

Implementation Strategies

Report 2: Appendix 2

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Implementation Strategies

The following section will build upon the *Actions* identified earlier in Report 2. The intention is to provide an appropriate level of detail as to how these actions could be implemented. It is important to note that thorough and comprehensive research into each of these actions was beyond the purview of this report. Thus, the following implementation strategies should not be taken as end-all solutions but rather as starting points for further considerations and, in some cases, further research.

It will be noted that each Implementation Strategy is broken down into Short Term and Long Term actions. The intention is to provide ideas for what could be done today, or in the near future, and what could be viewed as a goal to be worked towards.

As well, wherever possible sections include case studies from within the NeCN catchment area as well as examples from outside this region. These often provide an excellent source of models, contacts, and general expectations when pursuing these actions.

How to Use This Section

This section of the report is not intended to be read through cover-to-cover and instead should be viewed as a reference relating to a wide range of possible actions for expanding agriculture within the NeCN catchment area. It is suggested that those using this document make use of the Table of Contents to go directly to their areas of interest as reading this section in its entirety would presumably be overwhelming and therefore ineffective.

It should also be noted that every action throughout this appendix is not expected to be adopted by the NeCN. Instead, each action provides an implementation strategy containing a list of options that should be considered. Indeed, the priorities of the NeCN will have to be considered within their own resources and community needs in order to determine which options are most appropriate for their own goals, priorities, and situations.

General Recommendations

There are a few general or overarching recommendations that cut across the various Implementation Strategies within this report. These include:

- **Website:** The creation of an integrated website for housing the various outcomes of the implementation strategies and presenting a single point for accessing information on a wide range of topics.

- **Personnel:** New or existing personnel should be allocated the responsibility of seeing actions deemed valuable through to fruition. All too often good ideas are never implemented simply because there is confusion or miscommunication over *who* will make it happen. The NeCN should take steps to avoid this issue.
- **Use Existing Resources:** The fieldwork for this project identified many energetic, innovative, and passionate people and groups within the NeCN catchment area. Going forward, these individuals and groups should be utilized as role models and champions for making actions happen.
- **Communication:** The fieldwork also found that many people were unaware of programs and services that are presently offered within the area. Indeed, it is important to note that in some cases the solution to a problem will not necessarily be the creation of a new program or service but rather better communication of existing programs and services.
- **Foster Cooperation:** It is also important to keep in mind that in some solutions the NeCN would only be required as a liaison or mediator. In these cases, existing individuals or groups can come together to play a hands-on role while the NeCN fosters cooperation and communication between them. These will be most effective as it requires little hands-on work or finances from the NeCN.
- **Regular Newsletter:** Many farmers in the area do not have, or are uncomfortable with, computers. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to distribute a paper copy of a newsletter on a regular basis (i.e. monthly, quarterly). This newsletter can be used to help foster a sense of community within the NeCN catchment area's agriculture sector. More importantly, it can be used to raise awareness of: events; improved farming practices or crop varieties; funding opportunities and deadlines; success stories or innovative ideas; among other topics. There may even be an opportunity to get a regular contribution from the regional OMAFRA office and/or one of the research stations discussing what they are working on and practical findings. The NeCN may also consider partnering with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) to deliver this newsletter and/or make use of municipal tax mailouts to deliver the message.

Dedicated Resources for Implementation

Strategic Action: Dedicated resources for implementing an agriculture strategy in the NeCN catchment area

Recommended General Direction: Dedicate human and financial resources to the revitalization of agriculture in the NeCN catchment area.

Dedicated human and financial resources will be required in order to successfully implement the strategies necessary to revitalize the agricultural sector in the NeCN catchment area.

Objectives:

- I. New or existing personnel responsible for implementation of strategies.
- II. Allocation of financial resources allocated through the NeCN.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Specific allocation of duties and responsibilities to NeCN members**
 - a. In order to accomplish the goals of the NeCN it will be essential that responsibilities be clearly defined and provided to specific individuals. All too often there is confusion and miscommunication as to who will implement a strategy or oversee a project.
 - b. Therefore, those that are responsible for overseeing an implementation strategy should be clearly defined presumably on a volunteer basis.
- **Dedication of financial resources**
 - a. It will be important to provide financial resources for the completion of the projects and strategies necessary for achieving the NeCN goals. While some implementation strategies will require person-hours rather than funding, many of the implementation strategies will require funding to be successful.
 - b. It will also be important to note the funding opportunities provided by external sources and other levels of government which can be used for achieving these agriculturally related goals. In many cases the role of the NeCN will not necessarily be funding directly, but rather applying for funding and managing its distribution.

Long Term:

- **Personnel specifically responsible for agricultural development in the NeCN catchment area**
 - a. In time, it would be beneficial for the NeCN to hire a community economic development specialist with the specific role of overseeing projects and implementing strategies.
 - b. This role would report directly to the NeCN Board of Directors, or a Steering Committee, and be responsible specifically for achieving the goals set out by the NeCN organization.
 - c. There may be an opportunity to apply for grant funding to create such a position, such as through the Ontario Trillium Foundation or the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC).

Why do this?

In order to successfully implement the strategies contained within this report dedicated resources will be necessary. Indeed, in every case personnel (new or existing) will be required to undertake the work necessary to achieve the goals and in many cases, financial resources will be required as well.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- New or existing personnel specifically tasked with seeing implementation strategies through to fruition.
- Financial resources dedicated to projects aimed at revitalizing agricultural sector in NeCN catchment area.

Impacts:

- Achievement of goals and successful completion of projects.

Promotion to Mennonite Communities

Strategic Action: Promote available land to Mennonite communities in Southern Ontario

Recommended General Direction: Undertake a promotional campaign targeted at Mennonite and Amish groups in Southern Ontario raising awareness of Cochrane District as an option for settlement.

There may be a role for the NeCN in promoting the area to Old Order Mennonite and Amish communities in Southern Ontario as well as work with Mennonite settlement services to find obstacles to settlement in the area and opportunities to overcome them.

Objectives:

- I. Promotional package available for Mennonite and Amish groups in Southern Ontario.
- II. Settlement liaison based in the NeCN catchment area.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Promotional package for distribution within Mennonite and Amish communities in Southern Ontario**
 - a. A promotional package should be created highlighting the agricultural opportunities within the NeCN catchment area with particular emphasis on the availability, viability, and affordability of land within the area.
 - b. The promotional package should also include information on the way of life and values which communities in Northeast Ontario share. It should also include information on the availability of services within the area.
 - c. It would be worthwhile to include success stories of other Mennonite groups which have settled in nearby regions such as in Desbarats, near Sault Ste Marie and in Timiskaming.
 - d. This information package should be distributed to Mennonite and Amish leaders, such as Bishops, in Southern Ontario. It will also be important to follow up with these individuals, ideally in person, to form a personal relationship.
- **Continued discussions with community leaders and research into viability**
 - a. It will be important to continue discussions with community leaders to find obstacles to settlement in the area and how they might be addressed. As well, there is a significant number of sects within the overarching Mennonite or Amish terms with some more suited to the region than others.
 - b. For instance, Lyndsay Mollins Koene of the Mennonite Central Committee of Ontario states that while in appearance some Mennonite groups would seem to live traditional lives, in terms of dress or use of buggies, they may also make use of electricity and modern farm equipment in their agricultural operations.
 - c. Therefore, it will be important to establish and continue discussions with Mennonite or

Amish leadership to discuss individual community needs and expectations while keeping in mind that these will not necessarily be shared by every group.

Long Term:

- **Settlement service and single point of contact within NeCN catchment area**
 - a. In order to help facilitate the settlement of a Mennonite or Amish community a single point of contact should be created or appointed. This can allow for relationship building between the NeCN and Mennonite or Amish communities in the south. It can also improve efficiency and avoid complications resulting from each NeCN municipality attempting to work independently; particularly with a group with limited communication methods.
 - b. In parallel, a form of settlement service should be created to work with Mennonite or Amish communities in meeting their community expectations and help them find available land. For instance, consultations may indicate that the community expects to be within a one day buggy ride from a settlement providing supplies. Surely a representative from the NeCN would be most appropriate to help identify appropriate areas with available farmland.
 - c. This settlement service should also support these newcomers once they settle in the area in meeting their unique needs. There has already been at least one recent attempt to establish an Old Order Mennonite community in Cochrane District; however this group did not remain. This unfortunate situation may be overcome with the availability of a service offering support to these groups and helping them overcome any obstacles they encounter, before they decide to move elsewhere.
- **Tour of region specifically for Mennonite or Amish groups**
 - a. Another means to raise awareness of the opportunities within the NeCN catchment area would be a tour of the region and the opportunity to visit some good examples of operating farms.
 - b. It can be expected that this would be the best way to clearly present the agricultural potential to the Mennonite or Amish communities as well as demonstrate the way of life that can be expected by settlers in the region.

Why do this?

Old Order Mennonite and Amish communities sometimes move their groups away from urbanizing areas in search of places more in keeping with their way of life. Mennonites are also good farmers who may not be hindered by the long distances to external markets or the lack of machinery providers. From an agricultural sense they would be ideally suited to the conditions of the NeCN catchment area and would provide an excellent starting point for agricultural expansion.

Socially they also would appear to be well suited to the relatively remote location of the NeCN catchment area from the large centres of Southern Ontario. However there has been some indication that there are some elements that they seek in communities before they would consider moving to them.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- Promotion package created and distributed to Mennonite and Amish community leadership in Southern Ontario
- Settlement service and point of contact for those interested in settling in the area to help meet community needs.

Impacts:

- Increased awareness of the availability of land and opportunities in the NeCN catchment area within Mennonite and Amish communities and leadership.
- Means for NeCN representatives to work with Mennonite or Amish leadership to overcome barriers to settlement and help facilitate the process where appropriate.

Relevant Examples

Additional sources

- Mennonite Central Committee of Ontario: <http://ontario.mcc.org/lowgerman>

External Promotion of Agricultural Potential

Strategic Action: Promotion and marketing of agricultural potential of NeCN area to external audiences

Recommended General Direction: Undertake a marketing campaign promoting the agricultural opportunities and considerable potential that the NeCN catchment area offers targeted at those in Southern Ontario and beyond.

The NeCN catchment area has considerable agricultural potential which should be promoted and marketed outside the region. In particular, there are current and potential farmers in southern Ontario that are not aware of the benefits and potential of agriculture in Cochrane District who may consider moving to the area.

