

Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy: Status of Action Items

STRATEGIC GOAL	ACTION ITEM	TIMELINE	STATUS
1. Strengthen communication and collaboration with York Region, lower tier municipalities and the agri-food sector	1.1 Create a York Region agri-food specialist role dedicated to supporting growth of existing businesses, attracting new investments and promoting the Agri-food sector in York Region.	Short-term	Complete
	1.2 Build internal staff capacity to provide direction to lower tiers on agri-food issues; coordinate programming and initiatives between planning and economic development and tourism at the Regional level.	On-going	Complete/ On-going
	1.3 Develop a communication roadmap/strategy to ensure open and transparent communication pathways.	Short-term	Complete
	1.4 Create a directory/resource that includes names and contact information of producers in the Region; to be used by the Region for collecting employment data.	Medium-term	Complete
	1.5 Create annual opportunity to collect feedback from the agri-food sector to strengthen York Region staff and Council's understanding of farm and food businesses and their needs by engaging with local farmers and agri-food experts.	Medium-term	Complete/ On-going
	1.6 Continue to support and collaborate with GHFFA through projects.	On-going	Complete/ On-going
	1.7 Continue support for the York Region Agricultural Advisory Liaison Group (YRAALG) by allocating annual budget for special projects and events.	Medium-term	Complete/ On-going
	1.8 Explore and identify ways to celebrate and showcase agricultural innovators/champions in	On-going	Complete/ On-going

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	the Region using existing communication efforts.		
	1.9 Seek opportunities to collaborate with partners in York Region and beyond the Region.	On-going	Complete/ On-going
	1.10 Develop York Region agri-food educational materials for general public to share at regional and community events.	On-going	Complete/ On-going
	1.11 Investigate and explore opportunities for teaching youth about agriculture and food production in the Region.	Medium-term	Complete/ On-going
	1.12 Demonstrate a commitment to the agri-food sector by supporting agricultural events and conventions through sponsorship or in-kind support.	On-going	Complete/ On-going
	1.13 Collaborate with organizations such as Rouge National Park, Oak Ridges Moraine Trust, Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA), and Ontario Farmland Trust to conduct study to understand current land stewardship practices used by York producers.	Medium-term	Complete/ On-going
2. Support agri-food sector through integrated land use planning and economic development			
	2.1 At the next review, update York Region's Official Plan to conform and align with recent changes to the Greenbelt Plan, Growth Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Plan (2017 updates).	Medium-term	Underway
	2.2. Prior to next Official Plan review, conduct a Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) study to collect updated data on quality of soils, fragmentation, conflicting uses and production in York Region.	Medium-term	Complete
	2.3 Through the Municipal Comprehensive Review, review York Region's Official Plan (and lower tier plans) related to overall agricultural strategies, land use policies, acceptable uses, as well as application processes and development fees to ensure they encourage and support investment and employment in the agricultural sector.	On-going	Underway

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	2.4 Conduct a study that investigates innovative financial mechanisms that incentivize producers and landowners to keep land in agricultural production.	Medium-term	New
	2.5 Conduct a review of policies and regulations related to environmental performance of food processing operations within the Region.	Short-term	Complete
	2.6 Participate in the upcoming consultation and review for the Greater Golden Horseshoe's Agricultural System policies (led by OMAFRA).	Short-term	Complete
	2.7 Recognize and acknowledge the agri-food sector's role as an economic driver in the Region through updates to plans and policies.	Medium-term	Complete/ On-going
	2.8 Conduct a study and review of edge planning practices and identify planning tools the Region can use to resolve conflicts between adjacent urban and agricultural land uses.	Medium-term	Complete/ On-going
	2.9 Monitor the province's development of Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) guidelines and provide feedback through consultation with planning staff and other relevant stakeholders.	On-going	Complete
	2.10 Encourage the lower tier municipalities to develop and implement an Agricultural Community Improvement Plan (CIP) to incentivize on-farm diversification and value-added operations.	On-going	Complete/ On-going
	2.11 Create factsheets and accessible materials to help agri-food stakeholders interpret land use policies.	On-going	Complete
3. Support increased capacity for value added processing and support services			
	3.1 Develop and implement a Food Processing Action Plan that demonstrates York Region is 'open for business' to attract and retain food processing businesses.	Medium-term	New

