

SOWING SUPPORT: THE IMPORTANCE OF LAND USE POLICY IN PLANNING FOR SMALL-SCALE
AGRICULTURE IN ONTARIO

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture is changing in Canada. The average size of farms is increasing while the overall number of farms nationwide continues to fall, with the trends towards farm consolidation and industrialization putting smaller farms at risk of disappearing forever. Nevertheless, Ontario's small-scale farms continue to be an important facet of rural communities, with many positive social, economic, and environmental impacts. Planning in general, and land use policy specifically, has a major role to play in protecting farmland and ensuring long-term viability. This paper seeks to understand the effects of land use policies on the viability of small-scale farms in Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe through the study of three upper-tier municipalities and their constituent lower-tier municipalities. By examining the challenges faced by farmers, as well as how these are addressed, we can begin to understand where the blindspots are and what rural municipalities can do to better support small-scale agriculture.

Key Words

Agriculture, small-scale, Ontario, land use policy, farmland, rural planning

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Author’s Declaration for Electronic Submission of a MRP	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
LIST OF APPENDICES	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
Canada’s Changing Agricultural Landscape	1
Objective and Research Questions	3
Defining “Small”	4
Why Protect Agriculture and Farmland?	5
Planning For Farmland Preservation	7
LITERATURE REVIEW	10
RESEARCH METHODS	11
Case Study Selection Process	12
Niagara Region	13
Waterloo Region	13
Simcoe County	14
Policy Scan	15
PROBLEM INVESTIGATION AND ANALYSIS	16
Setting the Stage	16
Policy Analysis	18
1. OP Policy Language	19
1.1 A Vision for Agriculture	19
1.2 Objectives Related to Agriculture	20
1.3 Policy Recommendations	23
2. Land Use Designations and Permitted Uses	23
2.1 Distinction Between Agricultural and Rural Designations	24
2.2 Differences between Zoning By-laws and OP Policies	26
2.3 Policy Recommendations	29
3. Minimum Farm Size and Rural Lot Severance	30
3.1 Policy Recommendations	34

4. Minimum Distance Separation Formulae	34
5. Promotion of On-Farm Diversification and Value-Added Activities	37
5.1 Determining Compatibility based on Scale and Intensity of Use	41
5.2 Opportunities for Agri-Tourism	44
5.3 Policy Recommendations	45
6. Other Enabling Strategies Farmland Preservation and Farm Viability	45
6.1 Advancing the Interests of Small-Scale Agriculture through Advisory Committees	46
6.2 Favourable Tax Policies for Agriculture and On-Farm Diversification	46
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION	49
SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	51
REFERENCES	52

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: A basic agricultural profile of the three selected regions.

Table 2: Lower-tier municipalities chosen for further study.

Table 3: Degree of differentiation in permitted uses as allowed by the comprehensive zoning by-law in five lower-tier municipalities.

Table 4: Town of New Tecumseth and its objectives for prime agricultural areas specifically, as well as for all non-rural areas more broadly.

Table 5: Examples of flexible policy among the municipalities surveyed.

Table 6: MDS policies at the upper-tier, which filter down to the local level and into zoning by-laws.

Table 7: Examples of objectives and policies addressing and enabling on-farm innovation through a variety of permitted uses.

Table 8: Criteria provided by the PPS for each of the three broad categories of permitted uses on agricultural land.

Table 9: Tools available to municipalities to implement the PPS's permitted uses policies.

Table 10: Upper-tier municipalities that have amended the farm property tax following the passage of O.Reg 361/18.

Table 11: Summary of policy recommendations.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 : A map showing the concentration of soils suitable for agriculture within the southern regions of Ontario.

Figure 2: Hierarchy of planning policy documents in Ontario from the provincial to the local level.

Figure 3: What the average 19th century settler farm would have looked like (Source: Archives of Ontario [Marsden Kemp Fonds C-120-1-0-25-6]).

Figure 4: Map of the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) and the four land use plans that apply.

Figure 5: Increases in values across regions of Ontario (%), as well as value \$ per acre of farmland in 2019.

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Wainfleet's zoning by-law, listing permitted uses in all four agricultural zones (A1-4).

Appendix 2. Criteria for agricultural activities in West Lincoln as stated in the zoning by-law.

Appendix 3. Criteria for Permitted Uses from OMAFRA's *Guidelines*.

Appendix 4. Oro-Medonte's OP policy C1.3.1 on the creation of new lots of agricultural purposes.

Appendix 5. Niagara Region's AAC's Terms of Reference.

INTRODUCTION

Canada's Changing Agricultural Landscape

Agriculture is changing in Canada. Since its peak in 1941, the number of agricultural operations nationwide has seen sustained decreases while the size of the average farm has continued to grow. Between 1956 and 2016, the average farm more than doubled from 122 to 323 hectares (or from about 300 to 800 acres), while the total number of farms dropped by 66%, with each five-year census thereafter reporting sustained decreases (Statistics Canada, 2016). Driven largely by competition and technological advancement, today's farm is larger, more capital intensive, and more specialized than its mid-century predecessor. These trends towards consolidation and industrialization pose a challenge to many small-scale farm operators, which are often unable or choose not to compete with larger farms.

At the same time as the total number of farms declines, the average farmer is getting older. In 1991, the average age was 47.5 years, but has since risen to 55 years, and there are currently a larger number of farmers over the age of 70 than under the age of 35¹. The high number of aging farmers suggests that change is likely imminent in the industry. Since 91.6% of all farmers do not have a succession plan in place to guide the transition in ownership once the operator retires (Statistics Canada, 2016), there are questions regarding what the transition between generations will look like. Land that does not have a successor usually ends up being sold for full market value, and while a reasonable assumption would be that younger farmers would purchase this land for their own operations, rising land prices, driven by factors such as low interest rates and development and investment interests in farmland (Bunce, 1985; Hansen et al., 2012; Rotz, Fraser, & Martin, 2019) pose major challenges to entrants. The more difficult it is for prospective farmers it is to access land, the more likely that land will be purchased by large agricultural operations consolidating farmland in rural areas, or investors and developers if the land is in proximity to an urban centre or other settlement area experiencing growth. Ultimately, this puts the long-term viability of small-scale farming at risk by perpetuating the trends within the agricultural industry.

All of this is exacerbated by the pressure to accommodate a growing population on a finite land base. Despite Canada's geographic reach, land suitable for agriculture accounts for approximately 7% of the total land base. In Ontario, for instance, the highest concentration of good farmland lies below the

¹ although between 2011 and 2016, the number of farmers under 35 increased by 3% - the first increase observed since 1991.

Canadian Shield at the southernmost end of the province, coinciding with the area experiencing the greatest development pressure (Walton, 2003). Provincial population is projected to rise from 14.6 million in 2019 to 19.8 million in 2046, with the majority of this growth occurring in the Southern Ontario region - particularly the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2020).

Ontario has the largest number of farms in Canada and is one of the nation's largest food producers (Rotz, Fraser & Martin, 2019). Ontario's agricultural industry is the most intensive and diversified in Canada (Caldwell et al., 2011), with agriculture comprising the most significant land use in the southern half of the province, despite the growth and urbanization. Of the 9.2 million acres that make up the Central Ontario Zone (the area into which the Greater Golden Horseshoe falls), 44.2% was classified as farmland in 2001, and outside the four regions of the GTA, this number rose to just over 55% (Walton, 2003). Nevertheless, challenges to the integrity of this land base are mounting, resulting in the net loss of farmland across the province. Between 2011 and 2016, for instance, the province lost 319,773 acres of farmland, amounting to an average of 175 acres per day (Statistics Canada, 2016; Ontario Farmland Trust, n.d.). Despite the continued loss of agricultural land, however, agriculture continues to be an important facet of rural communities. In particular, small-scale agriculture continues to be prevalent, despite the decrease in farm operators and trend towards the consolidation of operations. For instance, 43% of Ontario's 49,600 farms surveyed by the most recent *Census of Agriculture* were under 130 acres, with nearly a third of them being under 70 acres (Statistics Canada, 2016). This number was even greater in areas like Niagara Region (79% under 130 acres) and Wellington County (57% under 130 acres). These farms produce a wide variety of primary and value-added agricultural products, many of which are meant for local markets. Beyond their productive capacity, however, small-scale farms contribute significantly to environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, and the provision of ecosystem services (Swinton et al., 2007; Ricciardi, 2018), regional food security (Donald, 2009), and sustainable rural economic development (Caldwell, 2006).

Despite this evidence, the trend towards larger and fewer farms (and an assumption that this trend will continue), coupled with the prioritization of urban (as opposed to rural) planning has left a knowledge gap in planning for healthy, vibrant agricultural communities that are able to retain a culture of small-scale farms. Supporting this, a 2012 study on on-farm diversification found that changing global market conditions and urbanization threaten the profitability of small-scale family farm operations in Central Ontario (Tew & Barbieri, 2012). This is especially true for small-scale farms in the catchment areas of urban and urbanizing areas (though not exclusively), which are highly vulnerable to development and other pressures despite their social, economic, and environmental importance. The

divergence between the smallest and largest sizes of farms, as well as the documented benefits of the former, highlights the need for awareness of the differences between varying scales of agricultural operations (Maynard & Nault, 2005).

To a certain extent, some loss of farmland may be expected and inevitable, particularly in the areas experiencing a significant influx of residents and thus the greatest growth pressure. However, it is reasonable that efforts are made to accommodate growth without severely compromising the quantity and quality of agricultural land. At a minimum, these efforts should prevent the “unnecessary and premature conversion” of farmland to non-farm uses (Caldwell, Hilts, & Wilton, 2017). In addition to preserving a land base, there are measures complementary to farmland preservation that can ensure the social and economic well-being of rural communities by contributing positively to farm viability. This paper will focus on local planning, specifically land use policy, and how it can serve as either a barrier or enabling support to small-scale agriculture in Ontario. Although there are a number of factors that contribute to challenges to farm viability, and while land use policy is one tool that must be considered in conjunction with others, becoming and remaining a small-scale farmer is particularly challenging without supportive land use policies at the local or regional level.

Objective and Research Questions

The objective of this research is to explore the effects of planning policies on the long-term viability of small-scale farms in Simcoe County, Niagara Region, and Waterloo Region. These three upper-tier municipalities are all in Ontario’s Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) and were selected due to the similar growth pressures experienced within and the rate of biodiversity loss through the conversion of green space and farmland, heightening the need for supportive policies for agriculture. In order to meet the primary objective, this research addresses the following questions:

- What are the land use policy challenges currently facing small-scale farmers in Ontario with respect to the establishment and operation of their farms?
- What are the best practices for supporting small-scale agriculture in rural communities through land use policy and municipal planning?

By better understanding the challenges faced by farmers, as well as how these are addressed - or not - we can begin to understand where the blindspots are and what rural municipalities can do to

better support small-scale agriculture, which remains an important facet of Ontario's rural communities. The research is organized into six chapters. The first introduces the research and its relevance, as well as establishes a common understanding of what constitutes a small-scale farm. The second chapter examines some of the contemporary issues and trends in agriculture through a literature review, while the third states the research methods used and provides an overview of the case study selection process. The findings of the policy review are presented in the fourth chapter, which addresses the five key land use planning policy areas, with an additional category for actions a municipality can take to better support agriculture. Recommendations for municipal planners are woven throughout the chapter; these can also be found in Chapter 5, which organizes all recommendations into a summary table. Finally, the sixth chapter concludes the research, outlining areas for further study.

Defining "Small"

It is important to define what constitutes a small-scale farm in order to appreciate its contribution to agriculture more broadly and to understand its unique characteristics. Two metrics most often used to differentiate small- from large-scale agriculture are 1) gross farm income (Maynard & Nault, 2005) and 2) farm size. However, differing metrics and thresholds across studies suggest that there is no consistent definition of a small-scale farm. For instance, a farm with small acreage may be high grossing if it specializes in a high-value crop or crops, and a larger farm may have lower on-farm income if it does not grow as intensively. Measures also vary widely from one country to the next, reflecting different contexts in which agriculture happens (in certain countries, small-scale agriculture is nearly synonymous with subsistence farming). For instance, a 2018 study by researchers at the University of British Columbia looking at global food production adopted a definition of 2 hectares (or approximately 5 acres) or smaller as the threshold for small (Ricciardi et al., 2018). This standard would not necessarily be appropriate in the Canadian context, however, as it would exclude over 94% of all farms in the country. Furthermore, farms with larger acreage may still be "small-scale" depending on a range of factors including the amount of land under cultivation, the amount of capital and labour involved, and the profile of crops and agricultural produced on the farm. For the purposes of this paper, however, spatial scale is used as the preferred criteria for measurement, and a threshold size of 130 acres (or 52.6 hectares) is adopted².

² Although the threshold selected could have been lower, 130 acres was chosen as it encompasses three data groups in the *Census of Agriculture* (<10 acres, 10-69 acres, and 70-129 acres).

It is important to note that small-scale operations are not always *family* farms (Martz & Brueckner, 2003), despite the connection that is sometimes made between small-scale agriculture and family ownership (Ricciardi et al., 2018). Small-scale farms may also be owned and operated by farming co-operatives, young and single farmers, and thus do not necessarily conform to the notion of the traditional “family farm” but yet embody similar principles of community-mindedness and environmental stewardship (conversely, larger operations also participate in stewardship activities and, if under family ownership, can still be understood as family farms if they embody these principles). For this reason, this paper purposefully utilizes the word *farm operator*, using it interchangeably with the term *farmer*, to refer to those individuals who make management decisions on the farm, regardless of whether they are owners or tenants.

Ultimately, while it is important to establish a common understanding of what a small-scale farm may be, a strict adherence to a single definition of ‘small-scale’ may not be entirely appropriate. What is necessary, however, is the recognition that municipal policies with respect to agriculture may have unequal impacts depending on farm size, and that there must be a tailored approach to ensure all sizes of farms are considered in the planning process.

Why Protect Agriculture and Farmland?

Agriculture is more than just the land on which it is practiced, and thus supports for agriculture must consider more than the preservation of farmland. Various rationales underpinned by different ideological arguments have been put forth to support the development of farmland preservation policies (Bunce, 1998; Wilton, 2017), and while the discussion of these is outside the scope of this work, it is important to note that policies targeting the preservation of agricultural land provide a wide array of measurable and documented social, economic, and environmental benefits. Often, ensuring the continuity of these benefits is said to be in the public interest, and policy targeting agriculture is based on the premise that it is in the public interest to protect farmland, farmers, and the farm economy (Caldwell, Hilts, & Wilton, 2017). The five main rationales for implementing policies supportive of agriculture are (Caldwell, Hilts & Wilton, 2017):

- 1) **Food production.** Despite the availability of imports, domestic agricultural production is important, and consequently a land base on which to produce food.
- 2) **Food security.** Domestic production can mitigate the effects of supply shocks or shortages, real or perceived.

- 3) ***Economic contributions.*** Not only does agriculture contribute to the national economy, but it is an important aspect of many rural communities.
- 4) ***Stewardship and amenity of the countryside.*** Farmland can provide important ecosystem services like wildlife habitat and carbon sequestration, and as the need for adaptation to climate change increases, the need for the provision of these services grows. Not only is Ontario's farmland closely connected to its natural heritage, it is an important aspect of cultural heritage as well.
- 5) ***A resource for future generations.*** All the aforementioned benefits of agriculture, if protected, will be benefits that future generations will get to enjoy as we do.

Despite these known benefits, agriculture faces a number of challenges, stemming from a range of sources both micro and macro in scale. These challenges include rising land values and increases in land speculation stemming from rapid urbanization and an inelastic supply of land, global financial forces, economic considerations like commodity prices and input costs (with low commodity prices requiring scaling up and achieving economies of scale in production in order to remain viable), and regulations/taxation from all levels of government. Uncertainty caused by climate change exacerbates the problem.

One of the primary challenges associated with agriculture stems from the fact that the land base required for agriculture is a finite resource. This also partly explains why policies supporting agriculture in Canada have prioritized the preservation of land. Despite the perception that Canada's land base is large enough to accommodate agricultural production with few constraints, the proportion of land that is suitable for agriculture is approximately 7%, mainly due to soil quality, climate, and terrain (Walton, 2003). Furthermore, according to the Canada Land Inventory - the biophysical underpinning of farmland protection efforts (Smith, 2017) - only 5% of the country's land base is free from severe constraints to production, and approximately 0.5% is considered prime agricultural land with no significant limitations for agriculture. Of this small fraction of Canada's 10 million km², a large proportion is found in southwestern Ontario and BC's Okanagan Valley. Ontario, for instance, Ontario contains 52% of Canada's Class 1 land (although 6.8% of the total land area of Ontario is suitable for farming, with even less than that actually accessible to agriculture). Illustrative of the concentration of prime agricultural land, the Greater Golden Horseshoe comprises only 3.5% of Ontario but has 42% of Ontario's Class 1 land (Turvey, 2020). It is also under the most intense development pressure from urbanization and competing land uses.