Objectives:

- I. Marketing campaign in Southern Ontario promoting the opportunities and benefits of agriculture in Cochrane District.
- II. Website providing information on Cochrane District, including information on agriculture practices, lifestyle, available land, among other practicalities.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Marketing campaign promoting the availability of land and viability of agriculture in Cochrane District**
 - a. A key method of promoting Cochrane District is the use of agricultural periodicals such as *Better Farming* and *Ontario Farmer*. An option for doing so would be to retain a journalist to write an article (or series) on success stories in the area.
 - b. Another important aspect will be having a presence at fairs, farm shows, and other agricultural events. For instance, a booth at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair would provide considerable exposure for Cochrane District and an opportunity to reach a large audience and easily dispel myths.
- **Website including information on agricultural opportunities and viability**
 - a. A key aspect of the promotion campaign should be a dedicated website providing a range of information on Cochrane District. Within this, information should be provided on the agricultural potential of Cochrane District and the benefits of farming in the region, such as the low cost of land. Similarly, information should be provided on viable crops and, ideally, necessary farming practices for the North which newcomers presumably would not know.
 - b. In addition to general information on agricultural opportunities, it would be ideal to include a means to find land for sale. This may include linkages with real estate offices in the area, local contacts with knowledge of land for sale, or even a place for those selling land in the area to advertise.

- **Information on non-agricultural characteristics and benefits**
 - a. It will be important to provide information on non-agricultural benefits within Cochrane District when attempting to attract newcomers. Indeed, Northeast Ontario is very different from Southern Ontario and anyone considering moving will require information on these communities in order to meet their lifestyle expectations. For instance, if one is interested in moving to Cochrane District but also expects city-style amenities, adjacent to Timmins will be the best choice. However this would not be apparent to anyone who has not visited Northeast Ontario and is accustomed to Southern Ontario distances.
 - b. It will also be important to promote the non-agricultural opportunities within Cochrane District when attempting to attract newcomers. For instance, the promotion website should present the opportunities for recreation and lifestyle choice offered by the broad range of landscapes and very different communities within the area. It should also raise awareness that there are small to medium sized settlements within the NeCN catchment area which are much the same as in Southern Ontario.
 - c. A good example for how this might be approached can be found in the PARC example described earlier in this section.
- **Organize farm tours to area**
 - a. Another means to spread the word about the benefits and opportunities for agriculture in Cochrane District would be to organize farm tours.
 - b. There is a wide range of groups who already participate in tours and may be interested in this opportunity. Such as: the Junior Farmers' Association of Ontario, Ecological Farmers of Ontario, Ontario Dairy Goat Cooperative, and more.
 - c. This would likely require some funding be put forward to offset the costs of transportation and accommodations although there is an assumption that a participation fee will be applied.

Long Term:

- **Support for each stage of the settlement process**
 - a. In time, it would be beneficial for a website and personnel to be available to support prospective newcomers through each aspect of their settlement process.
 - b. This would begin with background information on the area for those unfamiliar with the area and its realities.
 - c. Information on agricultural opportunities (i.e. available land, viable crops, climate, soils).
 - d. Information on lifestyle, recreation opportunities (i.e. outdoor opportunities, family friendly environment, strong community ties).
 - e. Information on community characteristics. For instance, it would be useful to provide some means of matching lifestyle expectations to community characteristics (i.e. if one likes cities they should leave near Timmins, if someone seeks a more secluded environment they may fit best elsewhere). Similarly, if prospective newcomers need certain institutions (for a specific religion for instance) it would be useful to be able to provide where these are located and thereby what communities best fit the needs of these newcomers.
 - f. Information and support in finding housing/land availability: It would be ideal to have a contact person support individuals in their search for available farmland and housing as well as information on listings wherever possible.
 - g. Support in integrating with the community: The movement of a newcomer to the area should not be the end of their support. If an individual or family has difficulty integrating,

they may not remain in the area. Therefore, ongoing integration support would be worthwhile.

- h. Similarly, if these newcomers' farming operation fails they will not remain in the community. Therefore, it would be beneficial to provide on-going support in growing the agricultural operation, including information on necessary farming practices, business counselling, etc. This may be accomplished through the counselling and funding application support provided by the Community Futures Development Corporations as well as through a network of local groups and a mentorship program.

- **Purchasing options on land**

- a. A fairly hands-on option for the NeCN may be to participate in option to purchase agreements with landowners in the area. Essentially, this means that the organization will *purchase* the option (but not obligation) to buy a set piece of land for a relatively small lump sum put forward with the option remaining in place for a specified time period.
- b. This would provide a very strong method for marketing the available land in the area, as it would be much more effective to say 'this land is available for purchase today at this price' than merely stating that land is generally available in the area.
- c. This option also provides an opportunity to sell particularly good land that landowners may be interested in selling but are not actively advertising. This could be accomplished through consultation with landowners in the area.

- **Advertise outside of Ontario or Canada**

- a. While the beginning of this campaign should begin in Ontario there may be opportunities to expand the campaign to other parts of Canada and internationally.
- b. For instance, due to the high proportion of French speakers in the NeCN catchment area, there may be an opportunity to undertake a marketing campaign in Quebec or New Brunswick in order to take advantage of this local asset.
- c. Another opportunity may be a marketing campaign in Europe, where land is very costly and difficult to obtain. In particular, Scotland and the Scandinavian countries may provide a particularly good opportunity due to their similar climate.
- d. Steinbach, Manitoba has been quite successful in this regard and may provide a good example for the NeCN.

Why do this?

The NeCN catchment area contains a substantial amount of viable farmland currently being unused. As well, while some products are not currently viable, such as soybeans and corn, many other products are. This presents a great opportunity for encouraging new farmers to come to the area with their capital and agricultural knowledge. An obvious source for these newcomers is southern Ontario. This is particularly true given the very high cost of land in southern Ontario and the very low cost in the Northeast. As well, there are many in the new generation in southern Ontario who strive to become farmers but who cannot afford the start-up costs.

For these groups the North would be very attractive, however many likely have not considered this option either due to a lack of exposure or inaccurate assumptions of the viability of

agriculture in this area. Thus, a marketing campaign could increase awareness, dispel myths, and promote opportunities.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- Marketing campaign making use of agricultural magazines, fairs, farm shows, and other events.
- Website providing information on opportunities for agriculture in the area and benefits. The website should also provide information on viable crops and necessary farming practices for the North.

Impacts:

- Increased use of agricultural land in the region.
- New farmers to replace those nearing retirement.
- Revitalization of farming culture and the agricultural community in the region.
- Influx of farming knowledge from the south mixed with local knowledge of farming in the north.
- Capital, machinery, and other investment necessary for farming in the area.

Relevant Examples

External:

Parkland Agricultural Resource Cooperative (PARC) - <http://www.parklandmanitoba.ca/index.php>

The Parkland Agricultural Resource Cooperative (PARC) is a cooperative organization of 9 municipalities in the Parkland region of Manitoba. The communities are focused on developing value-added opportunities for the abundance of raw resources available in the region. The group uses a balanced approach by promoting opportunities through an economic and agricultural lens while also promoting lifestyle and community benefits.

The PARC organization promotes this area of Manitoba through a comprehensive look at the advantages and opportunities within the region. This includes information on local assets and opportunities as well as promotional handouts and electronic brochures. Areas of promotion include lifestyle, community, economy, history, climate, geography, and of course agriculture. The website includes a wealth of information for prospective newcomers within a number of categories.

The group also participates in the development of a number of projects, including: a bio-industrial park; ethanol plant; canola crusher and bio-diesel plant; among others. At the same time, the group provides information on additional opportunities recognized within the region.

Additional sources

- **Steinbach, Manitoba:** http://www.steinbach.ca/steinbach_life/im_new_to_steinbach/
- **"Benchmarking Rural Ontario Community Attractiveness to Newcomers":**
<http://ruralontarioinstitute.ca/blog/post/New-Tool-for-Rural-Ontario-Communities-Under-Development.aspx>

Support Funding Applications

Strategic Action: Liaison with farmers to inform and support funding applications

Recommended General Direction: Provide a regular update on funding opportunities as well as face-to-face support in the completion of funding applications.

Some of those within the broader agricultural sector within the NeCN catchment area have been found to be unaware of funding opportunities or uncomfortable with computers or paperwork. Therefore, there would be a role for the NeCN in informing these individuals about opportunities for funding as well as providing support with completing applications.

Objectives:

- I. A regularly updated list of funding opportunities available to farmers and the broader agriculture sector (i.e. processors, suppliers).
- II. Information on available support for completing applications.
- III. Potentially, a dedicated support service to help those involved in this sector with the completion of funding applications.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Compilation and distribution of a list of available funding sources**
 - a. In order to raise awareness of funding sources and increase the chance of acceptance within the area, a regularly updated listing of funding sources should be compiled and distributed both online and within a newsletter.
 - b. The listing should include opportunities from the various agencies which may be applicable, but not necessarily obvious. For instance, opportunities from OMAFRA, AAFC, NOHFC, MNDMF, should all be included. However, opportunities for loans or grants from other organizations, such as the Community Futures Development Corporation, should also be included.
- **Increased awareness of existing support services for the completion of funding applications**
 - a. In order to increase the success of applications from the agricultural community within the NeCN catchment area, support should be provided in the completion of applications. For instance, farmers are often adverse to paperwork or are unfamiliar with language expected from those considering applications. This is an expertise already present within the NeCN.
 - b. This support service is largely available within the NeCN catchment area already as offered through the various Community Futures Development Corporations and Economic Development Corporations; however the fieldwork found that few were aware of such services. Therefore, it would be valuable to raise awareness of these opportunities within this sector.

- c. Inclusion in a newsletter/mail out may be adequate to achieve this goal. As well, making use of word-of-mouth may also be appropriate, particular by starting with existing organizations such as the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA), AGRIVA, the Cochrane Federation of Agriculture, among others.

Long Term:

- **New support service to help with the completion of funding applications**
 - a. If the existing support services offered by the Community Futures Development Corporation and Economic Development Corporation are found to be inadequate a dedicated service may be warranted to help support applications.
 - b. Presumably this will not be necessary however it is something to keep in mind.

Why do this?