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	3.2 Establish an agri-entrepreneur mentor program in conjunction with the York Small Business Enterprise Centre to support existing and potential entrepreneurs with mentoring and business guidance.	Medium-term	Complete/ On-going
	3.3 Investigate and identify opportunities to develop a regional food incubator/hub to support fruit and vegetable value-adding opportunities to increase farm revenue.	Long-term	Complete/ On-going
4. Leverage within the GTA and proximity to customers through direct farm marketing to meet demand for local food production			
	4.1 Facilitate the revitalization of the York Farm Fresh Organization to support the growth of York's agri-food sector and demand for farm-direct production.	On-going	Complete
	4.2 Continue annual production of the York Region Farm Fresh Guide Map and Pumpkin Pie Trail Map to promote and raise awareness of locally produced agricultural products.	Short-term	Complete
	4.3 Continue to support and encourage the provision of community gardens and/or urban agriculture projects that promote agricultural awareness in settlement/urban areas.	On-going	Complete/ On-going
	4.4 Support the development of agri-tourism programming such as "Farm Tour Hikes".	On-going	Complete/ On-going
	4.5 Raise awareness around the diversity of production and processing found in the Region through promotional materials (e.g. Ontario's 'soup and salad bowl' in the Holland Marsh; world crop production).	On-going	Complete/ On-going
	4.6 Revisit York Region's Food Charter and broaden support across the agri-food sector.	On-going	Underway
	4.7 Develop local food-sourcing policies for Regional facilities and encourage other public sector agencies within the Region to adopt similar policies.	Medium-term	Planned

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	4.8 Facilitate relationship building between producer, processors and retail companies that support local food production (e.g. Longos, Metro).	Medium-term	Complete/ On-going
	4.9 Communicate and promote existing online tools to help connect producers with the local market through workshops and seminars.	Medium-term	Complete/ On-going
	4.10 Partner with Rouge National Urban Park and Toronto Region Conservation to increase collaboration and learning amongst agri-businesses and potential new entrants into agri-tourism through hikes, education programs and/or peer-to-peer learning groups.	Medium-term	Underway
5. Provide support for business retention and expansion of primary agriculture production within York Region			
	5.1 Conduct Business Retention and Expansion studies (led by OMAFRA) to assess and evaluate the needs and opportunities in each lower-tier municipality with a focus on agri-food related services and businesses	Medium-term	Planned
	5.2. Conduct a study and develop a long-term sustainability strategy for the Holland Marsh through collaboration with stakeholders and partners (e.g. Simcoe County, Lake Simcoe Regional Conservation Authority, Holland Marsh Growers' Association, OMAFRA, etc.).	Medium-term	Complete
	5.3. Work with industry and government agencies to support the employment of seasonal and foreign agricultural workers, with respect to working conditions, accommodations, cultural services and accessibility to workers.	On-going	Complete/ On-going
	5.4. Undertake an equine industry study and consultation to identify barriers and opportunities for growing the Region's equine industry including research on successes in other regions (e.g. Greater Toronto Area, Caledon, Halton Hills, etc.).	Medium-term	New
	5.5 Explore opportunities to increase the production of world crops within York Region.	Medium-term	Complete/ On-going

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	5.6 Continue support to improve broadband connectivity across the Region through the Region's Broadband Strategy; particularly in rural and agricultural areas to help businesses develop and grow.	On-going	Complete/ On-going
	5.7 Develop template and prepare annual report card to record and evaluate achievements.	On-going	Complete/ On-going
	5.8 Conduct a five-year review of York Region's Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector Strategy.	Long-term	Planned