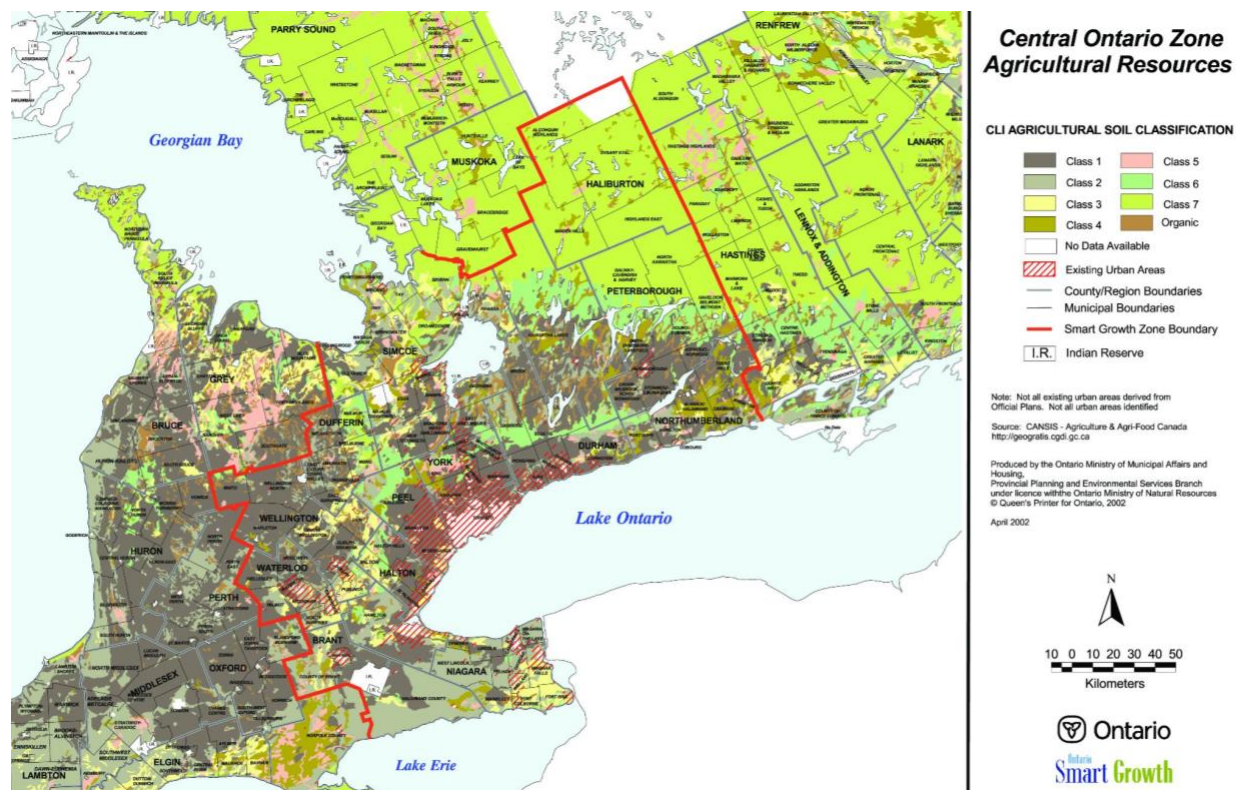


Figure 1: A map showing the concentration of soils suitable for agriculture within the southern regions of Ontario (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2015).

Since agricultural land constitutes such a small fraction of the country's total land base, and since areas of large amounts of prime agricultural lands are under threat of development, farmland preservation becomes increasingly salient. It is crucial for municipalities to understand that the preservation of farmland alone will not ensure a viable agricultural sector, and successful planning efforts must go beyond land use policy. That said, ensuring a stable, contiguous land base for agriculture while limiting or restricting conflicting development and incompatible uses is the most important prerequisite for enabling farm businesses to survive and thrive into the future (Daniels, 2020).

Planning For Farmland Preservation

Agriculture has not traditionally been considered part of the planning portfolio in Canada. This is despite its inherent nature as a land-based activity relying on the availability of healthy lands (as cited in Caldwell, Zink, Epp & Geschiere, 2020). One of the reasons for this is the disconnect between agricultural production and the supply of land, stemming from the notion, commonly held prior to the

1970s, that land for food production was limitless and technological advancement would preclude any threats to agriculture (Bunce, 1998). However, a growing awareness of the need to preserve farmland in the 1960s, supported by a small but steadily growing body of evidence of soil degradation and urban sprawl sparked an interest in conserving productive farmland in North America (Wilton, 2017). Farmland preservation and other agricultural issues became important policy considerations in the 1970s, and by the end of the decade, many state, provincial, and local jurisdictions had adopted some form of farmland preservation policy (Bunce, 1998).

In Ontario, legislation passed at the provincial level either mandated or enabled policies for farmland preservation at the local level, serving as a directive to lower levels of government. Although agriculture is still classified as a split federal and provincial responsibility under Canada's *Constitution Act*, the passage of provincial legislation like the *Planning Act*, the *Provincial Policy Statement*, and *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* delegated some of the power away from those levels of government, conferring them on municipalities and thus allowing local governments to make decisions on important agricultural issues, although with varying levels of autonomy (Caldwell, Zink, Epp & Geschiere, 2020). A major achievement with respect to agriculture was Ontario's *Greenbelt Protection Act*, passed in 2004, which addressed issues of farmland preservation directly by establishing permanently protecting both farmed and forested lands across the entirety of the Golden Horseshoe region (while this helped with the protection of farm and natural lands, this move arguably transferred some decision-making power away from individual municipalities and back to the province). Presently, the land use planning framework in Ontario remains top-down, although municipalities do have autonomy over decisions, with provincial policy directives being incorporated into municipal Official Plans (OPs) (which must be consistent with policies outlined at the provincial level). OPs are intended to guide long-term growth and development in a municipality. Comprehensive zoning by-laws ground the objectives and policies outlined in the OP, allowing municipalities to control the spatial distribution of uses in the municipality.

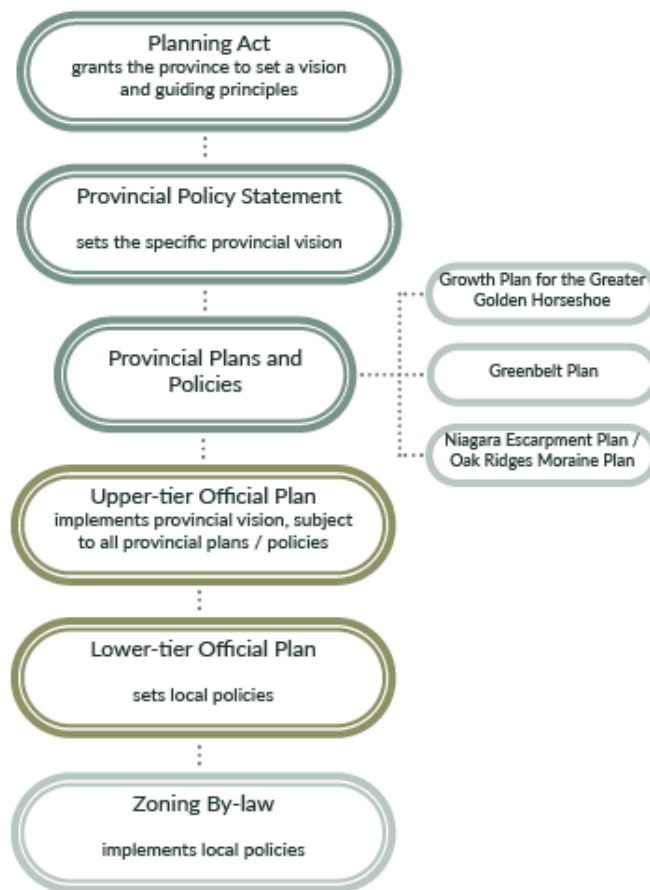


Figure 2: Hierarchy of planning policy documents in Ontario from the provincial to the local level.

It should be noted that although land-use policy is an important tool that assists with farmland preservation, it must exist in tandem with other policies and measures that encourage farming activity. The Ontario Greenbelt Task Force, during the development of the legislation that would lead to the *Greenbelt Protection Act*, placed emphasis on matter: although land-use planning was important, “[it] alone is insufficient to ensure that agricultural lands within the greenbelt will be farmed, and that [other] viability issues must be examined” (Province of Ontario, 2004). That said, without a stable land base for the long-term, other aspects of farm viability do not matter, and there is a critical role for planning in agriculture. Decisions made at the municipal level impact farmland directly, as they may decrease the land available for farming while allowing urban expansion and non-farm activities to replace working farms. Furthermore, agriculture is dependent not only on the availability of land, but on the availability of quality farmland with characteristics suitable for agriculture in appropriate quantities.

In this context, policies that affect the distribution and size of lots help shape what the agricultural landscape looks like and how it operates.

All planning policies ultimately affect land in real terms, since planning regulates and organizes the activities that take place on the land. Therefore, agriculture must be a central tenet of rural planning, and land-based planning policies must protect and ensure that a land base is secured for agricultural production for the long-term.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Farmland preservation has remained an issue in Canada for at least 50 years; for instance, in the second half of the 20th century, University of Waterloo geography scholar Ralph Krueger wrote extensively about the threat posed by urban development to tender fruit lands in Niagara's Fruit Belt (Krueger, 1978). The first major step at the provincial level to address the need for agricultural planning policy were the Foodland Guidelines, published in 1978. The policy framework has evolved to become more sophisticated over time, including through the adoption of Provincial Policy Statements (PPS), a successor of the Foodland Guidelines, and the *Greenbelt Protection Act* (2003). Today, although the importance of Ontario's agricultural sector is generally recognized, it is only just beginning to emerge as a major focus of land use planning in Ontario (Bunce, 1998; Caldwell, Hilts & Wilton, 2017). There are many forces, both internal and external, that continue to transform the agricultural industry in Ontario, and although the effects are felt by all farmers, smaller-scale farms face unique challenges in remaining economically viable. Globalization and changing markets, as well as ongoing urbanization, have put additional pressure on small-scale farm operators, most of whom cannot compete in a global market with low commodity prices, and it is against this backdrop that the agricultural sector is evolving. Having already examined some of the challenges experienced by small-scale agriculture, this literature review seeks to explore some of the major developments and trends in the industry. The literature focuses on agriculture in Canada, and primarily Ontario, providing a comprehensive overview of the current state of agriculture.

By 2011, less than one of five (18.9%) people in Canada lived in a rural area, and in Ontario, this number was even lower (Statistics Canada, 2016). Although the percentage of the population employed in agriculture was a fraction of this figure, it was (and is) an important contributor to the national economy. In 2016, the agriculture and agri-food system in Canada employed approximately 2.3 million people, representing 12.5% of total employment in 2016 and accounting for 6.7% of the total GDP..

Ontario was a major contributor to this, having the highest percentage of the nation's farmers at 26% (Turvey, 2020). So while it is clear that agriculture is still an important economic and social pillar in the province, the realities of farming are not what they were even 50 years ago.

The rate of change within the agricultural industry continues to accelerate, and the state of modern farming (particularly with respect to small-scale agriculture) today can be characterized by the following trends, gleaned from the literature and synthesized: 1) changing demographics; 2) changes in land tenure, with a shift from land ownership to land rental and leasing; and 3) a shift from resource-based to diverse, creative economies.

RESEARCH METHODS

The primary goal of this paper was to explore how land use policy affects small-scale agriculture in three regions of Ontario's GGH, thereby drawing attention to the importance of supportive planning policies for this type of agriculture. To reach this goal, this paper relied on two primary methods: secondary research review and case study analysis. The first step of the process involved a scan of the literature to identify the current and future challenges and opportunities with respect to agriculture in Canada and Ontario in general, with the ultimate objective of building an understanding of the current state of small-scale agriculture. Part of this review included examining the history of agriculture in Canada between the beginning of the 19th century and the end of the 20th century in order to contextualize the current state of farming. The literature reviewed during this step was sourced from online journals accessed through Ryerson University's library database, with the majority of texts and articles derived from journals dedicated to rural studies. Additional literature published by organizations and ministries doing work related to agriculture, including the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association, and the Neptis Foundation, was accessed, given the prevalence of current literature on the subject. Canada's 2016 *Census of Agriculture* provided most of the quantitative data referenced in this paper.

The second step involved a review of land use policy in three Ontario upper-tier municipalities in order to ground the secondary research. The three upper-tier OPs were chosen as a point of entry, and a comprehensive scan of all land use planning policies relating to agriculture was undertaken. However, given the fact that not all opportunities are captured in regional policy, and lower-tier OPs set policy at the local level which is then translated into zoning by-laws, it was necessary to examine overarching policies at the local level. Although this is a step removed from *local* policy, policy at higher levels of

government informs local policy, so this research meant to understand the enabling framework for policies at the lower level. However, given that not all opportunities are captured in the upper-tier municipality's OP, a closer examination of lower-tier OPs and comprehensive zoning by-laws was necessary. While primary research could have been undertaken, there are two reasons this did not occur. Firstly, there is quite a bit of literature exploring the effects of specific land use policies on agriculture; for instance, policies relating to lot creation or on-farm diversification. However, no recent publications³ were found that examined the effect of land use policy in a more holistic manner, synthesizing and drawing conclusions across multiple policy areas. Furthermore, given the four to eight-month time frame associated with the completion of this paper, a decision to prioritize an in-depth review of secondary sources was made. Below is a detailed breakdown of the case study selection and policy analysis process.

Case Study Selection Process

Due to time constraints, it was important to define the precise geographic scope of this paper. The initial focus was on upper-tier municipalities in southwestern Ontario. The province of Ontario was selected based on its significant contribution to agriculture in Canada - in 2015, the province accounted for over a quarter of the nation's farms and one-fifth of national gross farm receipts were generated by Ontario agricultural operations (Statistics Canada, 2017). The southern regions of the province were chosen due to their high prevalence of land suitable for farming, as well as a "diverse and active" agricultural sector (Caldwell, Hilts & Wilton, 2017). The preference was for municipalities not directly in the urban shadow of the City of Toronto, but those that were experiencing growth pressures nonetheless. Municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) were excluded due to the degree to which they have already urbanized; although agriculture is present, it is no longer a significant land use or contributor to the municipality's economy. One of the main criteria for selection was that, despite growth pressures, agriculture was to remain one of the major social, economic, and cultural fixtures in the municipality.

The three municipalities ultimately selected were Simcoe County, Waterloo Region, and Niagara Region. These municipalities are all part of the Greater Golden Horseshoe and were ultimately chosen

³ 'Recent' defined here as within the last decade, during which there were a number of significant advancements in land use planning at the provincial level (e.g. the 2014 *Provincial Policy Statement*), which have filtered down to the regional and local levels, albeit unevenly.

due to the diversity of agricultural activity and presence of continued growth stemming from adjacency to the GTA.

Niagara Region

Niagara Region is an upper-tier municipality located in southern Ontario, comprised of the following lower-tier municipalities: Fort Erie, Grimsby, Lincoln Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Pelham, Port Colborne, St. Catharines, Thorold, Wainfleet, Welland, and West Lincoln. Agriculture continues to be an important contributor to the regional economy; in 2016, gross farm receipts accounted for \$836.1 million (an increase of 15.5% from 2011), representing 42.8% of the gross farm receipts in the Golden Horseshoe region⁴. The largest number of farms in Niagara Region are fruit and tree nut farms, though greenhouse operations and nursery and floriculture production account for the largest proportion of gross farm receipts and GDP impact (Niagara Region, 2016). Notably, the region is home to one of Ontario's specialty crop areas - the Niagara Peninsula Tender Fruit and Grape Area. Of the three regions surveyed, Niagara Region had the highest percentage of farms under 130 acres at 79%, with over half of farms being under 70 acres, explained partly by the prevalence of intensive operations including greenhouses and wineries.

Waterloo Region

Waterloo Region is an upper-tier municipality located in southern Ontario, consisting of the following lower-tier municipalities: Kitchener, Cambridge, Waterloo, Woolwich, Wilmot, Wellesley, and North Dumfries. It is located in southwest Ontario, and is just outside the Greenbelt Plan area. In 2016, gross farm receipts in the region were \$563.6 million, a 19% increase from 2011. Of the three regions surveyed, Waterloo Region saw a 1% decrease in the number of farms between 2011 and 2016 (amounting to the loss of just 15 farms), which is lower than the decreases at both the provincial level (5% of farms) and the national level (6% of farms). The average size of farms in Waterloo Region was 156 acres, which is larger than the average size of 119 acres in Niagara Region but considerably smaller compared to the average of 249 acres in Ontario, with the smallest farms located in Kitchener and Waterloo. 66% of all farms in the region were smaller than 130 acres, most of which were located in Woolwich or Wellesley Townships. Notably, the average farm size fell between 2011 and 2016, which contrasts with the two other regions which saw increases in the average farm size in acres.

⁴ Note: Not the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Golden Horseshoe consists of the municipalities of Niagara Region, City of Hamilton, Halton Region, Peel Region, Durham Region, and York Region.

Simcoe County

Simcoe County is an upper-tier municipality located in central southern Ontario, comprised of sixteen lower-tier municipalities. Although the region has a lower concentration of prime agricultural land than Niagara and Waterloo Regions (only a portion of the southern part of the region is within the area covered by the Greenbelt Plan), it is nevertheless an important agricultural area. The soil found in the Holland Marsh - one of Ontario's specialty crop areas) is very fertile, and able to support a wide variety of crops⁵. In 2016, gross farm receipts in Simcoe County were \$447,7 million, a substantial increase of 21% from 2011. Although Simcoe County had the greatest number of farms of the three regions, it also saw the largest decrease in the number of farms between 2011 and 2016 (9.8%). It also had the largest change in average farm sizes, up by 11% from 2011. While Simcoe County had the lowest percentage of small-scale farms compared to the two other selected regions, this type of farm still comprised over half of all farms in the region, with an increase in the number of farms under 10 acres between 2011 and 2016.

Region	Number of Farms	% Change in Number of Farms (2011-2016)	Average Farm Size (acres)	% Change in Farm Size (2011-2016)	% of All Farms Under 130 Acres	% of Farmland Owned (vs. Rented or Leased)
Niagara Region	1,827	-9.3	119	+7.6	79	61
Waterloo Region	1,374	-1	156	-1.9	66	74
Simcoe County	1,974	-9.8	251	+11	59	58

Table 1: A basic agricultural profile of the three selected regions (Source: *2016 Census of Agriculture*).

