.

<sup>3</sup> Planscape, Food and Farming, An Action Plan 2021, Background Report. Pg 10.1

<sup>4</sup> Planscape, Northumberland County Economics of Agriculture, October 2001, and Planscape, City of Kawartha Lakes and Peterborough Agricultural Economic Impact and Development Study, September 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Planscape, Durham Region Agriculture Profile, 2010

<sup>6</sup> Planscape, Food and Farming, An Action Plan 2021, Background Report. Pg 4.14.

Increased employment opportunities are another favourable result of a growing agriculture and agri-food industry. According to the *Region of Durham: Food Processing Action Plan*<sup>7</sup>, in 2010 there were 3,465 jobs in agriculture and food production, with an additional 940 jobs in farm and food product distribution. Over 1,400 Durham farm families derive income from their farm operation.

Attraction of more value-added and food processing businesses, and infrastructure to support new product development, will further enhance the contribution of agriculture to the region's economy and increase the sustainability of the agri-food industry. In order to attract and support further agri-food processing investment it is important to be "open for business" and have the land and necessary services readily available.

### **Environmental Benefits**

As an intrinsic part of the rural landscape, agricultural lands provide many positive environmental benefits. Agricultural lands preserve open spaces and provide natural corridors for the movement of wildlife, contributing to the biodiversity of an area. Retention of woodlots and windbreaks reduces soil loss from erosion and provides habitat for birds and animal species that are under stress due to habitat loss in urban areas. Farm fields provide habitat and a food source for birds and animals.

There is an ongoing debate about the environmental impact of agricultural activities on the natural environment. In response, farmers have focused on beneficial management practices (BMPs) and innovative technologies that reduce the impact of agriculture on the natural environment. These BMPs contribute to protection of surface and ground water quality, prevention of soil erosion and the introduction of on-farm alternative energy sources as well as production of green energy; all while producing products to feed and support Canadians.

### **Social Benefits**

The rural countryside and agriculture land uses add an important element to quality of life for all citizens. Agriculture preserves rural landscapes, allows the non-farm population opportunities to view and sometimes experience farming activities and provides fresh, safe and high quality food. Access to farms, farmers and local farm products provides an opportunity for non-farm residents to be educated about modern farm practices. Interaction with the agricultural community provides Durham's non-farm population with an effective, informal source of information about the complexities of modern agriculture.

### **Health Benefits**

The public is becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the links between a healthy community and a sustainable food system. Health organizations are also becoming increasingly supportive of partnerships with the agriculture sector and involved in policy development to promote a healthy and sustainable food

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<sup>7</sup> Locations Strategies & Millier Dickinson Blais Inc., Regional Municipality of Durham: Food Processing Action Plan, March 2011.



system. Durham is fortunate to have a vibrant agricultural sector as a base for these partnerships. The *Durham Region Food Charter* articulates the community's vision for a food-secure Durham which is "financially sound, environmentally responsible and socially just, contributing to the future well being of our region and its residents".

Proximity to a healthy agricultural community provides urban residents with access to fresh, high quality products from local farm markets.

Nutrition and health can become drivers of economic performance in the agriculture and agri-food industry. It is in Durham's best interest to support activities that are sustainable and have a positive impact on public health and the agriculture and agri-food industry. Consumers are more interested in food and nutrition than ever before. Functional foods (i.e. foods that are shown to have health benefits) are providing new opportunities for producers and food processing companies. Investment and support for the agriculture and agri-food industry has the advantage of generating economic activity and enhancing quality of life.

### **Education**

Education of both the farm and non-farm population will be critical for the sustainability of the agriculture sector. There is demand for increasing levels of skills in an industry that is becoming more technical in nature. To achieve this, Durham will strive to become a centre of advanced research and development as well as skills development, to meet the changing needs of the agriculture and agri-food industry. Durham College and UOIT will be the core of research and training excellence opportunities.