Throughout the fieldwork there appeared to be some confusion as to what funding was available for infrastructure improvements, among other opportunities. It may be worthwhile to provide information to local farmers about the availability of funding through various organizations and levels of government.

Another issue appeared to be discomfort with paperwork and a lack or unfamiliarity with computers and the internet. Therefore, it may be beneficial to provide face-to-face support for farmers, and other associated businesses, looking for funding opportunities and preparing applications.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- Regularly updated list of funding sources through various organizations distributed to those in the agricultural sector.
- Raise awareness of existing support services available through the CFDC's or local EDC's.
- Creation of a new support service to help those in the agriculture sector complete applications in order to increase their likelihood of approval.

Impacts:

- More funding for agriculture sector in the area.
- Increase in necessary investments within farming operations.
- Make better use of existing services and funding in order to (hopefully) avoid the need for the creation of new services or funding sources.

Relevant Examples

External:

Innovation Centre for Entrepreneurs - St. Thomas, Ontario - <http://www.iceinnovation.ca/>

The Innovation Centre for Entrepreneurs (ICE) is a multi-sector business incubator located in St. Thomas, Ontario. This mixed use facility provides a variety of services to help new and upcoming businesses such as manufacturing suites, modular executive office suites, laboratory facilities, a business centre, as well as onsite conference and meeting rooms.

The organization also works with clients to build a program with coaching and entrepreneurial training; business plan review and development support; and seminars, forums, and various educational tools. The organization also provides ongoing monitoring and support as clients build their businesses.

The ICE facility is a recent development founded by the Elgin Business Resource Centre (Community Futures Development Corporation), the St. Thomas Economic Development Corporation, Elgin County, and the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario. While not strictly agricultural, this facility does provide services relevant for this sector.

Additional sources

- **Programs and Services for Ontario Farmers (OMAFRA):**
<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/busdev/facts/progserv.htm>
- **Funding Programs and Support (OMAFRA):**
<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/industry/funding-prog-index.htm>

First Nations and Remote Communities

Strategic Action: Partnership with nearby First Nation communities as well as other communities present along the James Bay Coast

Recommended General Direction: Establish linkages between NeCN catchment area farmers and nearby First Nation and remote communities to meet the needs of both groups.

An opportunity exists to partner with nearby First Nation and remote communities in Northeast Ontario in order to provide an outlet for agricultural production while providing access to fresh food often lacking in these communities.

Objectives:

- I. Mediate a partnership between NeCN catchment area food producers and nearby First Nation and Remote communities.
- II. Help NeCN catchment area farmers navigate the distribution channels necessary for accessing these communities.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Mediate linkages between NeCN catchment area farmers and First Nation and remote communities**
 - a. There is a role for the NeCN in establishing contacts within the NeCN catchment area farming community and appropriate contacts in First Nation and remote communities. A good starting point may be contacting Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada; the Ontario Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs; and the Ontario Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, and Forestry.
 - b. There would also be a role for the NeCN in raising awareness of this opportunity within either of these groups in order to increase the momentum for its establishment.
- **Applications for funding**
 - a. The NeCN can play a role in supporting funding applications from groups within the NeCN catchment area attempting to achieve this goal.
 - b. As well, there may be an opportunity to request funding support for this project particularly through the lens of northern development and improving the health and well-being of First Nation and remote northern communities.
- **Support area farmers in navigating distribution channel necessary for accessing these communities**
 - a. A role exists for the NeCN in helping facilitate the creation of a co-operative of area farmers participating in this project. It will be impossible to manage this objective with each farmer working independently therefore the creation of a co-operative will be essential.

- b. In conjunction, a role exists for the NeCN in helping this group navigate the distribution channels necessary for accessing First Nation or remote communities. For instance, the NeCN could play a role in discussions with Ontario Northland Railway and local airlines servicing fly-in communities to establish agreements for accessing these communities.

Long Term:

- **Establish produce depots within the NeCN catchment area**
 - a. Once a co-operative is established within the NeCN catchment area agriculture community, it would be worthwhile to consider a partnership with this group in the establishment of produce depots within the area.
 - b. This would allow for farmers in the area to consolidate their produce and allow for more efficient and manageable distribution. Such a system would be very beneficial for supplying First Nation or remote communities in the area.
 - c. It has been proposed that in time a model be considered where three produce depots are established in the NeCN catchment area, spaced along the Highway 11 corridor with one in the South, in the centre, and one in the west. This would then be managed centrally by the co-op.

Why do this?

First Nation and remote communities in Northeast Ontario are often lacking in fresh and affordable food products. At the same time, NeCN catchment area farmers have the ability to produce quality meats and vegetables but often lack a market or find it difficult to compete when shipping to markets in the south. Therefore, an opportunity exists to link these two groups thereby providing an outlet for agricultural production from the NeCN catchment area while providing access to fresh food often lacking in First Nation or remote communities.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- Partnership between NeCN catchment area farmers and nearby First Nation and remote communities.
- Distribution channel for food products utilizing existing infrastructure, such as the Polar Bear Express between Cochrane and Moosonee.
- Partnership between nearby mining camps, such as in the *Ring of Fire* development, and area producers.

Impacts:

- Market for NeCN catchment area farmers utilizing their competitive advantages.
- Improved access to fresh, quality, and affordable foods in First Nation and remote communities.

Relevant Examples

External:

Nutrition North Canada - <http://www.nutritionnorthcanada.ca/index-eng.asp>

Nutrition North Canada is a program offered through Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Canada with the mandate of providing nutritious, perishable foods to Canadians living in isolated northern communities. One aspect of the program is the provision of funding directly to retailers, wholesalers, processors and distributors who have applied, met the program's requirements and entered into agreements with the department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

In Northwest Ontario this program has supported collaboration between Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) and Quality Market and True North Community Co-Operative based in Thunder Bay. Under this 12 week long agreement 26 Co-Operative Community Supported Agriculture (CCSA) boxes are sent by air and road to 7 remote NAN First Nations who have qualified for the full subsidy under Nutrition North Canada.

Additional sources

- **Iroquois Cranberry Growers:** <http://www.iroquoiscranberries.com/>
- **Kagiwiosa Manomin (Wild rice producer in Northwest Ontario):** <http://www.canadianwildrice.com/>
- **Indian Agricultural Program of Ontario (IAPO):** <http://www.indianag.on.ca/>

Tile Drainage

Strategic Action: Financial support for tile drainage projects

Recommended General Direction: Promote or create available funding specifically for tiling of farmland in the area.

During the fieldwork almost every farmer mentioned the need for tile drainage for successful agriculture in the area. However, it was also identified that installing tile drainage was costly and unaffordable for most farmers.

Objectives:

- I. Dissemination of information on existing programs which would be available for tile drainage projects.
- II. Inform farmers of benefits of tiling as a long term investment as well as opportunities for funding application support from Community Futures Development Corporations and Economic Development Corporations existing in the region.
- III. New funding programs specifically for tile drainage projects through the use of grants, cost-sharing, or manageable loans.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Compile, confirm, and distribute a listing of existing funding opportunities**
 - a. The first step for helping farmers gain access to tile drainage funding should be the compilation of funding opportunities that currently exist. This listing should include sources that are not necessarily explicitly targeted at tile drainage installation, but that would still apply to these projects. For instance, funding support from the Community Futures Development Corporations may be applicable for tile drainage projects yet farmers would likely not be aware.
 - b. This should be followed up by contacting the federal and provincial ministries responsible to ensure that the funds are still available and that a tile drainage application would indeed be considered.
 - c. The compiled and confirmed listing of funding sources should then be distributed to farmers in the area and updated on a regular basis.
 - d. Furthermore, support to farmers should be provided for completing and submitting applications. This could be the role of Community Futures Development Corporations in the area or Economic Development Corporations. Most importantly, the availability of this support should be disseminated to farmers in the area.
- **Promote benefits of tile drainage internally**
 - a. The benefits of tile drainage in terms of increased productivity and efficiency should be promoted within the NeCN catchment area. Farmers should be informed, potentially in the

same handout as the listing of funding sources, about the benefits of investing in tile drainage; even if they are long term.

Long Term:

- **New funding opportunities for tile drainage projects in the region**
 - a. Assuming that the needs of area farmers are still not met after being made aware of existing programs, the provincial and federal governments should be lobbied for new funding programs.
 - b. One method to do so would be to present the benefits of investing in these projects as well as data demonstrating the improved efficiency and productivity.
 - c. These other levels of government should also be approached through the lens of Northern development and the opportunities that improved agriculture could bring.
 - d. Further still, the long term investment opportunity within these Northern communities is important for leveraging.

Why do this?

Almost without exception, farmers interviewed during the fieldwork identified that tile drainage was essential for agriculture in the NeCN catchment area. This was found to provide increased yields by extending the growing season and improving field quality. This was also identified as being particularly important in this area with such a short growing season where even seemingly small increases can make a significant difference.

However, farmers also indicated that the installation of tile drainage systems was often prohibitively expensive. This indication provides a few important considerations. For one, farmers may not be aware of existing programs to support their tiling projects. Farmers also may not be fully aware of the benefits of tiling, particularly as a long-term investment, or are unwilling due to their age. Alternatively, the existing funding sources are inadequate to meet the needs of area farmers.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- Handout detailing available funding sources as well as benefits of tile drainage investment.
- Support for tile drainage funding applications.
- New funding sources to fill gap between farmer needs and presently available funding sources.

Impacts:

- Increased productivity and efficiency of area farms resulting in increased profits.
- Increased yields and outputs.
- Increased value of farmland in the area.

Relevant Examples

External:

Tile Loan Program – OMAFRA - <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/engineer/facts/07-061.htm>

The Tile Loan Program is administered by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). This program is delivered through municipalities in Ontario who accept and approve applications and who are also responsible for inspecting work and collecting payments.

Landowners are eligible for loans of up to 75% of the value of the work. The loans are provided for 10 year terms with annual repayment at competitive interest rates.

Applications for the program are submitted to the municipal council for approval. Once accepted the landowner must have a licensed tile drainage contractor undertake the work. The municipality is then responsible for inspection and preparation of monthly loan documents and loan payments to OMAFRA. As well, the municipality is responsible for collecting payments with defaulted payments treated the same as unpaid taxes.