It is important to note that a number of other upper-tier municipalities could have been selected for analysis. This does not mean they are not appropriate comparisons, but simply that the time and resources constraints associated with this research limited the number of relevant case studies. While the experiences of these municipalities is not universal, a few key learnings via inductive

⁵ In 2016, the Holland Marsh produced an estimated \$105 million in farm gate value of horticultural crops, with carrots accounting for \$29.8 million, followed by onions at \$20.9 million (Holland Marsh Growers' Association, 2019).

analysis can be extracted to inform the broader discussion on farmland preservation and long-term viability.

Policy Scan

Once the case studies were chosen, a policy review for each of the three selected regions was conducted. This entailed examining the objectives and specific policies pertaining to agriculture in each regions' OP. Ontario's planning framework consists of multiple layers, though a decision was made to focus on regional and local policy, as these have the most immediate effects on municipalities. Drawing on Dickinson et al. (2010) as a structural guide, the policy review was centered around six specific policy issues: OP policy language, land use designations / permitted uses, minimum farm size and lot creation, minimum distance separation formulae (MDS), promotion of on-farm diversified uses, and other policies and strategies related to agriculture. Categorizing policies in this manner allowed for a detailed comparison across municipalities with respect to the different policy issues, allowing for a structured approach to the identification of policy issues with respect to agriculture. Where a more detailed examination of the three case studies was needed, the following five lower-tier municipalities from each region were selected by random stratified sample for further analysis:

Simcoe County	Niagara Region	Waterloo Region
Penetanguishene Severn New Tecumseth Bradford-West Gwillimbury Oro-Medonte	Wainfleet West Lincoln Welland Thorold Grimsby	Kitchener Wellesley North Dumfries Woolwich Wilmot

Table 2: Lower-tier municipalities chosen for further study.

By comparing policies across municipalities, it was possible to identify the policies that were more supportive to agriculture, as well as those that might potentially hinder small-scale agriculture and lessons learned about planning for agriculture. Information gathered during the policy scan were then combined with secondary research, including the findings from the literature review, to make recommendations for land use policy that is sensitive to the needs and supportive of agriculture.

PROBLEM INVESTIGATION AND ANALYSIS

Setting the Stage

Looking at the development of agriculture in Canada, and specifically in Ontario, is useful for helping contextualize the need for and movement towards farmland preservation in Canada, particularly with respect to protection for smaller farms. Since this type of typology of farm has been the default throughout the country's agrarian history, the knowledge that it is currently under threat has not permeated the public consciousness. However, the trends described in the introduction to this paper suggest that it is important to examine smaller scale farms as a unique subset of all farms.

Agriculture first arrived from Meso-America approximately 1,500 years ago, and even prior to European settlement, Indigenous peoples in Ontario were practicing agriculture (Troughton, 2017). For instance, both the Huron Wendat and Mohawk peoples cultivated a range of crops including corn. The planting, care, and harvesting of the latter was seen as a cornerstone of Mohawk culture, for instance

(Onion, 1964). When we speak of agriculture today, however, we speak of the agricultural areas and systems that are a product of European, farm-based settlement patterns that began with the arrival of European colonists in the late seventeenth century (Troughton, 2017).



Figure 3: What the average 19th century settler farm would have looked like (Source: Archives of Ontario [Marsden Kemp Fonds C-120-1-0-25-6]).

The majority of agrarian-based settlement in the province took place over the course of the 19th century, first with the arrival of the British Loyalists from the United States at the beginning of the century, and later with waves of

European emigrants taking advantage of land grants. Most settlement took place in southern parts of

the province, and despite limited attempts to expand farm-based settlement into the Canadian Shield in Ontario and Quebec and other northern regions elsewhere in the province, agriculture remained concentrated in southern regions where growing conditions were amenable to farm-based development.

In eastern Canada, agrarian systems were fully in place by the last decade of the 1800s. Farms of this period were generally medium-sized, family-operated ventures with a diversity of crops and livestock (see Figure 3). To a large extent, settlement patterns were determined by the availability of fertile land and based on various land survey systems including the French long lot, the seigneurial system, and the lot and concession townships (Troughton, 2017). Despite fluctuations in the number of farms and areas under cultivation within Canada, the country remained primarily rural into the twentieth century. In fact, 1941 *Canadian Census of Agriculture* records the largest number of farms nationwide in any census (732,832), and a total area of 174.2 million acres in cultivation (Troughton, 2017). However, major changes to the country's agricultural system were imminent. The post-war period saw immense changes, as the number of farms decreased by 50% between 1941 and 1971, driven largely by mechanization, consolidation, and farm abandonment as the economic realities of farming made it increasingly difficult for families to continue (Troughton, 2017). Additionally, a post-war economic boom characterized by rural to urban migration and urban expansion put further pressure on rural areas as cities expanded into the countryside. The initial peak of exurban land demand occurred between 1966 and 1976, resulting in major losses of good farmland across Canada, including in Ontario's Golden Horseshoe and the Niagara Peninsula (Troughton, 2017). Although some provinces acted to halt the conversion of farmland (two notable pieces of legislation passed during this time were the *BC Land Commission Act* (1973), followed by Quebec's 1978 *Loi sur la protection du territoire agricole*), Ontario did not move to do the same despite calls for government intervention, relying on the planning process to protect farmland (Caldwell & Dodds-Weir, 2003). Ontario's approach to promoting farmland protection was more decentralized, centering instead on incorporating protections for agriculture into general land use legislation such as the *Planning Act* (Glenn, 1985). However, despite the adoption of legislation addressing the loss of land for agriculture, broader conversations about farm viability and the protection of agriculture as a lifestyle were decades off.

While the post-war urban expansion began to slow down post-1980, the agricultural landscape was still in transformation. The industrialization and commodification of agriculture served to further alter the landscape, with farms becoming increasingly larger and more specialized. The result of this was a smaller number of farms producing a large fraction of agricultural output, with mounting challenges to

the economic viability of small- and medium-sized farms. Despite the trends, Ontario remains a stronghold of agriculture, becoming the most intensive and diversified in the country (Caldwell, Churchyard & Dodds-Weir, 2017). There is currently a reasonable degree of support for policies that enable farmland preservation, but this varies between regions and municipalities, as the discussion of local policy that follows this section reveals.

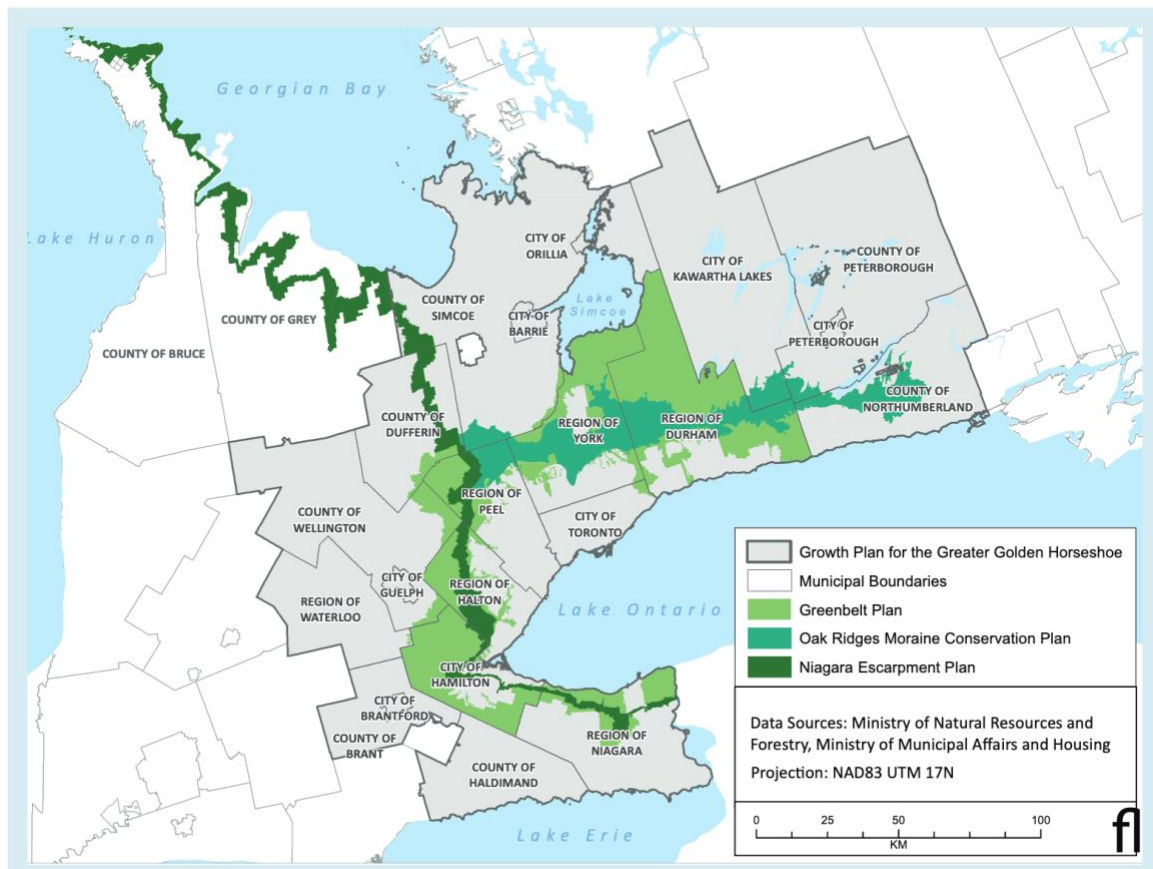


Figure 4. Map of the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) and the four land use plans that apply (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2015).

Policy Analysis

This section examines in-depth six policy areas: OP policy language, land use designations and permitted uses, minimum farm size and lot creation, minimum distance separation formulae (MDS), promotion of on-farm diversified uses, as well as other supportive policies and initiatives that municipalities should consider to support small-scale farm operators and producers.

1. OP Policy Language

A municipality's OP is its primary guiding document, putting forward a vision and outlining a set of objectives and policies to direct land uses and future growth in a manner that is both desirable to the municipality and in line with policy goals set at the provincial level. As such, the OP serves as the main guiding document for both upper- and lower-tier municipalities, playing a key role in shaping the future of the municipality which includes stating which activities are permitted and where they may occur. OPs at the regional level then give lower-tier municipalities the direction to create their own OPs and zoning by-laws, which shape and control land uses at the local level. This is important for agriculture as it sets the policy framework that governs how and where farming may take place and signals how much of priority protecting agriculture is in the municipality, how accommodating municipalities are to agriculture in general and innovative farming practices specifically, and how firmly or loosely the rules may be enforced. Furthermore, the objectives and policies concerning agriculture may be general and focus on the preservation of farmland, or they may acknowledge the challenges faced by farm operators and offer a nuanced understanding of the social, environmental, and economic importance of protecting and promoting agriculture as a land use.

1.1 A Vision for Agriculture

The goals, objectives, and policies in an official plan are sometimes prefaced by a vision statement - a concise statement summarizing the municipality's vision for the community for the future (usually for the duration of time that the plan is in effect). A vision offers municipalities a roadmap, articulating the community's values, priorities, and desires for the future in a compelling manner. This vision guides planning efforts and aids in the allocation of resources, becoming a focal point and a standard against which specific policies and objectives can be evaluated (Caldwell, 2020). Although it is aspirational, a strong vision can be particularly useful in land use planning, as it can set the tone for planning decisions that happen on the ground. For instance, a community whose vision includes a strong, diverse agricultural economy may adopt policies that enable and ensure a diversity of farm types and sizes (Caldwell, 2020).

Of the three upper-tier municipalities surveyed, only Waterloo Region included a vision statement in its OP. However, its statement did not explicitly mention agriculture, instead articulating the need to consider rural needs in a broad sense. Of the fifteen lower-tier municipalities surveyed, eight had a vision statement that included agriculture. Four of these - Severn, Oro-Medonte, Wainfleet,

and West Lincoln - engaged with it meaningfully to paint a picture of the future vision of agriculture, and of the future of the municipality in general. Bradford-West Gwillimbury's OP did not include a vision statement but did outline a robust set of guiding principles that emphasized protecting the integrity of the agricultural industry while allowing growth.

"Wainfleet will continue to be a thriving rural and agricultural community. Key to Wainfleet's future vision is the protection and strengthening of its rural and agricultural community through policies that support local food and rural food production and rural economic development. Agricultural production continues to be a solid pillar of Wainfleet's economy." (Township of Wainfleet, 2011, s.2.1)

"Future growth must be managed to preserve, protect and enhance the irreplaceable attributes of the Township and to foster stewardship of the community for the present and future generations... the vision includes continued viability of agriculture on prime agricultural lands in the Township, including flexibility to adapt new techniques and farm practices to sustain agriculture and related services. Supportive accessory uses, value added, and tourism related agricultural uses are encouraged." (Township of West Lincoln, 2015, s.2.3)

These are two excerpts from the vision statements of the Townships of Wainfleet and West Lincoln, respectively, with both statements offering a clear direction for the municipalities. They are easy to understand and compelling, ultimately serving as a guide to inform the future of agriculture.

1.2 Objectives Related to Agriculture

The three regions surveyed differed in the degree of nuance present in their objectives for agriculture, and correspondingly, their lower-tier counterparts as well. Similarly, each upper-tier municipality prioritized different aspects of agriculture. Niagara Region's OP focused on the area's specialty crop and tender fruit growing areas, with lands suitable for tender fruits and grapes having the highest priority for preservation. Additionally, the regional OP had several objectives relating to on-farm diversification, going beyond farmland preservation to address the development of value-added uses and on-farm economic diversification. Similarly, Simcoe Region's OP articulated the need to protect the land base while accommodating uses and facilities which can support a diversified agricultural economy.

The region's Official Plan was unique in its inclusion of the following objectives: 1) those recognizing the interrelationship between agriculture and natural heritage features and areas and ecological functions, and 2) those promoting a sustainable local food system with enhanced opportunities for food, agriculture and agriculture-related businesses and/or producers to deliver products locally. In contrast, while Waterloo Region introduced the current state of agriculture in a preamble to Chapter 6 (titled "Supporting the Countryside"), it only had four broad objectives with respect to agriculture.

Among the fifteen lower-tier municipalities, the most frequently occurring objectives related to:

- 1) protecting the land base;
- 2) discouraging incompatible or non-farm development and minimizing conflicts between land uses;
- 3) acknowledging the importance of agriculture to the local economy and the need to ensure future economic viability; and
- 4) promoting secondary, value-added, farm-related, and diversified uses.

All but four lower-tier municipalities had objectives for agricultural and rural lands; Penetanguishene, Wellesley, Woolwich, and Wilmot did not have stated objectives. However, of these four municipalities, the three latter ones did include policies with respect to agriculture (agriculture is not prevalent in Penetanguishene). One surprising finding was that of the fifteen lower-tier municipalities surveyed, eight municipalities stated objectives related to the protection of rural landscapes, character, and cultural heritage resources associated with agriculture. Although this is a new thread within planning for agriculture, it suggests a more nuanced approach to agricultural planning that considers aspects of farming beyond the land required for production.

The Town of New Tecumseth's OP contains the most comprehensive list of objectives of the lower-tier municipalities surveyed and is exemplary in the breadth of its considerations (see Table 2).

Relevant OP Section	Stated Objective
2.3	<p>b) The objectives for role and function of <u>non-urban areas</u> are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Ensure that agriculture remains an integral part of the economy of the Town; ii) Support the protection of lands that have the potential of being used for agricultural purposes from incompatible development where possible, to ensure that farming operations can operate with the maximum degree of flexibility and efficiency; iii) Encourage the establishment of agricultural-related uses and other on-farm diversified uses on farm properties to improve the economic livelihood of area

	<p>farmers;</p> <p>iv) Encourage the maintenance of the character of the Rural/Agricultural Area by maintaining farm buildings and other elements of the built and natural landscapes that contribute to that character;</p> <p>v) Prohibit the further fragmentation of prime agricultural lands and encourage consolidation of farming parcels to improve efficiencies and productivity where possible;</p> <p>vi) Restrict development that requires the expansion of municipal services into the Rural/ Agricultural Area;</p> <p>vii) Discourage the intrusion of land uses that are incompatible with the rural character and/or resource activities of the Rural/ Agricultural Area;</p> <p>viii) Direct urban land uses to the identified Settlement Areas;</p> <p>ix) Encourage the protection and identification of public roads which are necessary for the transportation of slow-moving farm-related equipment;</p> <p>x) Encourage the participation of the agricultural industry and the broader community in dealing with concerns of an agricultural nature; and,</p> <p>xi) Promote environmentally sensitive and sustainable farm practices throughout the Rural/ Agricultural Area.</p>
2.4	<p>b) The objectives for <u>economic development</u> are to:</p> <p>xi) Support a diversified agricultural economy, including opportunities for younger farmers and new agri-businesses;</p>
2.8	<p>b) The objectives for <u>natural heritage</u> are to:</p> <p>xix) Encourage agricultural operations to use best management practices to protect and mitigate impacts on natural heritage features and hydrologic functions.</p>
6.2.1	<p>a) The objectives of this Official Plan for the <u>Agricultural designation</u> are to:</p> <p>i) Recognize agriculture as the primary activity and land use;</p> <p>ii) Maintain and preserve the agricultural resource base of the Town;</p> <p>iii) Protect land suitable for agricultural production from fragmentation, development and land uses unrelated to agriculture;</p> <p>iv) Promote the agricultural industry and associated activities and enhance their capacity to contribute to the economy of the Town; and,</p> <p>v) Preserve and promote the agricultural character of the Town and the maintenance of the countryside as an open space area.</p>

Table 4: Town of New Tecumseth and its objectives for prime agricultural areas specifically, as well as for all non-rural areas more broadly.