Volunteer-based organizations such as Durham Farm Connections and Durham Farm and Rural Family Resources, which offer educational programs and opportunities for both the farm and non-farm population, are valuable assets that are unique to Durham Region. Continued and ongoing support of these organizations by the Region and its municipalities is vital to the agriculture sector.

### **Agri-Tourism**

Agri-tourism includes a variety of facilities, events and activities available in Durham, such as agricultural festivals and fairs, farm tours, wineries, equestrian trails and on-farm markets. In addition, there are a number of farmers' markets that operate within Durham. With its proximity to a huge consumer population, Durham has the potential to be an agri-tourism destination. Agricultural tourism can have significant economic benefits for farmers and rural communities.

The growing number of farm markets, farmers' markets, and "pick your own" operations provide opportunities for the urban population to connect directly with producers to purchase local food. Agri-tourism and value-added processes are enabling producers to make the most of on-farm resources as well as providing an opportunity to expand their operations. The Durham Region Farm Fresh

Association, which celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2013, has more than 70 members and the brand is increasingly recognized by consumers.

Agricultural tourism can have significant benefits for farm communities in the agricultural-urban interface of Durham. Agri-tourism provides opportunities for diversification and economic incentives for growers, promotes development and helps educate the public about the important contributions of agriculture to Durham.

Typically the general population is now two or three generations removed from direct experience with agriculture, and the farm population is declining relative to the growing urban population. Direct interaction with the farm community can help address this disconnect.

Current trends in the tourist industry show increasing demand for experiential, hands-on, non-conventional tourism activities. This trend has extended into the agricultural sector because the appeal for agricultural and farm-based tourism attractions is also increasing. Combining the tourism industry with the uniqueness and diversity of local agriculture, offers a new set of opportunities for farmers to diversify their operations and their revenue sources, and add to tourism's product mix.

## 4.0 Vision and Guiding Principles for Agriculture in Durham Region

### 4.1 The Vision

To provide the required support for the agriculture and agri-food industry, a vision for the future viability and prosperity of the sector needs to be articulated. The vision will become the basis upon which decisions affecting the agriculture and agri-food industry are made.

The vision for agriculture in Durham Region is as follows:

**Provide a supportive environment for the agriculture and agri-food industry in Durham Region to succeed in a sustainable manner in the areas of economics, health, food safety, animal care, and environment.**

### 4.2 Guiding Principles

To achieve this vision, the following principles will assist to guide the Region's and broader community's support for the agriculture and the agri-food industry:

#### **Attract, Retain and Expand Agriculture and Agri-Food Businesses by:**

- Supporting sustainable and viable long-term economic success for farmers through innovation, growth and diversification;
- Developing effective working partnerships among key stakeholders;
- Increasing accessibility to and demand for locally-grown agricultural products;
- Promoting opportunities for agriculture to play a key role in the production of green energy; and
- Encouraging the agricultural industry to become a model focused on innovation and excellence.

#### **Promote Outreach and Education by:**

- Supporting the positive image of agriculture;
- Supporting skills development in agriculture;
- Increasing the understanding of agriculture by the growing non-farm population;
- Increasing awareness of the needs of the agricultural community; and
- Educating the non-farm community about the sustainable environmental practices employed by farmers to protect the quality of air, water and land.

#### **Maintain a Supportive Policy Environment that:**

- Considers the potential impacts of policies on agricultural viability;
- Ensures maximum use of available agricultural land; and
- Facilitates access to the services and infrastructure required for agriculture.

**Support an Agriculture Labour Force focused on:**

- Developing a highly skilled, innovative workforce; and
- Attracting more young people to a career in agriculture.

**4.3 Action Plan****Attracting, Retaining and Expanding Agriculture and Agri-Food Businesses****Goals:**

- To grow the agriculture base and expand the production, processing and marketing capacity and expertise thereby ensuring that Durham is able to capitalize on both local and global market opportunities in agri-food; and
- To support sustainable and viable long-term economic success for farmers through innovation, growth and diversification.