Additional sources

- **Land Improvement Contractors of Ontario:** <http://www.drainage.org/>

Local Co-Op or Grocery Stores

Strategic Action: Encouraging a locally owned chain of co-ops or grocery stores selling local food

Recommended General Direction: Encourage a stable, year-round outlet for local agricultural products to reduce time constraints imposed by seasonal farmer's markets and overcome the difficulties of selling to supermarkets.

A more stable outlet for agricultural products should be encouraged to help local farmers sell their production. This could be created in the form of a co-op where farmers come together to create their own outlet stores or in the form of a private business specializing in local agricultural products.

Objectives:

- I. Encourage farmers to come together to overcome their similar obstacles in the form of a co-operative model.
- II. Promote the opportunities associated with available agricultural products, consumer demand, and the role of a private business in bridging the gap.
- III. Provide loans, business counselling, and liaison support to foster these ideas.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Provision of indoor space for farmer's markets**
 - a. A first step in encouraging this model could be the provision of space for an indoor farmer's market. This could be in any number of facilities, such as a local arena. The goal would be to extend the season for farmer's markets; overcome the obstacle of poor weather; and allow for a more stable environment for selling products, particularly for meat which needs consistent cooling.
- **Attempt to overcome obstacle of selling to supermarkets**
 - a. Before attempting to create new storefronts, it would be worthwhile to attempt to work with existing supermarkets to overcome the obstacles of selling local products.
 - b. This may begin with a market study to determine where a market for local products exists and what products consumers are seeking. This would be followed by consultations with supermarkets to understand purchasing policies and see where obstacles exist.
 - c. The next step would be to identify potential candidate stores as well as inventory farmers that might be able to contribute.
 - d. The next stage would be to inventory products that might contribute. For instance, meat, preserves, honey, and local baking could all be supplied year round while most fresh vegetables would be seasonal.
 - e. Following this, existing grocery stores would need to be approached that have the capacity to handle local produce. This would include a sales pitch using the local, Northern grown

- lens and ideally making use of an overarching brand.
- f. Finally, the NeCN would provide a facilitation role in helping farmers work with existing retailers to get their products on the shelves.

- **Promote ideas and opportunities for local farmers to come together to create outlet stores under a co-operative model**

- a. The NeCN would not have a role in owning/operating storefronts in the region. However, it can play a role in providing information and fostering ideas within the farming community. It can also act as a liaison between farmers interested in making such a model work within the area.
- b. A first step in facilitating this approach could be a workshop, or a series, to gauge interest and identify champions who could potentially form a volunteer committee.
- c. The Community Futures Development Corporations in particular would have a role in providing business counselling to this potential co-operative as well as support for funding applications and even the provision of manageable loans.

Long Term:

- **Promote the opportunity for a privately owned business specializing in local agriculture products**

- a. From a business perspective, there is probably not a strong enough demand for local products within the relatively small population of the NeCN catchment area to justify a dedicated storefront. Particularly as the addition of another level in the supply-chain would presumably result in increased prices. However, assuming that interest in local products continues to grow this may become a viable venture in the near future.
- b. There may be a role for the NeCN in promoting this business opportunity, assuming the market does not recognize it first. There would also be a role for the area's Community Futures Development Corporations in providing business counselling and start-up loans.

Why do this?

As mentioned in the previous section, the NeCN catchment area produces a wide range of agricultural products. At the same time there appears to be an increasing demand for local products and a rising interest across the province in local food. Nevertheless, farmers frequently mentioned the difficulties associated with accessing markets. For instance, farmer's markets have seasonal and infrequent hours while also taking up valuable time from farmers who often work fulltime off farm. The existing alternative is retail supermarkets, which are difficult to access for local farmers due to purchasing policies. The result, according to the fieldwork, is that area farmers often do not meet their potential production capacity due to the lack of a stable outlet for their products. Therefore, an alternative model would not only provide a stable outlet for existing outputs but encourage area farmers to increase their production levels.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- A group of small stores spread throughout the area selling local agricultural products owned by area farmers under a co-operative model; or a group of stores selling local agricultural products owned by private business.
- NeCN acting as liaison or mediator to provide information, counselling, and potentially loans to help achieve the desired outcomes.

Impacts:

- More consistent outlet for local farmers to sell their production.
- Fewer constraints in selling outputs resulting in increased production.
- Increased earnings for local farmers.
- Consistency and convenience for local consumers.

Relevant Examples

Internal:

Miky's Smoke House - <http://www.mikyssmokehouse.ca/>

Miky's Smoke House is an abattoir and seller of local meat based in Hearst. Through a variety of channels, Miky's Smoke House produces, packs, ships, and markets local meat across Northeast Ontario. For instance, Miky's Smoke House participates in local events, fundraising exercises, sells to a few local retailers, and sells directly from their storefront *La maison des viandes*.

The Miky's Smoke House storefront *La maison des viandes* sells a wide range of meat products, much of which is locally grown and processed. Products include highland and Angus beef which they produce themselves within the boundaries of Hearst. However, the storefront also sells pork, beef, and elk which they purchase from area farmers, process at their abattoir, and proceed to sell at their storefront.

La maison des viandes storefront was initially set up due to difficulties in selling to supermarkets and a declining availability of smaller stores in the area. While a fairly recent venture, this store has actually been found to be quite successful. Guylaine Tremblay, one of the owners, indicates that a market does appear to exist in Hearst for local meat products and by selling directly with only one full-time employee they have been able to keep a larger percentage of the sales.

External:

True North Community Co-operative - <http://www.facebook.com/TrueNorthCommunityCooperative>

The True North Community Co-operative is a non-profit, community-based co-operative based in Thunder Bay. The goal of the co-operative is to provide an opportunity for regional producers to market their agriculture and craft products at a fair price to local consumers.

The Co-operative is run by a volunteer board of directors by and from the membership. Anyone can shop from the storefront however there is a small annual fee to become a member at \$15 for an individual; \$25 for a producer; and \$40 for an organization. With membership comes 5% off all goods sold through the co-op as well as a single vote at their annual general meeting. Most importantly, for producers, membership provides the opportunity to sell their goods through the co-op and receive marketing through the storefront.

Presently, the Co-operative has approximately 40 producer members selling agricultural products and handicrafts. However, the co-operative provides more than just an outlet for selling products as it also helps foster a sense of togetherness, encourage networking, and share knowledge and resources throughout the Thunder Bay area.

Additional sources

- **Eat Local Sudbury:** <http://www.eatlocalsudbury.com/>
- **Ontario Co-operative Association:** <http://www.ontario.coop/>
- **Ottawa Valley Food Co-op:** <http://www.ottawavalleyfood.org/>
- **Eastern Ontario Local Food Co-op:** <http://www.easternontariolocalfood.org/>

Agriculture in Schools

Strategic Action: Inclusion of agriculture and food into school curriculum

Recommended General Direction: Promote an increased presence of agriculture and food in school activities and the taught curriculum.

There may be an opportunity to increase the presence of agriculture within NeCN catchment area schools in order to improve the social value of agriculture in the area, raise awareness of agriculture as a career choice, and increase knowledge of the benefits of eating healthy, local foods.

Objectives:

- I. Raise awareness of agriculture and farmers through fieldtrips and farm tours.
- II. Increase awareness of locally grown food and its value through school activities.
- III. Request inclusion of agriculture and food into the taught curriculum.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Fieldtrips to area farms from local schools**
 - a. During the fieldwork a few farmers mentioned the opportunity to have tours or farm visits on their operations. In at least one case the farmer had done farm tours with students in the past.
 - b. This would be a great opportunity to expose students to farming in the NeCN catchment area and to where their food comes from.
- **Increase awareness of local food and its benefits**
 - a. There may be an opportunity to increase awareness and value of local food within NeCN catchment area schools.
 - b. For instance, there may be a place for promoting local foods through the lens of environmental and health benefits. This may be done in courses through trips to farmer's markets, or other assignments. It might also be done by clubs formed by students with interest in this topic.
 - c. There may also be an opportunity for small gardens being planted through the schools to teach students about the availability of local products and their ability to grow it themselves. This might even be undertaken through the lens of school science classes.

Long Term:

- **Request inclusion of agriculture and food in school curriculum**
 - a. While difficult to make the case of a dedicated course for agriculture within the existing curriculum, there may be a place for agriculture to be included in a range of courses already being taught at various levels.

- b. Indeed, courses such as science, health, history, and careers could all contain some element of agriculture.
- c. Therefore, there may be a role for the NeCN to request that agriculture be included within the school curriculum through these existing courses where appropriate.

Why do this?

During the fieldwork it was sometimes mentioned that agriculture was not considered to be a major part of the history or culture of NeCN catchment area residents. This situation may contribute to the limited interest in farming apparent in the younger generations of the NeCN catchment areas as well as the limited value that agriculture is perceived to have within the area. Therefore, there may be an opportunity to raise awareness and provide exposure to agriculture within the area to increase its value within the minds of the next generation and potentially raise interest in its uptake as a career choice.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- Fieldtrips to farming operations from area schools.
- Importance and value of agriculture incorporated into school curriculum.
- Raise awareness of local food and its benefits.

Impacts:

- Improved societal value of agriculture amongst later generations in the NeCN catchment area.
- Increased knowledge of farming as a career option for NeCN catchment area residents.
- Increased value of local food and interest in farmer's markets.

Relevant Examples

External:

Lambton Kent Agriculture In The Classroom - <http://www.lkaitc.org/>

The Lambton Kent Agriculture In The Classroom (LKAITC) committee is a non-profit organization run by volunteers. Its mission is to deliver agricultural education to local school children and does so through a variety of programs located in Lambton County and Chatham-Kent in Southwest Ontario. The group provides three key programs to students in this area: Harvest Days, Spring Days, and Healthy Eating Clubs.

The *Harvest Days* program is a fast-paced educational, activity-based learning event offered to grade 3 students in Chatham-Kent each fall. The program teaches students about the agricultural products available in Chatham-Kent through four stations each providing classroom resources. In 2010, there were 766 participants in the *Harvest Days* program.

The *Spring Days* program is a hands-on learning opportunity for grade 4 students in Lambton County offered each spring. The program includes four modules: Simple Machines; Living with Farm Animals; Turning Rocks into Food; and Farm Foods for Healthy Living. There were 294 participants in the Spring Days program in 2010.