Finally, although clear and specific objectives specifically for agricultural lands or areas are good, they are not the only way to express goals relating to agriculture, and some of the municipalities surveyed had overarching goals and strategic objectives that highlighted the importance of agriculture and expressed the desire to protect it. For instance, New Tecumseth expressed the importance of agriculture through objectives related to natural heritage and economic development, in addition to objectives for non-urban areas in general.

1.3 Policy Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Develop a specific vision for agriculture and incorporate this into the Official Plan. Make sure actions and planning decisions do not go against this vision. Part of the vision could include acknowledging that farmers are land stewards (and at the very least, acknowledging that there are important benefits that farmers and agriculture bring).

Recommendation 2

Incorporate objectives for agriculture into the Official Plan's overarching strategic objectives, connecting them to other economic, social, environmental, and cultural objectives.

Recommendation 3

Broaden the objectives for agriculture to focus on overall farm viability in addition to farmland preservation.

2. Land Use Designations and Permitted Uses

Both OPs and zoning by-laws dictate respectively which uses in a municipality are permissible, which ones are restricted, and where they may occur. The former, however, serve as a guide to both the permitted uses and the spatial distribution of those uses while the latter directs activities on the ground by implementing policies outlined in the OP. Both the land use designations and policies in the OP and the specific permitted uses in the zoning by-law have implications for agriculture. For instance, while the OP's policies regarding permitted uses on agricultural lands must conform with those outlined in the PPS, and the implementing zoning by-law must be consistent with the OP, discrepancies between the OP and zoning by-law do occur, particularly in municipalities where a comprehensive zoning review has not taken place since the last PPS. Furthermore, since farmland can only be protected once it is designated as such, a municipality's land use designations in its OP are of particular importance as they establish which lands receive the highest priority for protection. While the direction of activities and uses in a municipality can ensure that growth is targeted to given areas and conflict between land uses is minimized, it is important to understand how decisions regarding where and which land uses are arrived at, and how they might differ between what is stated in the OP and what the implementing by-law prescribes.

2.1 Distinction Between Agricultural and Rural Designations

The first issue with prescribing and directing land uses stems from the challenges associated with defining what qualifies as agricultural lands and what does not. The province sets out the guidelines for which areas should be designated as (Prime) Agricultural land and which should be designated Rural - a catch-all term that includes all lands that are neither part of a settlement area nor in a prime agricultural area (Province of Ontario, 2020). As seen in the previous section, many of the municipalities surveyed outline a hierarchy for the protection of farmland, with prime agricultural lands receiving higher protection from competing non-farm uses and development than rural lands (see Section 3.3 for an in-depth discussion of why this has consequences for the preservation of a non-fragmented land base for agriculture). The definition of *prime agricultural lands* draws from the Province's definition in the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), and is based on the Canada Land Inventory (CLI) classification system. This system is meant to identify which land is most suitable for agriculture based on mapping exercises conducted in the 1960s through the 1980s, with seven classes used to rate agricultural land capability (Government of Canada, 2019). Class 1 lands have the highest capability to support agricultural land use activities while Class 7 lands have the lowest, although the system's accuracy has been questioned, in part because it fails to take into consideration local conditions or demands for crops that are suitable for cultivation on lower classes of land (Walton, 2003; Alton, Cudmore & Lister, 2011). Despite such criticisms, the CLI system is used as the basis for land use policy at the provincial level, with *prime agricultural land* being defined as: "specialty crop areas and/or Canada Land Inventory Class 1, 2, and 3 lands, as amended from time to time, in this order of priority for protection." (Province of Ontario, 2020). Areas where *prime agricultural lands* predominate are classified as *prime agricultural areas*, and the PPS states that these lands shall be protected for long-term use for agriculture. *Prime agricultural areas* are characterized by the presence of:

- Prime agricultural land, defined as specialty crop areas and/or areas with Canada Land Inventory (CLI) Classes 1 - 3 lands;
- Other areas associated with prime agricultural land including CLI Classes 4 - 7 lands and additional areas with a local concentration of farms with characteristics of ongoing agriculture; and,
- Agricultural areas with organic soil (not part of the CLI classification system).

This means that certain agricultural land may be protected for long-term use despite the presence of lower-capability soils, which has positive implications for the protection of agricultural lands in general. However, rural areas where *prime agricultural lands* are not predominant are to be designated as *rural* by municipalities, where although the same activities as in *prime agricultural areas* are permitted, the permitted uses are more flexible and permissive, offering less protection for agriculture from non-farm development (Churchyard, 2011). While this may not pose a major issue in rural municipalities with a high percentage of land designated (*prime*) *agricultural* (for instance, in the Township of Wellesley), it becomes particularly important in areas which do not have a high degree of Class 1, 2, and 3 soils but are still invested in protecting the best locally-available farmland and the agricultural industry (Churchyard, 2011). In *rural areas*, limited non-farm development is permitted by the PPS provided that it is “compatible with the rural landscape” (Province of Ontario, 2020, s.1.1.5.4), leaving the interpretation of this up to the municipality. This allows municipalities to continue with development, however restrained, in *rural* designations, which has impacts on existing farm operations in these designations but also in neighbouring *agricultural* designations. It is therefore important for municipalities to clarify what limited development looks like and specifically what types of rural non-farm development might be appropriate in *rural areas*. The Township of Woolwich’s policies for rural areas are an example of this specificity; they outline the permitted uses in the land use designation, most of which are agricultural, agriculture-related, or on-farm diversified uses, and clearly restrict the type of non-farm residential development that can occur while setting clear parameters for farm-related development.

“It is the intent of this Plan to preserve, protect and encourage the continued use of lands designated Rural Land Use for farming, including small-scale On-Farm Business activities and farm-related non-residential uses and mineral aggregate extraction and forestry. Non-farm related uses and buildings shall be encouraged to locate within Identified Settlements, Industrial/Commercial, Industrial, Commercial and appropriate Open Space designations.” (Township of Woolwich, 2000, s.6.1)

“The creation of lots for non-farm-related residential uses will not be permitted with the Rural Land Use area except in accordance with the Surplus Heritage Residence in policy

6.1.2.1.3. and the infilling policies in Section 6.1.2.1.4.” (Township of Woolwich, 2000, s.6.1.2.1.1)

With respect to lands designated for agriculture (as opposed to rural), the three selected upper-tier municipalities, as well as their constituent lower-tier municipalities, were fairly modern in their treatment of agriculture and contained progressive notions about what may be permitted on agricultural land while acknowledging the need for the long-term preservation of farmland. However, since updates to policy take time, it is necessary to examine the translation of these policies into zoning by-laws.

2.2 Differences between Zoning By-laws and OP Policies

If the permitted uses outlined in either the OP, organized by the specific land use designation, or the zoning by-law, are overly restrictive, vague, or conceive agriculture in an outdated manner, this can be a barrier to on-farm diversification and innovation, which is especially important for small-scale farm operators. Conversely, policies that are not sufficiently specific regarding appropriate uses may allow for incompatible activities to take place, undermining the long-term use of land for agriculture and taking land out of production. Incompatible uses include those that are much larger in scale and intensity than surrounding uses, or those that have significant impacts on surrounding operations (often a product of scale). For instance, the inclusion of a small patio restaurant as part of a winery that serves wine made on the premises may be appropriate relative to surrounding uses, while a large event space regularly hosting large wedding parties throughout the summer may no longer be appropriate.

There is further conflict when the uses permitted in the OP contradict those listed in a municipality’s zoning by-law. Zoning by-laws have direct and tangible impacts on the preservation of farmland and overall viability, and careful attention to the manner in which they are written and interpreted is critical. Firstly, there are real trade-offs between flexibility and specificity with respect to zoning, and this was apart from the comprehensive zoning by-laws of all fifteen municipalities. While the permitted uses in agricultural zones were frequently as progressive as those outlined in OPs, there were differences between the two policy documents, with a considerable degree of variation between municipalities. While permitted uses are certainly context-specific, meaning that what may be appropriate in one municipality or area may not be appropriate elsewhere, there was nevertheless a difference in permitted uses. Similarly, there was a difference in the number of agricultural zones in

each municipality, ranging from one to four (although most frequently two zones). Some of these differences are apparent in the table below.

Municipality / Region	Agricultural Zones	Permitted Uses as per Comprehensive Zoning By-law																																																																																																														
Severn	Prime Agriculture (AG) Rural (RU)	Abattoir (a); Agricultural Produce Warehouse; Conservation or Wildlife Area; Dwelling, Single Detached (a); Equestrian Facility; Farm; Farm Produce Sales Outlet; Forestry; Group Home (only permitted in RU); Home Occupation; Kennel (a); Outdoor Recreational Use, Passive; Park, Public (only permitted in RU); Public Use (only permitted in RU); Vet Clinic (a) <i>(a) Use is permitted only as an accessory use on AG zoned land</i>																																																																																																														
Oro-Medonte	Agricultural/Rural (A/RU) Zone (no differentiation between agricultural and rural zones)	Agricultural Uses, Intensive, Agricultural Uses, Agricultural uses, Specialized; Bed and Breakfast Establishments; Conservation Uses; Custom Workshops; Equestrian Facilities, Farm Produce Sales Outlets; Forestry Uses; Hobby Farms; Home Occupations; Market Gardens; Pits; Portable Asphalt Plants; Private Clubs; Private Home Daycares																																																																																																														
Wainfleet	Agricultural Transition (A1) Agricultural (A2) Specialty Crop (A3) Rural (A4)	<table><tr><th colspan="5">Table 5: Permitted Uses in the Agricultural and Rural Zones</th></tr><tr><th>Permitted Uses</th><th>A1</th><th>A2</th><th>A3</th><th>A4</th></tr><tr><td>Agricultural use</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td></tr><tr><td>Intensive animal operation</td><td></td><td>✓</td><td></td><td>✓</td></tr><tr><td>Single detached dwelling accessory to an agricultural use</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td></tr><tr><td>Single detached dwelling as a principal use on an existing lot of record</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Single detached dwelling existing at the date of the passing of this By-law as a principal use on a new lot</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Single detached dwelling as a principal use on any lot</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>Q3</td></tr><tr><td>Accessory Agricultural Activities</td><td>*</td><td>*</td><td>*</td><td>*</td></tr><tr><td>Secondary Suite</td><td>*</td><td>*</td><td>*</td><td>*</td></tr><tr><td>Value added production uses</td><td>*</td><td>*</td><td></td><td>*</td></tr><tr><td>Value added marketing uses</td><td>*</td><td>*</td><td>*</td><td>*</td></tr><tr><td>Home occupation</td><td>*</td><td>*</td><td>*</td><td>*</td></tr><tr><td>Home industry</td><td>*</td><td>*</td><td>*</td><td>*</td></tr><tr><td>Agri-tourism uses related to agriculture</td><td>*</td><td>*</td><td>*</td><td>*</td></tr><tr><td>One farm help-house</td><td>Q1</td><td>Q1</td><td>Q1</td><td>Q1</td></tr><tr><td>Bed and breakfast</td><td>*</td><td>*</td><td>*</td><td>*</td></tr><tr><td>Kennel</td><td></td><td>✓</td><td></td><td>✓</td></tr><tr><td>Conservation uses</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td></td><td>✓</td></tr><tr><td>Greenhouse</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td></tr><tr><td>Group Home</td><td>Q2</td><td>Q2</td><td></td><td>Q2</td></tr><tr><td>Medical Marihuana Facility</td><td>Q4</td><td>Q4</td><td>Q4</td><td>Q4</td></tr></table> <p>✓ Permitted use * Permitted as an accessory use only</p>	Table 5: Permitted Uses in the Agricultural and Rural Zones					Permitted Uses	A1	A2	A3	A4	Agricultural use	✓	✓	✓	✓	Intensive animal operation		✓		✓	Single detached dwelling accessory to an agricultural use	✓	✓	✓	✓	Single detached dwelling as a principal use on an existing lot of record	✓	✓	✓		Single detached dwelling existing at the date of the passing of this By-law as a principal use on a new lot	✓	✓	✓		Single detached dwelling as a principal use on any lot				Q3	Accessory Agricultural Activities	*	*	*	*	Secondary Suite	*	*	*	*	Value added production uses	*	*		*	Value added marketing uses	*	*	*	*	Home occupation	*	*	*	*	Home industry	*	*	*	*	Agri-tourism uses related to agriculture	*	*	*	*	One farm help-house	Q1	Q1	Q1	Q1	Bed and breakfast	*	*	*	*	Kennel		✓		✓	Conservation uses	✓	✓		✓	Greenhouse	✓	✓	✓	✓	Group Home	Q2	Q2		Q2	Medical Marihuana Facility	Q4	Q4	Q4	Q4
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Kitchener	AGR 1 (Prime Agricultural)	<p>12.2 PERMITTED USES</p> <p>No <i>person</i> shall, within any AGR <i>zone</i>, <i>use</i> or permit the <i>use</i> of any <i>lot</i> or erect, alter or <i>use</i> any <i>building</i> or <i>structure</i> for any purpose other than those permitted <i>uses</i> within Table 12-1 below.</p> <p>Table 12-1: Permitted Uses within the Agriculture Zones</p> <table><tr><th>Use</th><th>AGR-1</th></tr><tr><td>Agriculture</td><td>✓</td></tr><tr><td>Agriculture-Related (1)</td><td>✓</td></tr><tr><td>Existing Dwelling</td><td>✓</td></tr><tr><td>On-Farm Diversified Use (1)(2)</td><td>✓</td></tr><tr><td>Second Dwelling Unit (Attached) (2)</td><td>✓</td></tr><tr><td>Single Detached Dwelling (2)</td><td>✓</td></tr></table> <p>Additional Regulations for Permitted Uses Table 12-1</p> <p>(1) The total area of land occupied by the <i>use</i> shall not exceed 2 percent of the total <i>lot area</i>.</p> <p>(2) Shall be permitted as an <i>accessory use</i> to a <i>principal agriculture use</i> on a <i>lot</i>.</p>	Use	AGR-1	Agriculture	✓	Agriculture-Related (1)	✓	Existing Dwelling	✓	On-Farm Diversified Use (1)(2)	✓	Second Dwelling Unit (Attached) (2)	✓	Single Detached Dwelling (2)	✓
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Single Detached Dwelling (2)	✓															
Wellesley	General Agricultural (A1) Small Lot Agricultural (A2) Agricultural Institutional (AIN) Mixed Use / Agricultural Cluster (MAC)	<p><u>Permitted Uses in A1:</u> Agricultural use (except sod farming); Agricultural Greenhouses; Animal clinic; Animal kennel; Bed and breakfast establishment; Farm; Farm produce outlet; Farm-related occupation; Forestry use; Group home; Home occupation; Riding stable; Additional Detached Dwelling Unit; Additional Attached Dwelling Unit; One (1) single-detached dwelling lawfully in existence as of the date of passing of this By-law or on lots lawfully existing as of the date of passing of this By-law; One (1) principal farm dwelling to the farm operation; Converted dwelling; Accessory uses to the above permitted uses.</p> <p><u>Permitted Uses in A2:</u> Agricultural use (except sod farming); Animal clinic; Bed and breakfast establishment; Farm; Farm produce outlet; Farm-related occupation; Home occupation; One (1) single-detached dwelling lawfully in existence as of the date of passing of this By-law or on lots lawfully existing as of the date of passing of this By-law; Converted dwelling; Accessory uses to the above permitted uses.</p> <p><u>Permitted Uses in AIN:</u> Cemetery; Church or Place of Worship; Small-scale school, public or private; Accessory uses to the above permitted uses.</p> <p><u>Permitted Uses in MAC:</u> Non-commercial limited agricultural uses, which do not involve the retail sale of any crops, plants, or livestock grown or raised on the property; One (1) greenhouse accessory to a residential use; One (1) barn for the non-commercial limited agricultural housing, breeding or raising of livestock of any kind; Any required manure management facilities accessory to a barn; One (1) building for a ry industrial use as defined in this By-law, provided that a single-detached dwelling is established on the same lot, and provided that the use does not use large volumes of water or produce large volumes of effluent; A retail or wholesale outlet or showroom as an accessory to a dry industrial use; One (1) single-detached dwelling on one lot, which may include an</p>														

		accessory dwelling unit within the dwelling; Accessory uses to the above permitted uses, but not including portable classrooms, cabins, mobile homes, trailers, or any other residential buildings; Accessory signs.
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Table 3: Degree of differentiation in permitted uses as allowed by the comprehensive zoning by-law in five lower-tier municipalities.

A potential means of encouraging a broad range of activities while setting limits on scale and preserving farmland is by using a broad range of permitted uses that includes agricultural, agriculture-related, and on-farm diversified uses (with the option of explicitly permitted agri-tourism uses) across several different agricultural zones. Multiple zoning categories would allow municipalities to distinguish between scales and intensities of agricultural activities by either setting different criteria across zones, or by reserving certain agricultural zones for a narrower range of agricultural activities. An example of differentiation across zones is Wainfleet, which includes four agricultural zones: 1) Agricultural Transition (A1); Agricultural (A2); Specialty Crop (A3); and Rural (A4), allowing the municipality to ensure varying degrees of protection for different agricultural zones. Furthermore, the municipality's permitted uses in each zone align closely with its OP policies, focusing on general uses (for instance, agri-tourism uses) rather than very specific and prescriptive uses (see Appendix 1 for a comprehensive overview of Wainfleet's permitted uses in the three agricultural and one rural zones). An example of a municipality successfully setting limits on the scale of agricultural activity is West Lincoln (see Appendix 2 for the criteria for agricultural activities in the municipality).