**Actions:**

1. Ensure infrastructure and services are in place to support food processing and value-added agriculture developments.
2. Attract and encourage investment in food processing and value-added agriculture. Actively target investment in complementary businesses/industries such as cold storage, meat processing, distribution, canning, alternative energy production, post-harvest handling facilities, and direct marketing outlets to improve viability and ensure sustainability.
3. Expand the business visitation program to ensure that issues and concerns of businesses are addressed in a timely manner. Develop strong relationships with existing businesses. Continue to collaborate with, and engage agriculture, agri-business and agri-food companies to identify opportunities for diversification or expansion.
4. Implement a business mentoring program/networking group to provide opportunities for new businesses to learn from existing experienced businesses.
5. Complete an agri-food asset mapping exercise to raise awareness of the current assets and help to define the unique strengths of Durham's agriculture and agri-food industry. Identify opportunities to increase profitability by capitalizing on strengths.
6. Identify opportunities, develop potential, and encourage participation in Research and Development (R&D) related to pharmaceutical, nutraceutical, bio-based products (e.g. bio-gas, bio-fuels), and other specialty or non-traditional products to help diversify operations and create opportunities for growth.

7. Work with the local food service sector and the public sector to build a strong network and infrastructure to support local food procurement.

**Lead:** Durham Region Economic Development

**Suggested Partners:** various Region of Durham Departments (i.e. Planning, Works, Finance), OMAF, Durham College, UOIT, GTA AAC

## **Promoting Outreach and Education**

### **Goals:**

- To create a well-informed and supportive non-farming population that is aware of the contributions of agriculture to the regional economy, the realities of farming, and the quality of food that is produced locally;
- To support the positive image of agriculture, and to increase the awareness and understanding of agriculture and agricultural practices by the non-farm population;
- To promote local farm products as well as educational and recreational activities offered on Durham farms; and
- To achieve a greater understanding of normal farm practices by the non-farming population and promote good relations between farmers and non-farmers.

### **Actions:**

8. Continue to support agriculture education initiatives for the non-farm population such as the Farm Connections Grade 3 and High School programs, and other agriculture education programs.
9. Develop a comprehensive communications plan to promote local farm products, entertainment and education opportunities on the farm; as well as food safety, environmental stewardship, new marketing initiatives and other ideas and Best Management Practices utilized by farmers.
10. Continue to work with Durham College, UOIT and other post-secondary institutions to develop courses, programs and research projects to meet the training needs of the agriculture and agri-food industry.
11. Continue to provide educational opportunities for the general public, teachers, Regional and area municipal staff and Council to raise awareness and improve understanding of Normal Farm Practices (e.g. DAAC tour, Farm Connections).

**Lead:** Durham Region Economic Development

**Suggested partners:** Durham Farm Fresh, Durham Farm Connections, Durham Farm and Rural Family Resources, Durham Workforce Authority, Durham School Boards, GTA AAC, Farm and Food Care

## **Maintaining a Supportive Policy Environment**

### **Goals:**

- To ensure that the viability and profitability of agricultural operations are considered when policies are developed and reviewed, and when making decisions that will have an impact on the agriculture industry;
- To keep farmers on Durham farms; and
- To ensure that agriculture is recognized as the highest and best use of prime agricultural land.

### **Actions:**

12. Continue to work with the various organizations and levels of government to ensure that the interests of agriculture continue to be considered when making policy decisions. Ensure that there is a strong and clear vision for agriculture in Durham that articulates the importance and economic impact of agriculture for Durham.
13. Monitor changes in the agricultural sector (e.g. track land use, tenure of land, number of building permits, net returns, gross farm receipts, return per acre) to assess overall viability so that potential issues can be identified and addressed in a proactive manner.
14. Continue to protect prime agricultural land through Regional Official Plan and area municipal official plans and zoning bylaws. Prevent fragmentation of land by restricting or prohibiting rural severance policies, ensuring that secondary uses on agricultural land are agriculture-related, and ensuring that Minimum Distance Separation requirements are applied accordingly.
15. Continue to permit secondary uses on farms, such as value-added and agri-tainment operations, and ensure compatibility with existing farm and non-farm uses.