Finally, the *Healthy Eating Clubs* are a partnership between local community volunteer organizations, service groups and other agricultural stakeholders who promote healthy eating habits by encouraging students to try new foods, along with raising awareness of where their food comes from. The program is geared to elementary students in grades 6, 7 and 8 in the Lambton-Kent District School Board and connects health curriculums with local food and its production.

Cooperation Between Existing Stakeholders

Strategic Action: Create opportunities for cooperation between existing stakeholders

Recommended General Direction: Promote improved cooperation within the NeCN catchment area's agricultural community.

There is considerable opportunity for the agricultural community within the NeCN catchment area to come together to overcome their shared issues.

Objectives:

- I. Mediation of disputes or disagreements within the agricultural community.
- II. Foster the pursuit of agricultural cooperatives in overcoming the shared obstacles of this community.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Establish a forum for farmers to come together and discuss their shared issues and means to resolve them**
 - a. It would be beneficial to create a means by which farmers could come together and share their issues and brainstorm methods for overcoming them. Indeed, the fieldwork often found that many farmers in a given area shared the same issue but did not cooperate to overcome them.
 - b. Therefore a forum, ideally in person but potentially also online, would be valuable for farmers to identify shared issues and develop solutions that would meet their needs and capabilities.
 - c. In some cases simple awareness that others share the same issues would be enough to jumpstart an attempt to overcome them. As well, some solutions, at least at the individual scale, may be as simple as sharing knowledge, ideas, or machinery with those nearby.
- **Mediate disputes or disagreements within farming community**
 - a. While the fieldwork frequently found that farmers in the area shared issues, it also identified a certain level of distrust or unnecessary competition within some areas.
 - b. Therefore, there is a role more generally for the NeCN to participate in community led endeavours to ensure they do not falter due to personal disagreements or disputes.
- **Promote champions and role models within the community**
 - a. During the fieldwork it was sometimes possible to identify individuals or groups who were particularly active in attempting to overcome certain obstacles.
 - b. These individuals or groups should be particularly supported as champions for leading community lead initiatives and aided, wherever possible, in attempts to raise awareness, interest, and even funding as their projects progress.

Why do this?

There is an opportunity for stakeholders to come together on their own to overcome some obstacles and create opportunities for themselves. While in many cases farmers do cooperate with their neighbours, for instance by sharing machinery or know-how it has been stated that this group does not always have a collaborative spirit. Therefore, this warrants intervention from the NeCN in some instances to provide impartial mediation or jumpstart pursuits.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- Forum/workshops for agricultural community to share issues and ideas.
- Impartial mediation for disputes that occur within co-ops and projects.

Impacts:

- Community generated and implemented solutions to their shared problems.
- Improved cooperation within the agricultural community leading to a cultural shift towards more collaboration in the future.

Relevant Examples

External:

Coopérative d'Utilisation de Matériel Agricole (CUMA) - <http://www.usaskstudies.coop/pdf-files/CUMA%20final.pdf>

The Coopérative d'Utilisation de Matériel Agricole (CUMA) model is a co-operative model for sharing farm machinery within an agricultural community. Translating into English as a “co-operative for the use of farm implements” this model originates in France and has been adopted in some parts of Canada, particularly in Quebec.

There are many benefits to members of CUMA groups. For instance, the use of shared machinery allows for the purchase of the most up-to-date equipment, which is larger and more efficient than what an individual producer could purchase alone.

The financing for CUMA's is generally the result of members' investment shares; traditional sources of debt financing; and members' fees. As well, the groups are typically governed by the general assembly made up of the membership; the board of directors; the branch manager; and the equipment manager.

Additional sources

- “Farm Machinery Co-operatives: An Idea Worth Sharing” - <http://www.usaskstudies.coop/pdf-files/Idea%20Worth%20Sharing.pdf>
- “The CUMA farm machinery co-operatives” - <http://www.usaskstudies.coop/pdf-files/CUMA%20final.pdf>

- **Coopérative d'utilisation de matériel agricole (CUMA): MAPAQ -**
<http://www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/Regions/bassaintlaurent/CUMACUMO/CUMA/Pages/CUMA.aspx>
- **Centre for the Study of Co-operatives – University of Saskatchewan:** <http://usaskstudies.coop/>

On-Farm Infrastructure

Strategic Action: Financial support for on-farm infrastructure

Recommended General Direction: Encourage the increased use of existing funding programs and new funding opportunities within the NeCN catchment area in order to invest in on-farm infrastructure.

Farmers within the NeCN catchment area could greatly benefit from investments in on-farm infrastructure in order to increase their efficiency, effectiveness, and competitiveness. However, most cannot afford the high costs of obtaining or installing this infrastructure.

Objectives:

- I. Increased awareness of existing support programs within the agriculture community.
- II. New funding programs dedicated to improvements in on-farm infrastructure.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Increased awareness of existing funding opportunities**
 - a. As mentioned in the *Support Funding Applications* implementation strategy, the issue may not always be a lack of funding opportunities but rather a lacking awareness of existing opportunities.
 - b. For instance, funding for infrastructure can be obtained through the Environmental Farm Plan program; the Food Safety and Traceability Initiative (FSTI); among others.
 - c. Therefore, a list of existing funding opportunities should be provided in electronic and newsletter format with support provided in completing these applications.
 - d. It will also be important to coordinate with existing organizations in the area which are highly knowledgeable on these opportunities or even deliver them; such as the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA).
- **Apply for region-wide funding**
 - a. There may be an opportunity for the NeCN organization to request block grants which can be redistributed for on-farm infrastructure investments.
- **Lobby provincial and federal governments for dedicated funding programs**
 - a. Dedication funding programs for on-farm infrastructure should be requested from the federal and provincial governments.
 - b. The case should be made that these investments are essential for success in Northern conditions (i.e. livestock housing, greenhouses) along with the long term economic opportunities that these investments could provide for this area.
 - c. There should also be attempts made to leverage the Northern/remote community angle. As well, there may be opportunity to leverage the opportunity for improved community health, particularly through the lens of local food improvements.

Long Term:

- **Creation of new funding opportunities through local bodies**
 - a. If other attempts to increase the investment in on-farm infrastructure prove insufficient there may be a role for the NeCN and its member municipalities to provide funding directly.
 - b. This funding could be delivered in the form of cost-sharing or low-interest loans for farm improvements.

Why do this?

Throughout the fieldwork it was found that many farmers in the NeCN catchment area lacked the necessary on-farm infrastructure in order to be an effective, efficient, and competitive operation. These same operations also had limited financial resources and could not afford these necessary investments in infrastructure such as livestock housing, cement pads, weight scales, storage, row-covers, greenhouses, machinery, among others. Therefore, it would be highly beneficial for this group to receive more funding support for these investments either through better use of existing programs or new dedicated programs.

Outcomes and Impacts**Outcomes:**

- Regularly updated list of funding sources through various organizations distributed to those in the agricultural sector.
- New funding sources provided specifically for on-farm infrastructure investments.

Impacts:

- Increased awareness, and better use of existing funding opportunities.
- Improved effectiveness, efficiency, and competitiveness of NeCN catchment area farms.
- More investment into the long-term viability of NeCN catchment area farming operations.

Relevant Examples

Internal:

Enterprises North Job Creation - Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation-

http://www.mndmf.gov.on.ca/nohfc/programs/enterprises_north_job_creation_e.asp

The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC) provides several funding opportunities for businesses in Northern Ontario. One such opportunity is the Enterprises North Job Creation program. This program provides financial assistance to private sector businesses under the auspices of job creation.

This program offers support to new and existing businesses in a variety of sectors, including agriculture. Eligible uses for the funds include capital construction cost as well as the purchase of new or used equipment.

The funds are provided in the form of repayable loans with projects normally receiving funding based on the number of full time equivalent jobs created in the North. Maximum contribution to any one project will generally not exceed 50 per cent of eligible costs up to \$1 million.

Additional sources

- **Environmental Cost-Share Opportunities for Ontario Farmers - (OSCIA):**
http://www.ontariosoilcrop.org/en/programs/cost_share_opportunities.htm
- **Growing Forward in Ontario - OMAFRA:**
<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/about/growingforward/gfontario.htm#best>

Energy Production

Strategic Action: Support and encourage energy production through agricultural operations

Recommended General Direction: Encourage the opportunities for energy production on agricultural operations and support the necessary infrastructure.

An option exists in the NeCN catchment area for producing energy on agricultural operations such as through biomass, solar, and ethanol production.

Objectives:

- I. Promote the opportunities for energy production through agricultural operations.
- II. Support the necessary infrastructure for energy producing agriculture industries.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Promote opportunities for energy production through agriculture operations**
 - a. Information does currently exist to demonstrate the viability of energy producing agriculture within the NeCN catchment area. In particular, the NCBAN study provided considerable information on bio-mass and how this option might be pursued.
 - b. As well, programs are currently in place for solar power generation on (less productive) agricultural lands.
 - c. Therefore, this existing information could be promoted to NeCN catchment area farmers and to private sector partners as a potentially viable business opportunity.
 - d. However, before the NeCN gets too involved in promoting these opportunities it is important to conduct other studies or to encourage private entities to conduct their own viability studies considering the existing questions around this option.

Long Term:

- **Support the infrastructure necessary for energy producing agriculture**
 - a. Once there is sufficient confidence in the future of energy production on agricultural operations, there may be a role for the NeCN in supporting the infrastructure necessary for its success.
 - b. For instance, there will presumably be a need for increased grid capacity; distilleries; pelletizers; transport infrastructure (such as a rail depot); among others depending on the method pursued.

Why do this?

There may be opportunity for increased energy production in the NeCN catchment area through agricultural operations. For instance, the production of bio-mass, solar, and ethanol may all potentially be viable routes. An option for the NeCN could be to promote these

opportunities to area farmers and private sector partners as a business opportunity. The NeCN could also play a role in supporting the infrastructure necessary to support any such ventures.

However, it is important to note that questions do remain surrounding the long-term viability of this approach. For instance, solar power expansion has recently been impeded by insufficient grid capacity, and particularly in the North. As well, the future of bio-mass and ethanol are also debated, particularly due to their reliance on political stances that are subject to change. Further, questions still remain regarding distances to major energy markets in the South and the viability of transporting low density, low value fuels (in the case of bio-mass) long distances with rising fuel prices.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- Increased interest from farmers and the private sector in energy producing agricultural operations.
- Improved viability of the energy producing agriculture sector through the availability of essential infrastructure.