Ultimately, the primary challenge for municipalities is addressing outdated zoning by-laws to bring them up to date with higher-order policies, particularly given the resources and time required to undertake comprehensive reviews. The next step is understanding what the context-specific requirements for agriculture are, and ensuring these are reflected in the zoning by-law while using differentiated agricultural zoning categories and / or development standards to ensure the dual goals of protecting agricultural land while promoting on-farm viability.

2.3 Policy Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Clearly articulate what "limited development" and what "rural character" is in OP policies and ensure that potential development on rural, non-agricultural land is compatible with the multifunctional role of natural and agricultural features in rural landscapes.

Recommendation 2

Update zoning by-laws to conform with Official Plans and reflect the realities of agriculture today, with consideration for whether agricultural zones are located in relation to agricultural land use designations in OP schedules.

Recommendation 3

When drafting zoning by-laws, be aware of the types of agricultural uses that exist within the municipality, in order to ensure they best fit the needs of farmers and promote farm viability through the assurance of protection for agriculture while simultaneously allowing for flexibility in uses. Note that zoning is highly-context specific and what is appropriate will vary by municipality.

3. Minimum Farm Size and Rural Lot Severance

In Ontario, the creation of new lots is subject to the land use planning process. Lot severance is closely related to the issue of minimum farm size, for in the event of a land severance on agricultural land (that is, the authorized (by the municipality) separation of a parcel of land in order to create a new lot), the newly created lot must meet minimum size requirements. For some farmers, lot severance is a convenient means of gaining liquidity from a large plot of land (often at retirement), or for intergenerational wealth transfer through the passing of a parcel to the next generation (Alton, Cudmore & Lister, 2011). The process is governed by policies in the municipal OPs, which outline the process for land severances, as well as differing requirements for severances in different land designations. Although the process varies from one municipality to the next, a minimum lot size of 40 hectares (100 acres) for the severed lot is standard across municipalities in the GGH.

The intention behind minimum lot sizes is to prevent the conversion of farmland to non-farm uses through severance into much smaller lots and the resulting fragmentation of the rural landscape (Caldwell et al., 2011). Lot severance policies must be consistent with Ontario's Provincial Policy Statement (2020), which, with some exceptions, largely prevents the creation of new lots on lands that are designated as prime agricultural. The justification for this is that small, fragmented lots in agricultural areas limit the possibilities for farming operations, and that larger lots allow for greater flexibility to pursue future agriculture activities and operations. However, as discussed in s.3.2, the protection from fragmentation for land designated as prime agricultural land does not necessarily extend to lands designated as rural, meaning that the fragmentation of the land base is not entirely guarded against unless a municipality includes specific policies to prevent lot severance on land

designated as rural (Walton, 2003).

The other issue pertains to policies on minimum lot sizes for newly-created properties on agricultural land. In addition to restricting lot creation in the first place, most municipalities in the GGH have adopted rules regarding how small severed lots can be; throughout the GGH, this is at least 40 hectares. This policy is meant to ensure that contiguous blocks of farmland do not get gradually broken up into small parcels that are no longer economically viable. One potential drawback to minimum lot sizes, however, is the potential challenge they may pose to new or young farmers, particularly in areas where land prices are high. This especially holds true for prospective farmers wishing to undertake high-value ventures like vineyards, market gardens, as well as organic and greenhouse production oriented to farm-gate sales and local marketing, as they do not need a large land base to get started. A 2014 comprehensive report on small acreage farms in Huron County supported this notion. Key informant interviews conducted within the County as part of the project identified the high up-front purchasing costs for larger parcels of farmland, as well as a lack of smaller-scale lots, as major barriers for new and entrant farmers (Zhou, Fegan, Song & Sharpe, 2014). This is a valuable finding, and while it is not necessarily applicable to all municipalities across southern Ontario, the rising cost of farmland across the province suggests that concerns about access to farmland may not be specific to Huron County. Ultimately, these concerns raise some questions about the appropriateness of minimum farm sizes.

Of the fifteen lower-tier municipalities surveyed, the trend towards larger minimum lot sizes was clear, which was consistent both with provincial policy and with upper-tier municipalities' policies. All municipalities established a minimum lot size of 40 hectares, although this was reduced to 16.2 hectares in Niagara Region and Simcoe County's specialty crop areas to reflect the reduced land requirement for the types of agricultural products being cultivated. The table below presents a select number of municipalities that had flexible minimum farm size policies (while simultaneously limiting non-farm development in agricultural areas).

Municipality / Region	Relevant OP Section	Minimum Farm Size	Specific Policies
Oro-Medonte ⁶	C1.3.1	>4 hectares	The Creation of New Lots for Agricultural Purposes Council supports the development of new specialized agricultural uses in the Township as these uses have the

⁶ See Appendix 4 for the entirety of Oro-Medonte's OP policy C1.3.1 on the creation of new lots of agricultural purposes.

			<p>potential to increase the amount of agricultural activity in the municipality [...] The Township will consider an application to create a new lot for a specialized agricultural use. In considering the creation of such lot, the Committee of Adjustment shall be satisfied that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The creation of the new lot can be justified. In order to assist the Committee of Adjustment in this regard, the applicant shall submit a farm business plan that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Describes how the soil conditions, climate, and location are appropriate for the proposed specialized farm use in detail; ii) Describes the capital investment that is to be made; iii) Identifies the market area for the product; and iv) Forecasts the income that would be generated by the proposed use. b) The applicant has experience and/or training with the type of specialized agricultural use being proposed; c) The new lot can be used for other agricultural uses that are common to the area if the lot ceases to be used for specialized agricultural purposes. d) The remnant parcel will continue to be viable for agricultural use after the severance has been granted. [...] e) The area of the lot to be created for specialized agricultural purposes does not exceed approximately 25 percent of the area of the lot from which the severance is proposed. f) The lot from which the severance is proposed has an area of at least 20.0 hectares. g) The new lot has an area of not less than 4.0 hectares.
Wainfleet	3.1.3.3 / 3.1.3.4	40 hectares but may vary	<p>The minimum lot size for new farm lots shall be 40 hectares (99 acres).</p> <p>A smaller severed or retained lot from that permitted in 3.1.3.4 a) may be permitted provided that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) The resulting parcels are both intended for agricultural use; ii) The agricultural operation is supported through a farm business plan; iii) The size of the resulting farm parcels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Is appropriate for the farming activities proposed, 2) Is suited to the particular location and common in the area, and 3) Provides some flexibility for changes in the agricultural operations;

			<p>iv) any small lot severances for greenhouses and other intensive forms of agriculture shall be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Subject to a condition that any new dwellings on the property are allowed only after the greenhouse and other farm buildings have been constructed or substantially completed, and 2) Of a sufficient size so that these uses have ample room for future expansion.
West Lincoln	4.3.2	16.2 hectares	<p>b) The size of agricultural parcels shall be maintained in units which are large enough to maintain flexibility to adapt to economic conditions in agriculture in the future. A minimum lot size of 16.2 hectares (40 acres) will generally be maintained in the Unique Agricultural Area; although smaller agricultural lots may be permitted for such uses as greenhouses, market gardening and intensive livestock operations. No farm parcel shall be reduced to a size that is not a viable economic unit.</p>
North Dumfries	5.1.2.2	40 hectares but may vary	<p>a) where the newly-created or retained farm parcels would have lot areas less than 40 hectares, the owner/applicant will be required to provide information satisfactory to the Township, which demonstrates that the resulting farm parcels will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) be of a size appropriate for the type of agricultural use common in the area; and ii) be sufficiently large enough to sustain an economically viable farm operation and to maintain flexibility for future changes in the type of size of agricultural operations; and <p>c) the development application includes a site-specific zoning by-law amendment.</p>

Table 5: Examples of flexible policy among the municipalities surveyed.

Given the vulnerability of small rural lots to non-farm development, a careful balance between flexibility and regulation must be struck to ensure access to a land base that can accommodate smaller operations and ensure access to farmland for new and aspiring farmers, without negatively impacting agriculture in the long run by preclude certain agricultural activities that may have otherwise been able to take place on larger lots, restricting the ability of farmers to adapt to changing economic conditions (Caldwell, 2020). Without enabling access to a diverse mix of farm types and sizes, the agricultural industry may become homogenized and vulnerable to external shocks (Caldwell, 2011). Conversely, newly-created small lots for agricultural uses may then become vulnerable to conversion to residential uses, so discretion must be exercised to prevent this from occurring. Oro-Medonte, for instance, attempts to limit the conversion of smaller farm properties to residential uses by mandating that the

newly created lot be placed in a site-specific zone in the implementing zoning by-law that prohibits the development of residential uses. In this manner the municipality's OP strongly discourages non-farm uses on smaller lots, stating the adverse impact this type of development would have on the rural character of the area and/or the viability of agricultural operations in the area. This is one strategy to allow for flexibility while ensuring that farmland is preserved.

Ultimately, it is clear that balancing the needs of farmers, particularly those wishing to enter the industry and/or cultivate smaller plots of land, with the need to preserve agricultural land is a challenge. Matters like the price of farmland, which itself is determined by a great number of economic and financial factors complicate the issue of access further. Therefore, while minimum farmland sizes (in tandem with restrictions on lot severances) may be useful in preventing the further fragmentation of farmland (Churchyard, 2011), municipalities should introduce flexibility into policy, such as in Niagara Region's specialty crop areas, acknowledging that agricultural operations can be sustained on a variety of parcel sizes. Although outside the scope of this paper, this work would benefit from further research on different forms of land tenure and alternative legal arrangements that could permit farmers the right to work parcels of land can be sustained on less than 40 hectares and that are suitable for the specific type of operation (Caldwell et al., 2011).

3.1 Policy Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Enable a diversity of farm types and intensities by acknowledging the diverse needs of different types of agricultural operations and introducing flexibility into policies regarding minimum farm size.

4. Minimum Distance Separation Formulae

Minimum distance separation guidelines were first introduced in the 1970s by the provincial government with the publication of *A Suggested Code of Practice*. As the result of post-war industrialization, there was a proliferation of livestock operations on scales not seen prior, leading to conflicts with surrounding land uses, particularly residential uses (Crinklaw, Turvey & Ward, 2016). In order to address nuisance odours (though not noise or dust) associated with these facilities, the *Suggested Code of Practice* recommended fixed setbacks between livestock operations and all

surrounding dwellings, lot lines, and roads in order to minimize adverse effects (Crinklaw, Turvey & Ward, 2016). Additionally, the document suggested that farmers apply for a certification outlining the minimum amount of land required, given the size of operation, to avoid the risk of groundwater contamination from animal waste. In a 1976 update to the *Code*, the provincial government published the *Agricultural Code of Practice*, which established a two-way system for separating livestock facilities from non-compatible uses and vice versa, as well as a sliding scale approach to separation distances, with suggested setbacks varying between different sizes and types of farm (Geerts, 2016). The Minimum Distance Separation I (MDS I) and Minimum Distance Separation II (MDS II) formulae and guidelines were updated several times (in 1995 and 2006) to reflect changing land use planning practices and the evolution of the livestock industry (namely the centralization and intensification of operations), but have persisted in their usage for determining the compatibility and appropriateness of new livestock facilities and neighbouring residential uses. Currently, MDS I setbacks apply to proposed new non-farm development in proximity to existing livestock facilities, while MDS II setbacks apply to proposed new or expanding livestock facilities in proximity to existing or approved non-farm development (Geerts, 2016). Although these scientific formulae were initially intended as guidelines, they have become ubiquitous, and have gained legislative authority through the *Provincial Policy Statement*. Since all municipal land use planning documents are required to be consistent with the PPS, the inclusion of MDS formulae in the PPS meant that municipalities were legally required to integrate the formulae in OPs, and consequently, in zoning by-laws.

This standardization has two major consequences for agriculture in Ontario: 1) integrated farm operations (those with both livestock and other farm products) are difficult to maintain, and b) livestock operations are further isolated from the community as they are deemed incompatible with surrounding land uses and required to be located on increasingly large plots of land. Ultimately, the problem that MDS formulae were meant to address created more challenges for smaller-scale operations, and continues to serve as barriers to on-farm innovation (Dickinson et al., 2010). Depending on how they are applied by a municipality's OP and zoning by-law (there is typically little variation in how they are applied), MDS formulae may preclude the integration of different uses on a farm plot (for instance, livestock on smaller scales), which is both characteristic of farming innovation through diversification and important for ensuring the viability of smaller-scale operations (Donald, 2009).

Municipality / Region	Relevant OP Section	Specific Policy
Waterloo Region	6.C.1	New land uses, including the creation of separate lots, expansions of existing lots and the development of new or expanding livestock facilities, will comply with the minimum distance separation formulae.
Niagara Region	5.B.15	New dwellings on existing lots and proposed new lots must be separated from existing livestock operations on adjacent properties. Similarly, new or expanded livestock operations must be separated from existing dwellings on adjacent properties. It is required that local official plans and zoning by-laws use the Minimum Distance Separation Formula of the <i>Agricultural Code of Practice</i> as their standard for livestock operations. Exceptions may be made for farm buildings under the same ownership. Also, as set out in the [Code], other non-farm uses shall comply with the Minimum Distance Separation Formula. Notwithstanding the above, in areas shown as Good General Agricultural Area on Schedule B, new lots suitable for residential dwellings must be separated from existing livestock operations by 1000 feet or the distance determined by the MDS formula whichever is greater.
Simcoe County	3.3.14	All new land uses, including the creation of lots and new or expanding livestock facilities, shall comply with the appropriate Minimum Distance Separation Formulae, as prepared by the Province. Decisions on the location and form of subdivision and development should be made with an objective of protecting prime agricultural areas based on agricultural designation for agriculture and minimizing land use conflicts between agriculture and other uses. Local municipalities shall determine the appropriate application of the Formulae to existing lots, consent applications for surplus farm dwellings, within settlement areas, and following destruction of all or part of a dwelling by catastrophe.

Table 6: MDS policies at the upper-tier, which filter down to the local level and into zoning by-laws.

Since MDS formulae are firmly embedded in provincial planning legislation, municipalities have little leeway within the current framework to amend formulae to accommodate different scales of livestock operations by varying setback requirements. The most notable example of exemption to MDS requirements currently is the Township of Wellesley's "Rural Mixed-Use / Agricultural Cluster". In this zoning category, neither MDS I nor II regulations do apply between lots. This type of zoning category was a response to local economic and social needs, particularly those of the local Mennonite community, and as a means to reduce land use conflicts between different but compatible uses including small-scale agriculture (Zhou, Fegan, Song & Sharpe, 2014). Given the prevalence of existing

small lots under 10 acres, the scale of agricultural activity means that different types of uses can coexist without adverse effects on surrounding operations. This type of exemption from MDS formulae may not be appropriate everywhere, but it does suggest that setback requirements could vary based on the scale and intensity of the agricultural use. The noxious effects that MDS formulae seek to mitigate are minimized by scale, meaning that small-scale, mixed-use farming operations are less likely than large-scale livestock operations to need to be distanced from surrounding uses. In order to grant municipalities the flexibility to respond to the needs of smaller operations, an enabling step on the part of the provincial government would be to distinguish between small and large livestock operations in setting MDS formulae requirements.

Recommendation 1

Consider the different sizes and scales of livestock operations, taking stock of the potential barriers to mixed-use farming and small-scale livestock operations that stem from the application of MDS formulae.

5. Promotion of On-Farm Diversification and Value-Added Activities

There is a long tradition of innovation in farming, with farmers obtaining income through a variety of activities beyond the “range of conventional crop and livestock enterprises associated with agriculture” (as cited in Brunet, 2017, p. 164). However, on-farm diversification has taken on new significance in the past couple decades, primarily in response to the changing economic realities of farming (Caldwell, 2006; Barbieri et al., 2008). A key adaptive strategy for many farm operators (particularly smaller ones), on-farm diversification provides the opportunity to earn a livelihood and remain viable using existing farm resources (Tew & Barbieri, 2012). On a macro scale, it has the potential to revive and strengthen the economic base of rural communities, ultimately contributing to sustainable economic development while bringing a range of non-economic benefits to farmers, visitors and communities (Donald, 2009; Tew & Barbieri, 2012). In Ontario, Prince Edward County has emerged as a leader in on-farm diversification (Donald, 2008; Donald, 2009; Bepple et al., 2009). Over the past decade, the County has begun to shift away from some of the more traditional forms of agriculture towards new enterprises like culinary and agro-tourism, viticulture, specialty and organic farms, as well as artisanal value-added products like honey and preserves - all of which are reflective of the “creative

rural economy” (Donald, 2009). The municipality’s landscape of small farms, an important facet of its cultural heritage, both necessitates and enables on-farm innovation.

Since municipal planning policy regulates land uses, it has an important role to play in enabling on-farm innovation by 1) clearly articulating the permitted uses in a given area, and 2) ensuring that the permitted uses are based on an expanded conception of what is appropriate on farmland and which activities can contribute to farm viability. Both OP policies and zoning by-laws must be flexible enough to allow for innovation to happen while setting limits on scale and intensity to prevent incompatible activities from taking place. It is therefore important for municipalities to consider how traditional ways of farming and innovative practices interact, and where the potential trade-offs may lay.