**Lead:** Durham Region Planning and Economic Development

**Suggested Partners:** DAAC, AACC, OMAF, GTA AAC, Municipal Staff, Durham Soil and Crop, Durham Federation of Agriculture,

## Support an Agriculture Labour Force

### Goals:

- To develop a highly skilled and innovative workforce thereby improving viability and profitability of agriculture in Durham and encouraging succession of farms; and
- To attract more young people to a career in agriculture.

### Actions:

16. Enhance leadership capacity in the agricultural community by continuing to partner with Durham Farm Connections to offer the Durham Region Agriculture Leadership Program to Durham farmers with the intent of developing and enhancing leadership skills, thereby creating Agricultural Ambassadors that can represent Durham on a provincial, national and global scale.
17. Identify gaps in labour, skills and training requirements and work with organizations and educational institutions to establish and develop solutions. Support skills development through hosting skills development and information workshops.
18. Support the implementation of Best Management Practices such as Nutrient Management Plans, Environmental Farm Plans, source water protection measures, good forestry practices, and long-term lease arrangements to encourage sustainable farming practices.
19. Promote and support programs for entry-level farmers, such as apprenticeship programs, co-op placements for high school and post-secondary students, certification and educational courses, and succession planning.
20. Encourage school boards and post-secondary institutions to increase awareness of the agriculture sector so that students can realize the wide range of opportunities for employment and consider careers in agriculture.
21. Increase awareness of research and opportunities in business management, technology, diversification and value-added operations by various farms, farm organizations, educational institutions, to ensure that farm businesses stay current with technology and remain competitive.

**Lead:** Durham Region Economic Development

**Suggested Partners:** Durham Farm Connections, Durham Farm Fresh, Durham College, UOIT, Durham Workforce Authority, Durham School Boards, Durham Farm and Rural Family Resources, Municipal Economic Development Staff, various agricultural organizations,



## Glossary

An **agriculture and agri-food industry** is defined as a distinct group of productive or profit-making enterprises – farms and companies that grow, harvest, process and distribute food, beverages and bioproducts; as well as the supporting businesses that supply goods and services to the farms and processors. This is further broken down into sectors:

The **agriculture sector** refers to the farms that grow and harvest crops and livestock.

The **agri-food sector** refers to the companies that further process, value-add and distribute food, beverage and bioproducts.

Note: In many cases there is overlap between the agriculture and agri-food sectors as both processes can take place at the same operation.

**Agri-business** refers to the companies and enterprises that supply goods and services to the agriculture sector. (i.e. equipment dealers, feed and seed supplies, veterinarians, etc.)

A **cluster** is defined as a geographic region with a sufficient number of activities with similar or related needs and interests to generate external economies of scale and produce innovation.<sup>8</sup>

A **food and farming cluster** is comprised of enterprises and institutions involved in growing, harvesting, processing and distributing food, beverage and bioproducts derived from agriculture. The phrase is used to describe the combined activities and outputs of primary production (farmers), food processing, food service providers (including hotels, restaurants, and institutions), food wholesalers/distributors and goods retailers/merchandisers and the input suppliers and service providers to the cluster. Essential supporting activities that are a vital part of the cluster are those that provide services, impart skills and training, undertake research and innovation and enable commercialization.<sup>9</sup>

**Agriculture-related uses** refers to those farm related commercial and farm related industries that are small in scale, directly related to the farm operation and are required in close proximity to the farm operation.<sup>10</sup>

**Secondary uses** refers to uses secondary to the principal use of the property, including but not limited to, home occupations, home industries, and uses that produce value-added agricultural products from the farm operation on the property.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Planscape, Food & Farming: An Action Plan 2021, January 2012

<sup>9</sup> Planscape, Food & Farming: An Action Plan 2021, January 2012

<sup>10</sup> Durham Regional Official Plan, Consolidation, June 2008

<sup>11</sup> Durham Regional Official Plan, Consolidation, June 2008