Impacts:

- More profitable ventures for NeCN catchment area farmers.
- Increased diversification of agricultural production in the area and more options for area farmers.
- Potentially, the creation of a niche utilizing the competitive advantages of the NeCN catchment area.

Relevant Examples

Additional sources

- **Northern Energy Program (NOHFC):** http://www.mndmf.gov.on.ca/nohfc/programs/northern_energy_e.asp
- **Photovoltaic potential and solar resource maps of Canada (NRCAN):** <https://glfc.cfsnet.nfis.org/mapserver/pv/index.php?NEK=e>
- **Solar Energy (OMAFRA):** http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/engineer/ge_bib/solar.htm
- **Biofuels (OMAFRA):** http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/engineer/ge_bib/biofuel.htm
- **Biomass Combustion (OMAFRA):** http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/engineer/ge_bib/biomass.htm
- **Feed-in Tariff Program - Ontario Power Generation:** <http://fit.powerauthority.on.ca/what-feed-tariff-program>
- **MicroFit – Ontario Power Generation:** <http://microfit.powerauthority.on.ca/>
- **Ontario Field-scale Agricultural Biomass Research Program (OSCIA):** http://www.ontariosoilcrop.org/en/programs/biomass_research_program.htm
- **Biorefining Research Initiative - Lakehead University:** <http://lubri.lakeheadu.ca/index.php>

Internal Promotion of Products

Strategic Action: Promotion and marketing of local agriculture products to residents of the NeCN catchment area

Recommended General Direction: Pursue an integrated marketing and promotion campaign resulting in increased production and consumption of locally produced agriculture products.

Through the use of a promotion and marketing campaign awareness will be raised within the NeCN catchment area regarding the availability of local agriculture products and the benefits relating to their consumption.

Objectives:

- I. Educate the residents of the NeCN catchment area about the health, economic, and community benefits of consuming local products.
- II. Provide an integrated marketing tool for local producers in order to raise awareness on their location and product availability.
- III. Increase the sales of value added products in the NeCN catchment area through the use of the local food movement.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Awareness campaign within NeCN catchment area**
 - a. A market survey should be conducted and find consumer demands/desires and to determine where are they, what they want, what will they pay.
 - b. Local media within the area should be utilized to gain profile of local agriculture. This may also help bolster the already growing local food movement.
 - c. Production of a 'local food map' and farmer inventory to encourage awareness and help local consumers in finding farmers and available products. Local food maps may also be used as a form of *agritourism*, for instance by promoting pick-your-own berries which have been successful in the area in the past.
 - d. Production of a website or partnership with existing website to promote the benefits of buying locally as well as availability. This would include a directory of farmers and retailers in the area who sell local products as well as the range of products available (including seasonality where appropriate).
 - e. Use role models and success stories to shift views and expectations and reinforce with consumers and producers alike that local food is present in the area with considerable variety and high quality.
 - f. The Porcupine Health Unit should be included in the local food campaign to provide information and legitimacy for promotion of the health benefits of local food consumption. The health unit should also be encouraged to promote local food within its own campaigns, such as the supermarket tours which could also visit farmer's markets and the Good Food Box program making use of local food whenever possible.

- **Use of local food by institutions and events**
 - a. Institutions should be encouraged to make use of local food wherever possible. This may include long term care facilities, hospitals, and institutions under the control of local authorities.
 - b. Events in the area should also be encouraged to make use of local food wherever possible. This may include festivals, fairs, carnivals, or other regular events throughout the region.
- **Creation of a local agriculture network**
 - a. There are several groups operating relatively independently within the NeCN catchment area each with the goal of encouraging the consumption of local agricultural products. This includes groups such as AGRIVA in Hearst; Taste of Timmins; the Northern Agriculture Steering Committee in Kapuskasing; and numerous individuals interested in this goal. A network should be established to link these interested parties to allow for information sharing, avoid overlap and duplication of effort, and encourage cooperation towards achieving their overarching goal.
 - b. This may be achieved in person through the use of a coordinated workshop or digitally through a website, forum, and directory.

Long Term:

- **Local brand**
 - a. A local brand should be created to supplement branding exercises already existing in the NeCN catchment area. This would act as a secondary branding attempt to complement existing brands within the area, rather than replace them. It would allow for a clear indication of products produced within the NeCN catchment area and act as a means to unite farmers in the area behind a single brand.
 - b. The existing efforts from AGRIVA may provide an opportunity for cooperation in order to expand this brand across the region.
- **Partnership with High School/College courses**
 - a. A potential opportunity may exist to partner with high school or college level co-op programs or business/marketing courses to help with developing or expanding the marketing campaign. This would be a means of promoting local agriculture products to the new generation while also obtaining help at a low cost. For students, this provides real world experience with a project that provides benefits to their community.
- **Encourage and support local food in retail stores**
 - a. One method to encourage and support the presence of local food in retail stores would be the creation of a single-desk for marketing and coordination between producers and distributors. Rather than each farmer attempting to sell their own products independently it would be beneficial for a single source to mediate, allowing for a single source for farmers to contact when trying to sell goods as well as for grocery stores seeking local products.
 - b. This would also allow for an ongoing relationship between this single desk and grocery stores as well as with farmers to overcome complications between seeking contacts and trying to purchase from numerous farmers independently.

Why do this?

The NeCN catchment area produces a wide variety of products which could be consumed locally. As well, with a population of approximately 76,000 and the inclusion of the major centre of Timmins there is an available market for these products. The issue arises in bridging this gap between production and consumption. During the fieldwork producers often mentioned difficulty reaching markets as well as a perception that a market did not exist. Nevertheless, the interest in local food has been increasing rapidly across the province and seems to be catching on within this area as well; especially in Timmins. Therefore, there is a role for the NeCN to help foster this interest in local food on the consumption side, while also providing general marketing and coordinated promotion for the area's products.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- Overarching local brand for products produced within the NeCN catchment area.
- Expanded farmers markets with more opportunity to sell local goods.
- Local food map of available products.
- Directory of producers and available products.
- Linkages between groups and individuals interested in expanding local food consumption.
- Marketing campaign to increase awareness of local food availability, as well as benefits.

Impacts:

- Help facilitate an outlet for local agriculture products, especially for small scale operations.
- More demand from consumers resulting in increased presence of local products in retail food stores.
- Increased production from area producers to meet growing demand resulting in more income for area producers.
- Healthier and more environmentally sound purchasing habits from area residents.
- Increased social/cultural value of agriculture from residents of the NeCN catchment area.

Relevant Examples

Internal:

AGRIVA - <http://www.agriva.ca/>

AGRIVA is a volunteer run sub-committee of the Hearst Economic Development Corporation. Its primary interest is in local food by expanding production and consumption. This includes providing an outlet for area producers in the farmer's markets operated by AGRIVA as well as capacity building exercises. For instance, the group participates in garden information and outreach to residents of Hearst as well as recently undertaking an education and information sharing campaign.

A key aspect of the group is raising awareness of existing products and producers as well as promoting the benefits of consuming local products. The group's website includes information resources for producers and consumers as well as a directory of agriculturally related groups and individuals in the Hearst area.

The group is currently in the process of undertaking a branding exercise for locally produced goods which may be appropriate for a partnership with the NeCN for application beyond the boundaries of Hearst.

The mission statement of the group is as follows: *"A group which has the mandate to support responsible and sustainable development for companies and organizations aiming at community and regional agriculture and/or production of value-added products. Community education and promotion of these products are also important aspects of this mission."*

External:

Huron Perth Farm to Table (HPFTT) - <http://huronperthfarmtotable.ca/>

Huron Perth Farm to Table is a network of community organizations with shared concerns about access to local, healthy food and the overall decline in agricultural-related activities in Huron and Perth Counties. Its roles are to educate consumers about food, nutrition and agricultural issues, create new markets for local farmers, enhance food security and increase public access to nutritious food.

The network includes representatives from the Huron and Perth Federation of Agriculture, the County of Huron (Planning & Development, and the Health Unit), the Perth District Health Unit, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs, the Huron Business Development Corporation, Huron and Perth Tourism groups, producers, and community members.

To date, HPFTT has helped launch a number of new farmers markets; created a virtual hub as a point of communication and collaboration for food groups in the Huron-Perth area; increased consumer awareness through education and promotion of local food (including a Buy Local Buy Fresh Map); and expanded the area's good food box program. This project is still ongoing with a variety of objectives expected to be initiated in the near future in its second phase.

Additional sources

- **Golden Beef:** Northern Ontario branding initiative based on grass-fed and hormone/antibiotic free beef - <http://goldenbeef.ca/>
- **Ontario North East (ONE) Meats:** Local abattoir/branding initiative based in the Town of Cochrane.
- **Taste of Timmins:** Individual initiated website promoting local food in and around Timmins including information on events, farmers markets, benefits of local consumption, and information on local producers - <http://www.tasteoftimmins.com/>
- **Ontario Market Investment Fund (OMIF):** <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/industry/omif-program.htm>
- **Broader Public Sector Investment Fund:** <http://bpsinvestmentfund.ca/>
- **Aim for 8 Fruit and Vegetable Voucher Program - Chatham-Kent Public Health:** <http://ckphu.com/2011/01/aim-for-8-fruit-vegetable-program/>
- **Public Health and Land Use Planning:** http://www.opha.on.ca/resources/docs/CAP_PHLUP-Report-Apr2011.pdf
- **Food Security Research Network – Lakehead University:** <http://www.foodsecurityresearch.ca/>

Off-Farm Infrastructure

Strategic Action: Encouraging and supporting off-farm infrastructure

Recommended General Direction: Encourage and support investments in off-farm infrastructure to help keep existing operations viable and attract new operators.

A lack of off-farm infrastructure within the NeCN catchment area is widely recognized as a major hindrance to agricultural expansion. Therefore, investments in off-farm infrastructure may be a means to revitalize the agricultural sector in the area.