The 2014 *Provincial Policy Statement* helped advance support for agricultural innovation by expanding the permitted uses on agricultural land to include *agriculture-related uses* and *on-farm diversified uses*. Interpreted and expanded upon in OMAFRA’s *Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario’s Prime Agricultural Areas* (2016), these policies conceived of agriculture in a broader sense, reflecting the economic realities of farming today. This was an improvement to the 2005 *Provincial Policy Statement*, to which farmers were bound prior to 2014, and which outlined the following permitted uses: “agricultural uses, secondary uses, and agriculture-related uses” (Province of Ontario, 2005). This was quite narrow in what it actually permitted, and created ambiguity stemming from the judgement call that needed to be made regarding whether a proposed use was truly “secondary” or not, and whether there had to be a nexus between the proposed use and agriculture (Anderson, 2016). For instance, two conflicts that escalated to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) in 2011 and 2014⁷ resulted in contradictory verdicts; in one instance, the Board found that the storage of vehicles in vacant poultry barns was an appropriate secondary use, while in the other it stated that boat storage was not appropriate (Anderson, 2016).

The current PPS’ expanded conception of permitted uses in prime agricultural areas, on the other hand, meant to reduce ambiguity and stemmed from the two following key objectives (Province of Ontario, 2016):

1. maintaining the land base for agriculture (PPS Policy 2.3.1)
2. supporting a thriving agricultural industry and rural economy (PPS Vision and PPS Policy 1.1.4)

⁷ These two cases were *Karas v. West Lincoln (Township)* [2011] O.M.B.D. No. 757 and *Simcoe (County) v. Innisfil (Town)* [2014] O.M.B.D. NO. 129.

While the new PPS clearly allows for more flexibility with respect to agricultural innovation, the aforementioned objectives may potential conflict; therefore, local municipalities must be extremely cautious about the type, size, scale, and intensity of new ventures in order to protect agricultural land and reduce competition between non-farming uses and farming production while simultaneously allowing for innovation to happen. OMAFRA's *Guidelines* handbook attempts to interpret and clarify the policies relating to permitted uses in prime agricultural areas. This is a major enabling step towards promoting on-farm innovation, although some OPs are not up-to-date with provincial policy. However, this can be expected given the age of some Plans, as well as the degree to which and the speed at which provincial policy with respect to agriculture has evolved over the past decade (City of Kawartha Lakes, 2020). This is reflected in the municipalities surveyed: at the upper-tier level, Simcoe County and Waterloo Region's OPs were consistent with the PPS, while Niagara Region's Plan, having been adopted in 2014, was not yet consistent with provincial policy (although it is currently undergoing a municipal comprehensive review). Of the fifteen lower-tier municipalities surveyed, only four mentioned all three categories of permitted uses for agricultural areas (agriculture, agriculture-related, and on-farm diversified uses) in their OP. Ten municipalities were not yet consistent with the PPS, although all of them did permit some type of on-farm innovation. Definitions and terminology used varied, but permitted uses included: secondary uses, on-farm businesses, home industries, on-farm commercial or industrial uses, agriculturally-related activities, and uses that provide value-added agricultural activities.

Municipality / Region	Relevant OP Section	Specific Policies
Waterloo (Region)	n/a	Although the region has some of the best farmland in Ontario, this Plan recognizes that simply protecting farmland will not guarantee that it will be actively and viably farmed. Farm businesses today face many economic challenges in a globally competitive environment. To help keep farmers on the land, this Plan contains policies that support on-farm diversification strategies as a means of supplementing farm income.
Bradford-West Gwillimbury	n/a	b) Permitted uses on lands within the Agriculture designation may include <i>agriculture uses</i> , <i>agriculture-related uses</i> (subject to Section 4.6(c)), <i>processing of agricultural products</i> , <i>on-farm diversified uses</i> (subject to Section 4.6(d)), natural heritage conservation and forestry and <i>agriculture produce sales outlets</i> .
Oro-Medonte	C1.2	...permitted uses include single-detached dwellings, bed and breakfast

		establishments, home occupations, home industries, commercial dog kennels, forestry, resource management uses, farm implement dealers and feed fertilizer distribution, storage facilities for agricultural products, greenhouses, agricultural research and training establishments, farm-related tourism establishments, agriculturally-related commercial uses, commercial uses on farm property and seasonal home-grown produce stands.
Welland	5.1.2.2 / 5.1.3.6	<p>Permitted uses include normal farm practices, agriculturally-related activities, nurseries, greenhouses, conservation, forestry and infrastructure of a linear nature. Secondary uses are also permitted. Secondary uses are 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.</p> <p>The City supports value added agricultural activities which allow the agricultural industry to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Become more competitive, sustainable and environmentally friendly; ii. Adapt to new and changing markets; iii. Diversify into and take advantage of new agricultural opportunities; iv. Improve the understanding of agriculture by the general public; and, v. Broaden operations to diversify economic activities and add value to primary products. <p>Accordingly, the City will review and update the agricultural policies of this Plan to reflect any new Policies in the Regional Policy Plan which allow for a greater range of value-added activities than those currently permitted in this Plan.</p>

Table 7: Examples of objectives and policies addressing and enabling on-farm innovation through a variety of permitted uses. For the policies that do not conform to the PPS, a wide range of permitted uses was found.

While the diversity of permitted uses beyond traditional agriculture suggests that municipalities have fairly progressive notions of agriculture relative to a decade ago (Dickinson et al., 2010), there is utility in the standardization of definitions across municipalities (beyond that, it is required). By conforming to the PPS' definitions of the three broad categories of permitted uses, municipalities will benefit from clear and fairly detailed policy guidance and a direction for on-farm innovation, as articulated by OMAFRA's *Guidelines*. In addition to an updated definition of permitted uses, municipalities should ensure further conformity with the PPS by ensuring that OP policies only promote uses compatible with agriculture by setting criteria for agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses

(see Appendix 3 for a full list of criteria). A way of ensuring this is by focusing on limits on scale and intensity, rather than type, of use.

5.1 Determining Compatibility based on Scale and Intensity of Use

Beyond ensuring that OP policies clearly state that agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses are all permitted in prime agricultural areas, municipalities should clearly articulate criteria for these uses, with more or less restrictions in place depending on the local conditions (that said, these restrictions cannot bring the OP in conflict with the PPS or any other provincial plan). One option for prioritizing the protection of farmland while minimally impacting options for farm viability and local economic development is to direct agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses that are slightly larger in scale to rural designated areas (where all three types of uses are permitted) and away from prime agricultural lands. This creates a logical hierarchy of scale without being overly restrictive.

The following table summarizes the criteria the PPS establishes for permitted uses in prime agricultural areas.

Type of Use	Criteria as provided by PPS policies and definitions
Agricultural	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The growing of crops, raising of livestock and raising of other animals for food, fur or fibre 2. Includes associated on-farm buildings and structures, including, but not limited to livestock facilities, manure storages, value-retaining facilities, and accommodation for full-time farm labour when the size and nature of the operation requires additional employment 3. All types, sizes and intensities of agricultural uses shall be promoted and protected in accordance with provincial standards 4. Normal farm practices shall be promoted and protected in accordance with provincial standards
Agriculture-related	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Farm-related commercial and farm-related industrial uses 2. Shall be compatible with and shall not hinder surrounding agricultural operations 3. Directly related to farm operations in the area 4. Supports agriculture 5. Provides direct products and/or services to farm operations as a primary activity 6. Benefits from being in close proximity to farm operations

On-farm diversified	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Located on a farm 2. Secondary to the principal agricultural use of the property 3. Limited in area 4. Includes, but is not limited to, home occupations, home industries, agri-tourism uses and uses that produce value-added agricultural products 5. Shall be compatible with, and shall not hinder, surrounding agricultural operations
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Table 8. Criteria provided by the PPS for each of the three broad categories of permitted uses on agricultural land.

While there is no restriction on the scale of activities permitted in agricultural areas, there are limits on scale for on-farm diversified uses. Agriculture-related uses are not limited in the same manner, but they must nevertheless be compatible with surrounding operations. Although there are a number of ways in which municipalities can place limits on scale (for instance, the number of full-time farm employees or the floor area of farm buildings), the current preferred approach according to provincial policy is placing limits on the agriculture-related or on-farm diversified use (Geerts, 2016). This is often expressed as a percentage relative to the size of the farm parcel and is meant to account for the amount of farmland that is displaced and thus unavailable for farming as a result of the use. This measure is meant to achieve a balance between protection and innovation, but it is also meant to “level the playing field” for different types of uses, grant farmers more flexibility to innovate, and simplify implementation (Geerts, 2016). One of the major benefits of evaluating secondary uses based on the area they take up is the objective nature of such calculations, as other criteria like “shall be compatible with, and shall not hinder”, “surrounding agricultural operations”, and “benefits from being in close proximity to” leave room for interpretation. Furthermore, by including this limitation in the provisions of a comprehensive zoning by-law, municipalities help provide greater certainty upfront and streamline the approvals process.

That being said, limits on footprint alone are not sufficient in “supporting a thriving agricultural industry and rural economy” (Province of Ontario, 2020), and OPs include a range of criteria to ensure appropriate (however that may be conceived) size, scale, and intensity of use on prime agricultural land. At the regional level, Niagara Region has a robust enabling framework for on-farm diversification. Of the fifteen municipalities surveyed, all other than Penetanguishene included criteria limiting the scale of on-farm diversified uses, although since OPs were not yet in conformity with the PPS, they set out criteria for secondary uses, home industries, on-farm commercial uses. Only Bradford-West Gwillimbury, Kitchener, New Tecumseth, and Wilmot included criteria limiting all agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses. None of the fifteen municipalities expressed limits on size as a ratio of the total lot area,

although Oro-Medonte, Thorold, Severn, Grimsby, and North Dumfries placed objective limits on certain agriculture-related and secondary uses. Although North Dumfries' permitted activities on agricultural land were not current with provincial policy, the municipality set out detailed criteria limiting the size of both agriculture-related and secondary uses, including that the use will not become obnoxious, offensive, dangerous, or detrimental to the environment (and automotive sales and/or repair are expressly prohibited).

In order to further control the development of agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses, municipalities may require a zoning by-law amendment or a site plan control prior to approving a new use on agricultural land. Regulation by way of site plan control application encourages as-of-right permissions and simplifies the process of undertaking a new farm venture (County of Brant, 2020). Although the financial burden of the process varies between municipalities, a lengthier process (for instance, a zoning by-law amendment) is more arduous and costly than a shorter process (a minor site plan control application, for example). All fourteen municipalities required either site plan control or a zoning by-law amendment for certain activities to take place on agricultural land. There is not necessarily a better or worse mechanism for the regulation of on-farm diversified uses, and the alternatives available to municipalities are summarized in Table 9.

Regulatory / Planning Tool	Explanation and Use
Official Plan Amendment (OPA)	This tool should not be used to regulate on-farm diversified uses, given the complicated nature of and costs associated with OPAs.
Zoning By-law Amendment (ZBA)	A ZBA is simpler than an OPA, and is only required for an on-farm diversified use that is not already expressly permitted as-of-right in a municipality's zoning by-law. If a municipality wants to regulate on-farm diversified uses (whether that is through the regulation of land uses or of specific structures on the property), it may subject certain uses to a minor variance or zoning by-law amendment to ensure issues such as site layout and traffic are compatible with surrounding agricultural uses. This allows a municipality to exert a greater degree of control over agricultural activity but may make on-farm innovation slightly more challenging for farm operators. Simplifying the ZBA process and communicating it clearly to farm operators would serve to potentially overcome these challenges.
Site Plan Control	Site Plan Control avoids the use of OPA and ZBAs while still ensuring that new uses fit in with the agricultural character of the area and are compatible with surrounding agriculture. Site Plan Control can be used by municipalities to regulate things like vehicle circulation, the scale and design of buildings,

	fencing, landscaping, and visual screening. In order to simplify the process and enable on-farm innovation, municipalities should consider an expedited approval process (which may look like a delegated authority for planning departments to approve).
Development Permit	A development permit system allows municipalities to provide certainty to farm operators wishing to pursue on-farm diversification and speed up the approvals process by combining zoning, site plan and minor variance processes.

Table 9. Tools available to municipalities to implement the permitted uses policies stated in the PPS (adapted from Geerts, 2016).

5.2 Opportunities for Agri-Tourism

One particular type of on-farm diversified use - agri-tourism - was included for the first time in provincial policy in 2014. Although it is considered a secondary use and thus permitted by many municipalities, few include specific OP policies on agri-tourism. Yet, it is a use deserving further consideration. Agri-tourism uses are part of a broader category of rural tourism, with OMAFRA defining it as “the act of visiting a working farm or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, procuring a product or service, education or personal involvement in the activities of the farm operation” (Kelly, 2016). This can include anything from farm stands, farm-based educational classes, farm tours and retreats, and pumpkin patches to on-farm dinners and festivals; there is great sophistication and diversity in terms of products, services, and marketing (Veeck, 2016). From the perspective of the farm operator, particularly those on smaller farms, agri-tourism can serve to increase on-farm revenue (Tew & Barbieri, 2012). Other motivations for diversification include the effects of globalization on agriculture, a newfound desire on the part of tourists to reconnect with where food comes from, and social motivations, such as wanting to maintain a rural lifestyle (Martz & Brueckner, 2003).

In Ontario, agri-tourism is beginning to have wider appeal, as evidenced by the publication of OMAFRA's *Factsheet on Agri-tourism* in 2016 (Kelly, 2016). However, market research on the growth and development of agri-tourism in Canada, as well as on the tourists themselves, is limited (Ainley & Smale, 2010). A lack of concrete evidence that agri-tourism ventures are truly effective strategies for diversification necessitates further research, suggesting that cautious optimism must be exercised regarding the promotion of agri-tourism as a solution to farm viability. Nevertheless, farm operators who wish to undertake such ventures should be supported, given the agri-tourism's potential economic

and social benefits. Of all the municipalities surveyed, the following included specific policies on agri-tourism uses: Woolwich, New Tecumseth, Oro-Medonte, Wainfleet, West Lincoln, Thorold. Given Niagara Region's enabling framework governing on-farm diversified uses, as well as its wine industry, it is unsurprising that its lower-tier municipalities made up half of all municipalities with such policies. By clearly defining and articulating the OP policies around agri-tourism, municipalities provide a degree of clarity to farm operators that assists with the implementation of agri-tourism ventures.

5.3 Policy Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Direct slightly larger scale on-farm diversified uses to Rural areas instead of Agricultural areas and away from prime agricultural lands to create a logical hierarchy of scale.

Recommendation 2

Where possible, promote regulation by way of site plan control. Include agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses as-of-right in the implementing zoning by-law. This will encourage more innovation as it will simplify the approvals process for farmers.

Recommendation 3

Recognize agri-tourism as a long-term strategy employed by farm operators to remain viable and ensure that both Official Plan policies and zoning by-laws set clear limits on the scale of activity without being overly restrictive or prescriptive about the types of uses qualifying as agri-tourism.

6. Other Enabling Strategies Farmland Preservation and Farm Viability

Land use policies as written in the OP and in enabling zoning by-laws play an important role in setting policy direction, particularly given municipal planners' familiarity with land use planning and the low administrative costs associated with protection for agriculture through zoning (Watkins, Hilts & Brockie, 2003). However, building a healthy agriculture system with robust protections in place for farmland goes beyond land use. This paper has already positioned itself to assert that land use policy alone will not provide guaranteed and lasting protections for agriculture in the long-term, given the high market demand for farmland and development pressures. Therefore, this section explores two other enabling actions that municipalities can take in order to complement supportive policies for small-scale agriculture under the current planning and policy framework in Ontario. These following two tools are

part of a comprehensive survey of issues affecting farm operators in the province undertaken by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA, 2020).

6.1 Advancing the Interests of Small-Scale Agriculture through Advisory Committees

While an OP may have a strong vision for agriculture and supportive policies in place, these policies may not necessarily be implemented if the capacity to do so does not exist, either due to staffing shortages or a lack of interest in / awareness of agricultural and rural issues and the value of agriculture (Epp, 2018). One means of ensuring that the interests of agriculture are reflected in planning outcomes is through special-interest committees at the municipal level. Agricultural Advisory Committees (AAC) “provide an agricultural lens to local policies, plans, and processes” through knowledge-sharing with municipal planning staff and Council (Epp, 2018). These committees make up for the lack of political representation of farmers, whose interests may be overlooked or misrepresented when creating policy (Bunce, 1998). Although specific mandates vary, they ensure that agricultural and rural interests are considered in the process of creating policies and plans, and that the challenges facing agriculture, including potential impacts of new municipal policies, are clearly communicated to decision-makers. For this reason, AACs play a very important role in advancing the interests of agriculture.

While Simcoe County and Niagara Region both had an AAC, Waterloo Region did not have a committee on agriculture at the regional level. Niagara Region’s AAC, first established in 2006, was viewed as highly effective and successful, in part due to its detailed Terms of Reference (ToR) clearly outlined the committee’s mandate (Epp, 2018) (for a summary of Niagara Region’s AAC’s ToR, see Appendix 5). The region’s AAC could be viewed as a successful example of ensuring the needs and concerns of agriculture are communicated to municipal councillors through the reliable and ongoing sharing of information.

6.2 Favourable Tax Policies for Agriculture and On-Farm Diversification

Supportive land use policies for on-farm and tax policies have not necessarily kept up with each other. OMAFRA’s *Guidelines* warn that a change in land use associated with on-farm diversification may result in a change in tax assessment class away from a more favourable rate (Geerts, 2016). Typically, farmland is taxed at a fraction of the residential tax rate (typically not more than 25%) through the

provincial Farm Tax Program - a response to the changing nature of agriculture and the financial hardships associated with traditional farming (MPAC, n.d.).