Objectives:

- I. Facilitate and encourage opportunities for off-farm infrastructure investments through private means or co-operative models.
- II. Support off-farm infrastructure investments through funding applications or the provision of low interest loans.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Promote business opportunities to private sector**
 - a. The agricultural sector in the NeCN catchment area can be expected to grow in the future and thereby presents an opportunity for private sector investment as an underserved market.
 - b. Therefore, this opportunity should be promoted to those in the private sector by demonstrating the opportunities for growth in the agricultural sector and their opportunity to serve this emerging market through off-farm infrastructure investments.
- **Raise awareness of existing off-farm infrastructure and support their development**
 - a. Existing off-farm infrastructure should be supported before any considerations around establishing new entities.
 - b. Through the fieldwork it was sometimes found that infrastructure did exist, however awareness was low or they did not meet the needs of the agricultural community. For instance, in the case of abattoirs, there is currently an operation in Ramore as well as one in Hearst. However, it was stated by farmers that knew of these operations that due to scale or variety of services (freezing for instance) these were sometimes inadequate to meet their needs.
 - c. Similarly, in the case of farm supplies the Hearst Castle Co-Op could expand their selection of products to better meet the agriculture sector in that area. As well, it was mentioned that machinery dealers exist in the NeCN catchment area (with specific mention of Timmins) which currently cater to the mining or forestry sector but could carry farm machinery.
 - d. Therefore, an opportunity exists to better utilize this existing off-farm infrastructure by raising awareness of its presence within the agricultural sector.
 - e. As well, an opportunity exists to help support the expansion of existing operations either in

terms of scale or variety of services. This could be achieved through support for applications to external funding sources or through the direct provision of low-interest loans or grants in exchange for certain agriculturally related services being provided.

- **Mediate and foster the creation of co-operatives for off-farm infrastructure developments**
 - a. In some cases a co-operative model may be appropriate for the local agricultural community to come together to overcome an issue of lacking off-farm infrastructure.
 - b. In these cases, the NeCN may play a role in bringing interested parties together and playing the role of a neutral mediator to overcome disputes and push the concept towards implementation.
 - c. The NeCN may also aid in the identification and completion of funding applications where their expertise would prove useful.

Long Term:

- **Support the development of new off-farm infrastructure initiatives**
 - a. In some cases existing off-farm infrastructure will not be sufficient to meet the needs of the agricultural sector.
 - b. In these cases, new developments will be necessary and should be supported by the NeCN.
 - c. One means for this support will be financial, for instance through the provision of financial support for new operations.
 - d. The NeCN might also consider partnerships with co-operatives or private sector entities. In these arrangements, the NeCN could steer the operation towards meeting community needs as well as apply for external funding support while not taking on full ownership of the operation.

Why do this?

A common issue presented by farmers in the NeCN area is the lack of off-farm infrastructure in the area. This includes suppliers for machinery as well as inputs such as fertilizer, feed, seeds and other agriculture needs. It also includes the lack of a grain elevator or rail depot. It was also identified that abattoir services are lacking or inadequate and would benefit from support. Further, a limited distribution network was identified as an obstacle for transportation to markets. Therefore, the NeCN could play a role in supporting and facilitating the creation of such infrastructure.

However, it should be noted that questions remain about the cause-and-effect associated with such infrastructure. For instance, would off-farm infrastructure result through market mechanisms if agriculture is expanded in the area, or will the presence of off-farm infrastructure result in expanded agriculture? While it is difficult to say for certain which position is correct, opportunities for investment in off-farm infrastructure should be pursued wherever possible.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- New off-farm infrastructure established in NeCN catchment area through private or co-operative models.
- More business opportunities within the NeCN catchment area.

Impacts:

- Maintain existing farmers and attract new operators.
- Increased availability of services and supplies resulting in increased attractiveness of the area as a farming community.
- More benefits of agricultural sector captured by local economy.

Relevant Examples

Additional sources

- **FCC AgriSpirit Fund:** http://www.fcc-fac.ca/en/AboutUs/Responsibility/agrispiritfund_e.asp
- **Infrastructure and Community Development Program (NOHFC):** http://www.mndmf.gov.on.ca/nohfc/programs/infrastructure_and_community_development_e.asp
- **Community Economic Development Program – FedNor:** <http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/fednor-fednor.nsf/eng/fn03440.html>
- **Rural Economic Development (RED) Program – OMAFRA:** <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/rural/red/index.html>
- **Community Development Program - Canada's Rural Partnership (CRP):** <http://www.rural.gc.ca/RURAL/display-afficher.do?id=1299516906622&lang=eng>

Support with Loans and Financing

Strategic Action: Support existing and beginning farmers with acquiring loans and financing

Recommended General Direction: Support improved access to loans and financing for NeCN catchment area farmers at reasonable interest rates.

A common issue for farmers found to exist within the NeCN catchment area is limited access to loans and financing. There is limited access to agricultural specialists in area banks and no Farm Credit Canada office located within the region.

Objectives:

- I. Increased awareness of existing grant and loan opportunities from organizations such as OMAFRA, NOHFC, and the various CFDC's located within the area.
- II. Potentially, new loan programs provided by the NeCN with low interest rates.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Compilation and distribution of a list of available funding sources**
 - a. In order to raise awareness of funding sources and increase the chance of acceptance within the area, a regularly updated listing of funding sources should be compiled and distributed both online and within a newsletter.
 - b. The listing should include opportunities from the various agencies which may be applicable, but not necessarily obvious. For instance, opportunities from OMAFRA, AAFC, NOHFC, MNDMF, should all be included. However, opportunities for loans or grants from other organizations, such as the Community Futures Development Corporation, should also be included.
- **Discussions with area banks and Farm Credit Canada**
 - a. It would be worthwhile to discuss the obstacles to agricultural specialists based in the NeCN catchment area.
 - b. However, it should be recognized that this is not an issue unique to the NeCN catchment area and there are larger issues and changes at play which the NeCN would have little say in.

Long Term:

- **Creation of new funding opportunities for area farmers**
 - a. If attempts to increase the awareness of existing opportunities for area farmers prove insufficient there may be a role for the NeCN and its member municipalities to provide funding directly.
 - b. This funding could be delivered in the form of low-interest loans for farmers in the area.

Why do this?

A common issue found to exist within the NeCN catchment area is limited access to loans and financing for agricultural operations. There may be several reasons for this, including a lack of agriculture specialists within the area banks; potentially a lack of interest based on assumptions of agricultural sustainability in the area; as well as limited equity based on the low cost of land in the area.

However, it is important to note that this issue exists for farmers across Ontario and is not unique to the NeCN catchment area. Indeed, when dealing with agricultural operations banks across the province are predominantly interested in cash-flow, which is difficult for many farmers. Instead, the one unique issue for the NeCN catchment area appears to be the lack of a local Farm Credit Canada office.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- Improved access to loans and financing for farmers in the NeCN catchment area.
- Increased awareness of existing funding sources.
- Potentially, new loan and financing opportunities provided by the NeCN.

Impacts:

- More new farmers with the financial capacity to purchase or establish agricultural operations in the area.
- Expansion and improvement of existing farms to improve productivity, efficiency, and competitiveness.

Relevant Examples

Additional sources

- **Ontario Feeder Cattle Co-Operative Program:**
<http://www.cattle.guelph.on.ca/programs/LoanProgram.asp>

Involvement from Research Stations

Strategic Action: More involvement with New Liskeard Agriculture Research Station (NLARS) and the Kapuskasing Beef Research Farm

Recommended General Direction: Request and encourage better use of local research stations by undertaking Northern specific research and disseminating findings to the agricultural community.

The presence of the New Liskeard Agriculture Research Station (NLARS) and the Kapuskasing Beef Research Farm provide an excellent opportunity for improving agriculture within the NeCN catchment area. However, these opportunities are not being adequately utilized in their present forms.

Objectives:

- I. More local input at agriculture research stations in Northeast Ontario
- II. Better dissemination of research findings from research stations in Northeast Ontario

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Lobby for changes in research station mandates**
 - a. The Kapuskasing Beef Research Farm is operated by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the New Liskeard Agriculture Research Station is operated indirectly through the Government of Ontario through the University of Guelph. In each case there is opportunity to lobby governments for changes to the stations' mandates.
 - b. By demonstrating the unique conditions of Northeast Ontario and corresponding research needs a case can be made for more Northern specific research.
 - c. At the same time, the case can be made that more involvement with the local community in terms of identifying research needs and disseminating research findings provides an opportunity for improving the quality and practicality of research.
 - d. There is an opportunity to leverage the Northern development lens when lobbying for changes; however another timely lens is climate change adaptation research which is highly relevant for Northern agriculture.

Long Term:

- **Establish scholarship or research funding**
 - a. Another means to direct research towards more useful, Northern specific topics is through the establishment of a scholarship or research funding.
 - b. In both cases, the research stations are operating far under their potential capacity and have space for additional research. For instance, at the time of our visit the Kapuskasing Beef Research Farm had at least 80 tiled acres sitting vacant as they had no researchers making use of it.
 - c. Therefore, there may be an opportunity to directly fund students at the Masters or PhD

level interested in undertaking research at these stations on topics specific to Northeast Ontario.

- d. As an example, at the University of Guelph funding opportunities exist which are cost shared between the Ontario government and an external source. They can be designed to attract applicants interested in specific topics with the funding source receiving a copy of results at completion. Certainly at the Masters level, it can be expected that in some years interested applicants can be found for a scholarship totalling a few thousand dollars.

- **Facilitate linkages with international partners and private investors**

- a. There are possibilities for linking the Northeast Ontario stations with international institutions undertaking similar work. For instance, the viable products for Northeast Ontario are very similar in Northern Europe, such as Scotland and the Scandinavian countries.
- b. Another opportunity to leverage funding may be to establish linkages between the existing research stations and private investors interested in particular research.

Why do this?

The presence of the New Liskeard Agriculture Research Station (NLARS) and the Kapuskasing Beef Research Farm provide excellent assets which are clearly underutilized in their present forms. Each station has been scaled back over the years to the point where they now provide little benefit for the communities in which they are located. Indeed, in both cases little work is being done on Northern specific agriculture either in farming practices or cultivars. Further still, the findings that do come out of these research stations are generally not disseminated to the local agricultural communities. While the NeCN does not have any direct involvement with either station, there may be a role for this group in requesting a change in mandate at these stations.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- Opportunity for more local input at the stations representing agricultural community needs and interests.
- Dissemination of research findings through workshops, presentations, among other outreach.

Impacts:

- Improved knowledge of improved and modern farming practices and crop varieties within the NeCN catchment area's agriculture community.
- More relevant information coming out of research stations to support and improve the agriculture operations of Northeast Ontario.