However, this preferential rate applies only to farm^{land}, and does not take into account any capital improvements on the farm (for instance, the construction of facilities for the production of value-added activities or the retail of farm products). In fact, a farm property may be separated by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) - the provincial body responsible for assessing the value of property for tax purposes - into multiple property classes if not all of these uses are deemed to be strictly for primary agricultural production. Any farm property used for value-added activities is no longer eligible for preferential treatment, assessed and placed in the Commercial or Industrial property classes by MPAC, as per Section 44 of *O.Reg 282/98* made under the *Assessment Act*. This poses a challenge to on-farm innovation, particularly given the fact that rising land values necessarily mean that farmers' property assessments increase, leading to higher taxes burdens and greater financial strain without a guaranteed increase in the ability to pay taxes due to static or decreasing incomes. In fact, MPAC's latest four-year assessment cycle (2012-2016) saw an increase in farmland values of approximately 65% over the four-year period, leading to higher property tax bills across the province, but particularly in areas where the value of agricultural land is rising the quickest (see Figure 5).

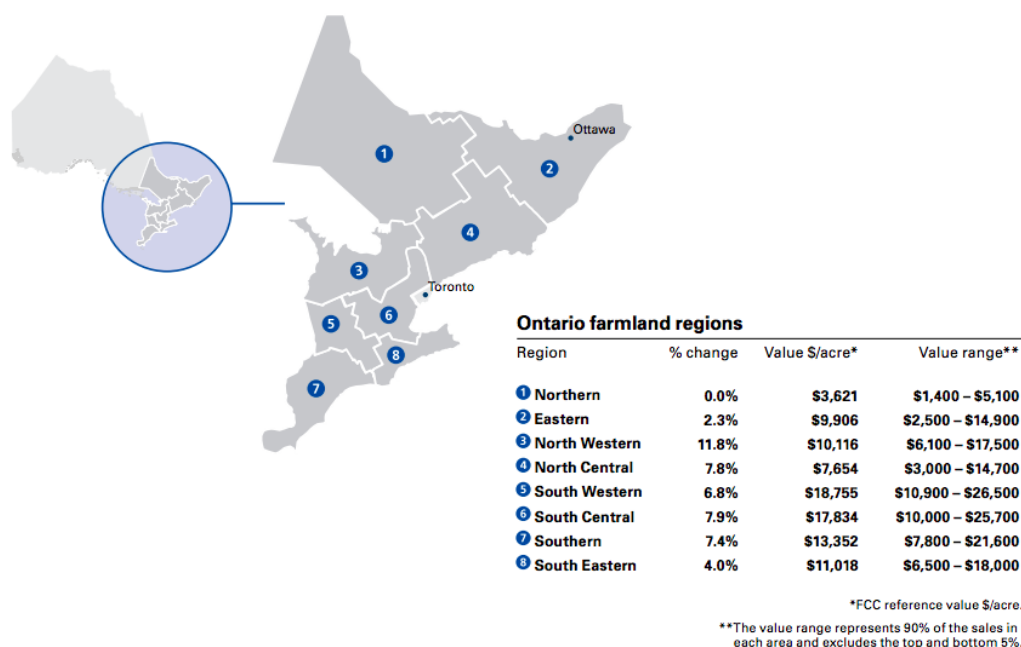


Figure 5: Increases in values across regions, in percent, as well as value \$ per acre of farmland in 2019 (Source: Farm Credit Canada, 2019).

To address this potential barrier to on-farm innovation, To address this issue, the Ministry of Finance, in May of 2018, passed *O.Reg 361/18*, amending the Assessment Act to recognize the importance of value-added activities. This regulation granted municipalities the authority to create a new property tax subclass for on-farm value-added activities for small-scale on-farm businesses. The intention behind this was to grant municipalities a tool that would provide sustainable property tax treatment to small-scale farmers seeking to diversify operations by engaging in processing or retailing activities as a direct extension of the farming business. Notably, while the definition encompasses many value-added on-farm activities (all agricultural-related uses, as defined by the PPS), it excludes some on-farm diversified uses. Nevertheless, it is a positive step in providing sustainable tax treatment to small-scale farmers who engage in value-added activities in order to diversify their business and increase farm revenues. However, this preferential tax treatment only applies if an upper-tier (or single-tier) municipality votes to enact a by-law establishing the new tax subclass. To date, a number of upper-tier municipalities including Halton, Haldimand, and Northumberland have voted to adopt *O.Reg 361/18*. In addition, over 20 municipalities have successfully reduced the farm property tax ratio below 25% (for farmland) in order to ease the tax burden on farmers (14 of those municipalities and their corresponding new ratios are listed in Table 10). None of the three upper-tier municipalities surveyed in this paper have voted to reduce the farm tax rate, although this would benefit farmer operators in those regions.

Municipality	New Ratio	Municipality	New Ratio
North Bay	0.15	Chatham-Kent	0.22
Caledon	0.1689	Lambton	0.226
London	0.1752	Lennox & Addington	0.23
Hamilton	0.1767	Prince Edward	0.2319
Halton	0.2	Oxford	0.235
Ottawa	0.2	Kingston	0.2375
Durham	0.2	Brant	0.24

Table 10: Upper-tier municipalities that have amended the farm property tax following the passage of *O.Reg 361/18* from the standard ratio of 0.25 of the residential property tax rate to ease the tax burden on farmers.

Although there are many nuances associated with tax policy that are outside of the scope of this paper, municipalities must better understand the needs of different types of farmers with respect to property taxation, particularly the impact it has on small-scale farm operations, and to respond to these needs appropriately.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This section provides a final summary of recommendations of changes to land use policies that municipalities can make in order to better support small-scale agriculture in their municipalities. Many of the recommendations outlined emphasize the importance of planning for different scales and intensities of agriculture, and that flexibility stems from the understanding that not only does small-scale agriculture differ from large agricultural operations, but that there is often more diversity among small-scale operations than is reflected in land use planning policies.

The table below lists the recommendations organized by each of the five policy areas, as well as other enabling actions.

Policy Area	Recommendations
OP Policy Language	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Develop a specific vision for agriculture and incorporate this into the Official Plan. Make sure actions and planning decisions do not go against this vision. Part of the vision could include acknowledging that farmers are land stewards (and at the very least, acknowledging that there are important benefits that farmers and agriculture bring).2. Incorporate objectives for agriculture into overarching strategic objectives.3. Broaden the objectives for agriculture to focus on overall farm viability in addition to farmland preservation.
Land Use Designations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Clearly articulate what “limited development” and what “rural character” is in OP policies and ensure that potential development on rural, non-agricultural land is compatible with the multifunctional role of natural and agricultural features in rural landscapes.2. Update zoning by-laws to conform with Official Plans and reflect the realities of agriculture today, with consideration for whether agricultural zones are located in relation to agricultural land use designations in OP schedules.3. When drafting zoning by-laws, be aware of the types of agricultural uses that exist within the municipality, in order to ensure they best fit the needs of farmers and promote farm viability through the assurance of protection for agriculture while simultaneously allowing for flexibility in uses. Note that zoning is highly-context specific and what is appropriate will vary by municipality.
Minimum Farm Size / Lot	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Enable a diversity of farm types and intensities by acknowledging the

Creation	diverse needs of different types of agricultural operations and introducing flexibility into policies regarding minimum farm size.
Minimum Distance Separation Formulae	1. Consider the different sizes and scales of livestock operations, taking stock of the potential barriers to mixed-use farming and small-scale livestock operations that stem from the application of MDS formulae.
Promotion of On-Farm Diversified Uses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Direct slightly larger scale on-farm diversified uses to Rural Areas instead of Agricultural Areas and away from prime agricultural lands to create a logical hierarchy of scale. 2. Where possible, promote regulation by way of site plan control. Include agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses as-of-right in the implementing zoning by-law. This will encourage more innovation as it will simplify the approvals process for farmers. 3. Recognize agri-tourism as a long-term strategy employed by farm operators to remain viable and ensure that both Official Plan policies and zoning by-laws set clear limits on the scale of activity without being overly restrictive or prescriptive about the types of uses qualifying as agri-tourism.
Other Enabling Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that there is an Agricultural Advisory Committee at the regional level with a detailed Terms of Reference, representation from a diversity of farm interests and organizations, as well as dedicated and supportive municipal staff and councillors. 2. Lower farm property tax ratios below 25% of the residential rate in the short term and implement the property tax subclass for on-farm value-added activities to ensure that such activities are encouraged, and to look at alternative means of property tax valuation in the long run.

Table 11: Summary of policy recommendations.

Ultimately, this paper has demonstrated the importance of small-scale agriculture to the economic well-being of the province, to environmental sustainability, and to food security, as well as its centrality to the well-being and vibrancy of rural communities. It has also reiterated the importance of considering supportive land use policies when planning for agriculture in tandem with other policies and interventions, like building capacity for change through Agricultural Advisory Committees. The thirteen recommendations outlined above are not exhaustive, but they are meant to serve as a guide for municipalities for examining current land use documents with the needs of small-scale agriculture in mind, working within the current land use planning system. There is great opportunity for municipalities to better understand and support this type of agriculture, and this paper is meant to serve as a stepping stone along the path of building that understanding.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research provided an overview of the planning framework in Ontario as it relates to agriculture, with an emphasis on policy areas that may impact small-scale farms under 130 acres. This allowed for a broad and comprehensive approach to examining farm viability, as well as the opportunity to provide workable solutions that fit into the existing planning framework (this does not, of course, discount the need for larger-scale changes to the planning system). However, it would be extremely helpful to delve further in depth on the policy areas identified here to further explore the intricacies of each. Interviews with both planning practitioners and farm operators on the ground would allow for valuable perspectives on how policies are implemented and how they are perceived by farmers. An example of this is a 2020 study on agri-tourism as a potential solution to rural revitalization in North Durham Region, which sought to understand the motivations of farmers to diversify, the ways in which agri-tourism could assist farmers, and the challenges stemming from policy and regulations (Parish, 2020). The recommendations in this paper were a product of secondary research, but primary research (in the form of interviews with both planners and farmers) would help with the development of a more fulsome, nuanced set of recommendations and would provide the opportunity to test some of the conclusions arrived at by this research.

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APPENDIX 1: Permitted uses in Wainfleet's zoning by-law

6.0 AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL ZONES

6.1 Permitted Uses

The *uses* permitted in the Agricultural Transition (A1), Agricultural (A2), Specialty Crop (A3) and Rural (A4) Zones are identified in Table 5 through symbols under the column related to each zone. Where a "Q" is shown in the column under a zone, a qualification applies to a permitted *use* as described following Table 5.

Table 5: Permitted Uses in the Agricultural and Rural Zones

Permitted Uses	A1	A2	A3	A4
<i>Agricultural use</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Intensive animal operation</i>		✓		✓
<i>Single detached dwelling accessory to an agricultural use</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Single detached dwelling as a principal use on an existing lot of record</i>	✓	✓	✓	
<i>Single detached dwelling existing at the date of the passing of this By-law as a principal use on a new lot</i>	✓	✓	✓	
<i>Single detached dwelling as a principal use on any lot</i>				Q3
<i>Accessory Agricultural Activities</i>	*	*	*	*
<i>Secondary Suite</i>	*	*	*	*
<i>Value added production uses</i>	*	*	*	*
<i>Value added marketing uses</i>	*	*	*	*
<i>Home occupation</i>	*	*	*	*
<i>Home industry</i>	*	*	*	*
<i>Agri-tourism uses related to agriculture</i>	*	*	*	*
<i>One farm help-house</i>	Q1	Q1	Q1	Q1
<i>Bed and breakfast</i>	*	*	*	*
<i>Kennel</i>		✓		✓
<i>Conservation uses</i>	✓	✓		✓
<i>Greenhouse</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Group Home</i>	Q2	Q2		Q2
<i>Medical Marihuana Facility</i>	Q4	Q4	Q4	Q4

✓ Permitted *use*

* Permitted as an *accessory use* only

Q1 One farm help-house shall be permitted per *bona fide* farm operation with a minimum lot area of 40 hectares.

Q2 Permitted only in an existing dwelling or in a new dwelling on existing lots of record.

Q3 New lots must meet M.D.S. requirements.

Q4 Permitted only through a site specific zoning by-law amendment.

6.2 Lot, Building and Structure Requirements

6.2.1 The regulations applicable to *uses* permitted in the Agricultural Transition (A1), Agricultural (A2), Specialty Crop (A3) and Rural (A4) Zones are set out in Table 6 and additional requirements applying to specific *uses* are outlined in Section 6.2.2.

Table 6: Regulations applying to Agricultural Zones

Uses	Min. Lot Area	Max. Lot Coverage	Min. Lot Frontage	Min. Front Yard	Min. Exterior Side yard	Min. Interior Side yard	Min. Rear Yard	Max. Height
<i>Agricultural use and all other permitted uses not otherwise listed below</i>	40 hectares for A1, A2 and A4 Zones 16 hectares for A3 Zone	10%	180 m.	15 m.	15 m.	15 m.	15 m.	NR
<i>Greenhouses and Medical Marihuana Facilities</i>		50% for lots less than 20 hectares 25% for lots greater than 20 hectares						
<i>Single detached dwelling as a principal use on a lot</i>	1 hectare ⁽¹⁾	7%	46 m.	15 m. or as existing whichever is the lessor	15 m. or as existing whichever is the lessor	3.5 m. with no attached garage 3 m. with attached garage	15 m.	9 m.

Uses	Min. Lot Area	Max. Lot Coverage	Min. Lot Frontage	Min. Front Yard	Min. Exterior Side yard	Min. Interior Side yard	Min. Rear Yard	Max. Height
<i>Kennels</i>	10 hectares	10%	180 m.	150 m.	150 m.	75 m. except 150 from any dwelling or institutional use	75 m. except 150 from any dwelling or institutional use	NR

NR = No requirement

Note:

- (1) The minimum *lot size* shall be 1 hectare unless a hydrogeological study undertaken by an applicant demonstrates that on-site *sustainable private services* can be achieved on a smaller *lot* with no negative impacts on surface and/or ground water features, in which case the minimum *lot size* is 4,000 m².

6.2.2 Additional Provisions

6.2.2.1 For *value added production uses*:

- the maximum *gross floor area* for *value added production uses* shall be 500 square metres;
- accessory retail and *restaurants* and ancillary *agri-tourism uses* shall be permitted to maximum size of the lesser of 50% the area of the *value added production use* or 250 square metres; and
- such *uses* shall be subject to site plan control.

6.2.2.2 For *value added marketing uses*:

- the *use* must be owner operated; and
- the maximum *gross floor area* for the *value added marketing use* shall be 100 square metres; and
- such *uses* shall be subject to site plan control.

- 6.2.2.3 For *Agri-tourism uses related to agriculture*, the maximum *gross floor area* of *buildings* and or *structures* shall be 250 square metres and such *use* shall be subject to site plan control.
- 6.2.2.4 For farm-help houses:
- a) the minimum *gross floor area* shall be 90 square metres; and
 - b) a farm help house shall be located in accordance with a Site Plan Agreement with the Township of Wainfleet.
- 6.2.2.5 For livestock or poultry *uses*, *existing buildings* or new *buildings used* for other than livestock or poultry *uses*, shall not be subsequently *used* for livestock or poultry unless the *building so used* complies with the Minimum Distance Separation (M.D.S.) requirements for the *use*.
- 6.2.2.6 For *medical marihuana facilities*:
- a) A *medical marihuana facility* or portion thereof shall not be permitted in a *dwelling*;
 - b) A *medical marihuana facility* shall be located a minimum of 150 metres from the lot line of any Residential or Institutional use or Zone, including a *day nursery*;
 - c) A sign identifying the facility or property as being or containing a *medical marihuana facility* shall be prohibited; and
 - d) Outdoor storage shall be prohibited.
- 6.2.2.7 Despite Table 6, the minimum yards for *intensive animal operations* shall be subject to the Minimum Distance Separation (M.D.S.).

6.3 Site Specific Exceptions for Permitted Uses

- 6.3.1 Notwithstanding the permitted *uses* in subsection 6.1, the following Site Specific Exceptions shall apply to the specific property listed in Table 7 and illustrated in Maps 1 to 40 in Section 15. These uses may be:
- a) in addition to the uses permitted in subsection 6.1
 - b) solely permitted to the exclusion of all other uses in section 6.1, or
 - c) not permitted, despite being listed in subsection 6.1.

APPENDIX 2: Criteria for agricultural activities in West Lincoln as stated in the zoning by-law

PART 5. AGRICULTURAL ZONES

5.1 APPLICABLE ZONES

The permitted *uses* and regulations of Part 5 apply to land within the following *zones*:

Zone	Symbol
Agricultural Zone	A
Agricultural Purposes Only Zone	APO
Agriculture-Related Zone	AR

These *zones* apply to land identified with the corresponding *zone* symbol as shown in Schedule “A”.

5.2 PERMITTED USES

In the *zones* identified in Section 5.1, no *person* shall *use* or permit the *use* of any *lot* or *erect, alter* or *use* any *building* or *structure* for any purpose except in accordance with the permitted *uses* in Table 11.

Table 11: Permitted Uses in Agricultural Zones

Uses	Zones where Permitted		
Principal Uses			
<i>Agricultural use</i>	A	APO	
<i>Agriculture-related use</i>			AR ⁽²⁾
<i>Agricultural service and supply establishment</i>			AR ⁽²⁾
<i>Commercial kennel</i> (see s. 3.8)			AR ⁽²⁾
<i>Contractors establishment</i>			AR ⁽²⁾
<i>Garden centre</i>			AR ⁽²⁾
<i>Pet care establishment</i> (see s. 3.8)			AR ⁽²⁾
<i>Private kennel</i> (see s. 3.8)			AR ⁽²⁾
<i>Service shop</i>			AR ⁽²⁾
<i>Single detached dwelling</i>	A		
<i>Veterinary clinic</i>			AR ⁽²⁾
<i>Wayside pit or quarry</i> (see s. 3.27)	A	APO	AR
Accessory Uses⁽¹⁾			
<i>Accessory buildings or structures and accessory uses</i> (see s. 3.1)	A ⁽¹⁾	APO ⁽¹⁾	AR ⁽¹⁾
<i>Accessory dwelling unit</i> (see s. 3.2)	A ⁽¹⁾		
<i>Accessory farm dwelling</i> (see s. 3.2)	A ⁽¹⁾		
<i>Garden suite</i> (see s. 3.2)	A ⁽¹⁾		
<i>Group home</i> (see s. 3.6)	A ⁽¹⁾		
<i>Home occupation</i> (see s. 3.7)	A ⁽¹⁾		
<i>On-farm diversified uses</i> (see s. 3.11), including:	A ⁽¹⁾		
<i>Agriculture-related use</i> (see s. 3.11)	A ⁽¹⁾		

Uses	Zones where Permitted		
<i>Agricultural service and supply establishment</i> (see s. 3.11)	A ⁽¹⁾		
<i>Agri-tourism / value-added use</i> (see s. 3.11)	A ⁽¹⁾		
<i>Bed and breakfast establishment</i> (see s. 3.4)	A ⁽¹⁾		
<i>Home industry</i> (see s. 3.7)	A ⁽¹⁾		
<i>Home occupation</i> (see s. 3.7)	A ⁽¹⁾		
<i>Pet care establishment</i> (see s. 3.8)	A ⁽¹⁾		
<i>Private kennel</i> (see s. 3.8)	A ⁽¹⁾		
<i>Service Shop</i> (see s. 3.11)	A ⁽¹⁾		
<i>Veterinary Clinic</i> (see s. 3.11)	A ⁽¹⁾		
<i>Outside display and sales area</i>			AR ⁽¹⁾
<i>Outside storage</i>	A ⁽¹⁾	APO ⁽¹⁾	AR ⁽¹⁾
<i>Pet care establishment</i> (see s. 3.8)	A ⁽¹⁾		
<i>Private kennel</i> (see s. 3.8)	A ⁽¹⁾		
<i>Renewable energy system</i> (see s. 3.15)	A ⁽¹⁾	APO ⁽¹⁾	AR ⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ Denotes uses that are only permitted accessory to or in conjunction with a permitted *principal use*.

⁽²⁾ These permitted *principal uses* in the AR Zone shall be directly related to *agricultural uses* in the area, require a location that is in close proximity to *agricultural uses*, and directly provide products and/or services to *agricultural uses* as the primary business.

5.3 REGULATIONS

In the *zones* identified in Section 5.1, no *person* shall *use* or permit the *use* of any *lot* or *erect, alter* or *use* any *building* or *structure* for any purpose except in accordance with the regulations in Table 12.

Table 12: Regulations for Permitted Uses in Agricultural Zones

Regulation		Zone Requirements		
		A	APO	AR
Minimum <i>lot area</i>		40 ha	39 ha	0.4 ha
Minimum <i>lot frontage</i>		100m		50m
Minimum <i>front yard</i>	<i>Dwelling</i>	15m		-
	<i>Greenhouse</i>	30m		
	<i>Mushroom farm building</i>	150m ⁽¹⁾		-
	<i>Other main building</i>	20m		10m
Minimum <i>exterior side yard</i>	<i>Dwelling</i>	15m	-	-
	<i>Greenhouse</i>	30m		
	<i>Mushroom farm building</i>	150 m ⁽¹⁾		-
	<i>Other main building</i>	20m		10m
Minimum <i>interior side yard</i>	<i>Dwelling</i>	5m	-	-
	<i>Greenhouse</i>	15m ⁽²⁾		
	<i>Mushroom farm building</i>	75m ⁽¹⁾		-
	<i>Other main building</i>	15m		7.5m

Regulation		Zone Requirements		
		A	APO	AR
Minimum <i>rear yard</i>	<i>Dwelling</i>	15m	-	-
	<i>Greenhouse</i>	15m ⁽²⁾		
	Mushroom farm <i>building</i>	75m ⁽¹⁾		-
	Other <i>main building</i>	20m		7.5m
Maximum <i>lot coverage</i>	<i>Greenhouses</i>	70%		40%
	Other <i>buildings or structures</i>	10%		
Maximum <i>height</i>		15m		15m
Minimum <i>landscaped open space</i>		No minimum		10%
Maximum <i>outside storage</i>		5% of <i>lot area</i> ⁽³⁾		10% of <i>lot area</i> ⁽³⁾

⁽¹⁾No *building* or *structure* used for the growing of mushrooms shall be located closer than 150 metres to the nearest main wall of a *dwelling* on a separate *lot* or any *street line*, and 300 metres to the nearest boundary of an Institutional Zone or a Residential Zone other than the Rural Residential Zone.

⁽²⁾The minimum *interior side yard* and *rear yard* for a *greenhouse* shall be 25 metres where one or more ventilating fans exhaust into the respective *yard*.

⁽³⁾*Outside storage* for purposes other than *outside display and sales areas* on the *lot* shall be located in a *rear yard* or *side yard* and screened from view from *public streets* and adjacent *lots*. No manure, compost or equipment storage area shall be permitted within 30 metres of a *street line* or a *lot line* of a separate *lot* that contains a *residential use* or the top of bank of a *municipal drain* or watercourse.

APPENDIX 3: Criteria for permitted uses from OMAFRA's *Guidelines*

Table 1. Criteria for permitted uses in *prime agricultural areas*

Type of use	Criteria as provided by PPS policies and definitions
Agricultural	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The growing of crops, raising of livestock and raising of other animals for food, fur or fibre 2. Includes associated on-farm buildings and structures, including, but not limited to livestock facilities, manure storages, value-retaining facilities, and accommodation for full-time farm labour when the size and nature of the operation requires additional employment 3. All types, sizes and intensities of <i>agricultural uses</i> shall be promoted and protected in accordance with provincial standards 4. <i>Normal farm practices</i> shall be promoted and protected in accordance with provincial standards
Agriculture-Related	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Farm-related commercial and farm-related industrial uses 2. Shall be compatible with and shall not hinder surrounding agricultural operations 3. Directly related to farm operations in the area 4. Supports agriculture 5. Provides direct products and/or services to farm operations as a primary activity 6. Benefits from being in close proximity to farm operations
On-Farm Diversified	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Located on a farm 2. Secondary to the principal <i>agricultural use</i> of the property 3. Limited in area 4. Includes, but is not limited to, home occupations, home industries, <i>agri-tourism uses</i> and uses that produce value-added agricultural products 5. Shall be compatible with, and shall not hinder, surrounding agricultural operations

(Source: Geerts, 2016, p. 3).

“Table 1 summarizes the specific criteria for agricultural, agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses. The criteria cover all key descriptors referred to in Policies 2.3.3.1, 2.3.3.2 and 2.3.3.3 of the PPS and the applicable PPS definitions. Each criterion is discussed in detail in [OMAFRA's *Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas*].”

APPENDIX 4: Oro-Medonte's OP policy C1.3.1 on the creation of new lots of agricultural purposes.

C1.3.1 The Creation Of New Lots For Agricultural Purposes

It is the intent of this Plan that land which is suitable for agricultural use be protected from development and land uses that are unrelated to agriculture. It is also the intent of this Plan to encourage the expansion, consolidation and development of new agricultural uses since the agricultural sector greatly contributes to the economy of the municipality.

Council supports the development of new specialized agricultural uses in the Township as these uses have the potential to increase the amount of agricultural activity in the municipality. For the purposes of this Plan and the implementing Zoning By-law, a specialized agricultural use is defined below:

"Means lands where a specialty crop such as tender fruits (peaches, cherries, plums) grapes, other fruit crops, ginseng, vegetable crops, greenhouse crops and crops from agriculturally developed organic soil lands are predominantly grown, usually resulting from:

- soils that have suitability to produce specialty crops or lands that are subject to special climatic conditions, or a combination of both and/or*
- a combination of farmers skilled in the production of specialty crops, and of capital investment in related facilities to produce, store or process specialty crops*

A specialized agricultural use may also consist of a market garden where the products grown on the site are sold. For the purpose of this definition, a specialized agricultural use does not include a fur farm."

It is recognized that specialized agricultural uses generally do not require more than 10.0 hectares of land to be economically viable. Given the supply of 10.0 hectare lots in the municipality on the date this Plan was adopted by Council, it is the general intent of this Plan to

direct new specialized agricultural uses to these lots.

However, the Township will consider an application to create a new lot for a specialized agricultural use. In considering the creation of such lot, the Committee of Adjustment shall be satisfied that:

- a) The creation of the new lot can be justified. In order to assist the Committee of Adjustment in this regard, the applicant shall submit a farm/business plan that:
 - i. describes how the soil conditions, climate and location are appropriate for the proposed specialized farm use;
 - ii. describes the proposed specialized agricultural use in detail;
 - iii. describes the capital investment that is to be made;
 - iv. identifies the market area for the product; and
 - v. forecasts the income that would be generated by the proposed use.
- b) The applicant has experience and/or training with the type of specialized agricultural use being proposed.
- c) The new lot can be used for other agricultural uses that are common to the area if the lot ceases to be used for specialized agricultural purposes. In order to assist the Committee in this regard, the applicant shall provide a report to the Committee prepared by a qualified agrologist that:
 - i. describes the nature of farming operations in the area; and
 - ii. describes what types of agricultural uses are feasible on the lot if the use of the lot for a specialized agricultural use ceases.
- d) The remnant parcel will continue to be viable for agricultural use after the severance has been granted. To assist the Committee

of Adjustment in determining the viability of the remnant parcel, an agricultural viability report shall be prepared by a qualified agrologist. This report shall review:

- i. the quality of soils;
 - ii. the nature of the existing farming operation, if one exists; and,
 - iii. the potential uses of the remnant parcel.
- e) The area of the lot to be created for specialized agricultural purposes does not exceed approximately 25 per cent of the area of the lot from which the severance is proposed.
 - f) The lot from which the severance is proposed has an area of at least 20.0 hectares.
 - g) The new lot has an area of not less than 4.0 hectares.

If the Committee of Adjustment is satisfied that the above criteria have been met, the Committee shall include a condition of consent that states that the new lot be placed in site-specific zone in the implementing Zoning By-law that prohibits the development of residential uses. The re-zoning of the property to permit a residential use is strongly discouraged by this Plan since the development of a residence would have an impact on either the rural character of the area and/or the viability of agricultural operations in the area.

C1.3.2 The Creation Of New Lots For Non-Agricultural Purposes

In accordance with the intent of this Plan to protect land suitable for agriculture and to maintain the rural character of the Township, the creation of new lots in the *Agricultural* designation for non-agricultural purposes is not permitted.

Appendix 5. Niagara Region's AAC's Terms of Reference.

Preamble

The Agricultural Policy & Action Committee (APAC) was formed in 2013 as a result of a direction from Regional Council to amalgamate the Agricultural Sub-Committee and the Regional Chair's Agricultural Task Force. The Agricultural Sub-Committee was established in 1972 for the purposes of creating support programs through the two federations of agriculture to promote the agricultural industry in the Niagara Region and to provide input into planning issues that could have an impact on the agricultural industry. The Regional Chair's Agricultural Task Force was formed in 2002 to identify and take action on major blockades to the long-term viability of agriculture and to influence positive changes in agriculture-related policy at all levels of government. The amalgamation of the two committees into the Agricultural Policy & Action Committee provides the opportunity to recognize and align the work of both committees, and to recognize the critical primacy of agriculture in the Niagara Region in terms of both public policy and demonstrable actions.

Mandate

The Agricultural Policy & Action Committee (APAC) is an advisory body established by the Niagara Region in accordance with the following Terms of Reference. The Committee has been established to advise Regional Council on issues that impact the agricultural industry and support Regional Council, reporting through the Integrated Community Planning Committee, by initiating, developing, implementing and participating in actions and strategies needed to advance the agricultural industry and preserve the agricultural land base throughout the Niagara Region.

Goals/Purpose

- Initiate, develop, implement and participate in strategies to advance the agricultural industry and preserve the Agricultural land base in the Niagara Region
- Update, as necessary, and carry out the tasks contained within the Agricultural Action Plan
- Act as a continuing liaison committee to further the interests of and promote the agricultural industry of the Niagara Region
- Provide input on planning-related matters that could have an impact on the agricultural industry
- Provide a link between the agricultural industry, the Agri-Food industry, and the economic development and health agendas
- Examples of specific work projects include, but are not limited to, the following: updating the agricultural & economic impact study, overseeing and updating the Agricultural Action Plan and the Local Food Action Plan, raw water for irrigation, tax policy, etc.

Reporting Structure

The APAC will report to the Regional Council through the Integrated Community Planning Committee.

Work Plan

The APAC will provide guidance to staff in the development of an annual work plan identifying the specific initiatives and activities to be undertaken within each of the areas of focus, inclusive of budget needs, to further guide decision-making and resource management.

Membership

Membership for the APAC shall not exceed a maximum of 15 members with the majority of members being from the agricultural sector (primary producers).

Membership for the APAC shall include:

- At least one (1) Representative as appointed by the Niagara North Federation of Agriculture
- At least one (1) Representative as appointed by the Niagara South Federation of Agriculture
- Up to **six (6)** Regional Council Representatives as appointed by Regional Council

Depending on the priority issues outlined in the APAC's work plan, the remainder of the membership should target membership from across the Niagara Region, throughout the value chain, from a range of commodities and sectors related to the agricultural industry. Membership or participation with either the Niagara North or Niagara South Federation of Agriculture is considered an asset.

The remainder of the membership may target but is not limited to the following commodity/interest groups:

- Tender Fruit Industry
- Research Sector
- Dealer/Shipper Industry
- Grape Industry
- Meat/Food Processing Industry
- Greenhouse Industry
- Land Preservation and Environmental Protection Sector
- Nursery & Landscape Industry
- Cash Crop Industry
- Poultry Industry
- Livestock Industry

The term of membership shall be four years, concurrent with the Regional Council's elected term of office, and the membership shall be approved by Council in accordance with membership requirements in the Terms of Reference. Current Committee members shall indicate their desire to be reappointed to the Committee no later than the December meeting prior to the change in Council.

All attempts will be made to stay within the guideline composition; however, if the applications received or the qualifications of applicants do not fully address the guideline composition criteria, the most capable and qualified applicants will be recommended for appointment to fulfill the membership composition.

The call for membership shall be made by invitation circulated to local agricultural stakeholders

Chair & Vice Chair

A Chair and Vice Chair will be elected from Committee members on a biannual basis at the first meeting of the New Year to preside over meetings and Committee business. The Chair of the Committee shall be a Regional Councillor. The Vice Chair of the Committee shall be a stakeholder member.

Working Groups

To fulfill its mandate and accomplish its goals, the APAC will establish working groups to deal with specific issues or projects. The working groups will meet, as needed, to review specific issues referred to them by the APAC and otherwise complete their assigned tasks.

Working groups are considered to be time-limited, project specific sub-committees of the APAC in that they are convened to accomplish a specific task (or tasks) in a narrowly defined time period.

Working groups must be comprised of at least two members of the APAC and may include community members and other individuals with relevant knowledge and expertise. Local municipal participation should be sought depending on the nature of the work being undertaken.

Working groups shall be chaired where possible by a voting member of the APAC and shall provide regular updates to the APAC regarding recommendations on assigned projects. Minutes of the meetings of the working group shall be recorded and submitted to the APAC for proper directing through the approval process. Working groups may meet at a time and place as decided by the members of the working group.

Some examples of projects to be undertaken by the APAC Working Group(s) include: raw water for irrigation, review of the Province's Greenbelt Plan, conduct an in-depth review of provincial policy, guide the creation of a Rural Community Improvement Plan, and guide technological studies.

Resources

The Integrated Community Planning Department is the designated lead department regarding resource support for the APAC; however, the Committee also has access to the technical expertise of staff from other Regional departments as may be required. It is recognized that staff time and the level of participation will be dependent on other departmental priorities as determined by senior management and/or Regional Council. As required, additional resources may be sought. Additional resourcing may be required for projects with senior levels of government.

The Committee shall receive administrative support from the Office of the Regional Clerk for meeting and agenda management.

Meetings

A meeting schedule following a quarterly cycle shall be set for the APAC. The schedule will be circulated to the members for approval each year. Should a time sensitive matter arise, the APAC may meet at the call of the Chair.

The APAC meetings will be held at Regional Headquarters at a time as determined by the members. Subject to requirements under the Procedural By-law, a meeting may be held in an alternate location. All meetings will be open to the public.

Meetings shall be governed by the Region's Procedural By-law, being a by-law to govern the calling, place and proceedings of the meetings of Council and its Committees, as may be amended from time-to-time. This includes rules surrounding quorum.

A schedule setting the due dates for materials to be included on the agenda will be circulated to each member pending adoption of a meeting schedule or the scheduling of a meeting date.

Absenteeism

Members, who miss three unauthorized consecutive meetings, shall be deemed to have resigned from the Committee and will be notified of this in writing by the Committee Chair.

Amendments To The Terms Of Reference:

The Terms of Reference should be reviewed and refined at a minimum of every four years to ensure that they remain current and meaningful. Proposals to amend the Terms of Reference shall require the approval of a majority of the members present. Proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference shall be submitted to Regional Council for approval through the Integrated Community Planning Committee and shall take effect only upon the approval of Council.