Relevant Examples

Internal:

Kapuskasing Beef Research Farm – <http://www4.agr.gc.ca/AAFC-AAC/display-afficher.do?id=1180631304122&lang=eng>

The Kapuskasing Beef Research Farm is operated by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through its Dairy and Swine Research and Development Centre in Sherbrooke, Quebec. While formerly an experimental farm evaluating a range of agriculture products, today the institution concentrates almost exclusively on beef cattle.

This long standing research station has been operating for more than 95 years, however in recent years has seen a scaling back and near closure. Today, the operation has 15 employees, 800 cultivated acres, and approximately 250 butcher cattle. While producing good work in the field of beef cattle research, particularly with an emphasis on grass-feeding, it does not have the range of research it once did. Instead, it has been described as a station undertaking research in the North rather than one undertaking Northern specific research.

As well, aside from occasionally offering tours, the research station does not provide the outreach or community involvement that it once did.

External:

New Liskeard Agriculture Research Station (NLARS) - http://www.uoguelph.ca/research/omafra/Research_stations/crop_research.shtml

The New Liskeard Agriculture Research Station (NLARS) manages approximately 680 acres along with an additional 120 rented acres in and near New Liskeard. Research programs focusing on agronomy, beef, and horticulture are all carried out at this station.

NLARS was previously operated by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) however today is operated by the University of Guelph. This station has only a few employees left after experiencing downsizing, similar to the Kapuskasing Beef Research Farm. This limited capacity has resulted in limited capabilities for disseminating the important research findings that this station produces.

Additional examples

- **The Ag Business Centre – University of Guelph, Ridgetown Campus:**
<http://www.ridgetownc.uoguelph.ca/abc/index.cfm>

Special Consideration in Regulations

Strategic Action: Consideration of small scale farmers/operations and northern conditions in formulation and enforcement of regulations

Recommended General Direction: Request special consideration for small scale farmers/agri-businesses and northern conditions in the design and enforcement of regulations which impact agriculture.

It is often stated that small scale farmers and related agri-businesses are unfairly subject to regulations designed for large operations. Further, it is perceived that the special conditions of Northern Ontario are not considered within the formulation and enforcement of these regulations.

Objectives:

- I. Lobby upper levels of government by requesting that the northern and small-scale agriculture conditions have specific consideration in agriculture regulations.
- II. Meet with local Members of Parliament and Members of Provincial Parliament to request that the voice of the northern agriculture sector be heard when considering agriculture policy and regulations.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Lobby provincial and federal governments for specific consideration of the conditions of northern farmers and small scale operations in the formulation of policies and regulation**
 - a. By meeting with representatives from OMAFRA, AAFC, and other relevant agencies there should be requests put forward for more specific consideration of the conditions for small scale and northern agriculture operations.
 - b. A comprehensive case should be put forward detailing the opportunities for agriculture in the north and the limitations imposed by some policies and regulations.
 - c. An opportunity exists to request a role for *northern proofing* of policies and regulations that affect agriculture, similar to the way designated offices are responsible for *rural proofing* policies that affect rural areas.
 - d. In some cases it may also be appropriate to request special financial assistance for agricultural operations meeting new regulations, particularly when those costs are prohibitively expensive for small scale operations.
- **Meet with Members of Parliament and Provincial Parliament representing the area**
 - a. The provincial and federal representatives for the NeCN catchment area should be met with.
 - b. These individuals should be presented with the case for the specific consideration for northern and small scale farmers including the opportunities for agriculture in the north and how these are limited by some policies and regulations.
 - c. A request should be made to these individuals to raise these special conditions and issues

<p>whenever an agricultural policy or regulation will have unconsidered impacts on northern or small scale agricultural operations.</p>
<p>Why do this?</p> <p>It is commonly stated that small scale farmers in the NeCN catchment area are unfairly subjected to rules and regulations designed for large scale operators. This is frequently cited in the area of food safety regulations that can create high costs for small scale farmers and abattoirs with limited financial support to adhere to them. Similarly, the limits on selling poultry have been seen to inhibit small scale farmers. These rules and regulations can sometimes also limit the ability to sell at local markets or to larger retailers.</p>
<p>Outcomes and Impacts</p> <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby provincial and federal governments for specific consideration of northern agricultural conditions and small scale operations when formulating policy and regulations. • Meeting with local MP's and MPP's to present the case for special considerations for northern farmers and small scale operations in the formulation of agriculture policy and regulations. <p>Impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and regulatory decisions with more consideration and recognition of the unique conditions for farmers in northern Ontario as well as small scale farmers across the province.

Support for new farmers

Strategic Action: Support for new farmers

Recommended General Direction: Support new farmers in accessing the finances necessary to take up farming in the area as well as help newcomers settle in the region.

The future of agriculture in the NeCN catchment area will rely on an uptake in farming from new farmers. However, it is difficult for those interested to obtain the high start-up costs associated with agriculture. As well, it will be difficult for those interested in moving to the area as a farmer to identify opportunities and adapt to the agricultural and social realities of the region.

Objectives:

- I. Support new farmers in identifying and obtaining funding for start-up costs.
- II. Settlement support for those interested in moving to the area and for newcomers.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Mentorship program**
 - a. The establishment of a mentorship program linking new farmers with established mentors would be an excellent opportunity to aid new farmers, particularly in regards to Northern specific crops and farming practices.
 - b. A program currently exists in Ontario known as FarmLINK. This organization could be used as a model, or partner for achieving this goal. For instance, a similar program could be created which is specific to the NeCN catchment area, or awareness could be raised regarding this existing program in order to increase participation.
- **New farmer network**
 - a. An opportunity exists to establish a network of new farmers to share their experiences and support each other in overcoming their similar obstacles
 - b. This network could also include role models from the area which may be included in workshops, presentations, or other in-person events to help spread knowledge and ideas while also establishing the personal connections necessary to create a vibrant agricultural community.
- **Compilation and distribution of information on funding support for new farmers**
 - a. As mentioned, accessing the necessary start up costs for new farmers is a major obstacle. Therefore, it would be beneficial for a list to be compiled and regularly updated which provides information on available funding opportunities, such as those offered through NOHFC and the CFDC's present in the area.
 - b. This could be distributed online, via a paper newsletter, and posted to the integrated website described earlier. As well, it can be included as a sub-section in the listing of general

- funding opportunities proposed in the *Support Funding Applications* implementation strategy.
- c. Further, support should be provided for the completion of these applications as proposed, also in the *Support Funding Applications* implementation strategy section.
- **Information on farming in the NeCN catchment area**
 - a. As presented in the *Additional Sources* section of this implementation strategy, there is a wide range of general information sources available for new farmers. However, there are limited resources available for the conditions specific to Northeast Ontario. Therefore, it would be beneficial to raise awareness of these existing information sources while also providing information on specific crop varieties and necessary farming practices specific to Northeast Ontario. The best means to do so would presumably be online through the single window website described throughout this report.
 - b. There are a variety of sources from which this information can be obtained. Some include: local farmers; the local chapters of the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) and Cochrane Federation of Agriculture; the research stations located in the area; and the OMAFRA representatives for the region.
 - **Settlement support services for prospective and new farmers**
 - a. Particularly for those interested in moving to the area from elsewhere in Ontario, or abroad, settlement support will be essential both before and after they move to the area.
 - b. Once awareness is raised it will be important to provide a means for those interested in the area to identify available farmland and help match prospective farmers with sellers. This may be achieved through online postings or a single point-of-contact to help those interested identify available acreage within their means or expectations (both agriculturally and socially).
 - c. Another important, though often overlooked, aspect of attracting new farmers will be supporting them in identifying communities that meet their personal needs and expectations. Indeed, there is more to decisions to move than agricultural availability. For instance, young people from southern Ontario may expect certain recreational opportunities or need schools for young families. It would be highly beneficial to have a method (such as a navigable online map) showing where these services are located.
 - d. A final point is that newcomers will need to be supported in integrating once they move to the area. In this regard, the mentorship and new farmer networks will be vital. As well, it will be useful to have a point-of-contact for newcomers looking for help. This will be important to keep in mind as it is in no one's interest to see these newcomers leave or their newly founded operations fail.

Long Term:

- **Creation of funding opportunities for new farmers**
 - a. If attempts to increase the awareness of opportunities for new farmers prove insufficient there may be a role for the NeCN and its member municipalities to provide funding directly.
 - b. This funding could be delivered in the form of cost-sharing or low-interest loans for farm improvements.

Why do this?

It is essential for agricultural expansion in the NeCN catchment area to have new farmers start up in the area. Particularly due to the affordability, it may be reasonable to expect that it would be an attractive option for young people elsewhere in Ontario (or beyond) wishing to farm but cannot afford to do so. However a significant obstacle is acquiring the loans and financing necessary to start such operations. Therefore an opportunity exists to support new farmers in this regard.

As well, there may be a role in settlement and information support for new farmers. For instance, settlement support would be necessary to help individuals with little knowledge of this very different area find available land; suitable communities for lifestyle expectations; adapt farming practices; among other practicalities. Therefore, some sort of coordinated mentoring service or information package may be appropriate.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- A mentorship program linking established farmers in the area with new farmers to help maintain local knowledge and aid newcomers.
- Settlement support service to help prospective and existing newcomers with finding available land, finding appropriate communities based on lifestyle, adapting farming practices, and other practicalities.
- Provision of information on funding opportunities for new or young farmers.

Impacts:

- More local youth taking up farming in the area.
- Increase in new farmers moving to the area from other parts of Ontario and beyond.
- Improved success rate of newly established farming operations.

Relevant Examples

External:

FarmLINK- <http://www.farmlink.net/>

The FarmLINK program matches new farmers who are looking for land or mentorship with farm owners who have land available or expertise to share. Through an interactive map and search function, FarmLINK provides new farmers with an opportunity to seek out mentors or available farmland within their geography. At present, there are no participants in Northeast Ontario.

New or prospective farmers can also post a short profile detailing their agricultural interests and mentorship needs. Prospective farmers can also post regarding the type of farm they are seeking as well as its location. As of August 2011, there were almost 300 profiles posted with a range of farming interests.

Additional sources

- **FarmStart:** <http://www.farmstart.ca/>
- **Starting a Farm in Ontario - Business Information Bundle for New Farmers (OMAFRA):** <http://www.omafr.gov.on.ca/english/busdev/newentrant/sec8.htm>
- **Young and Beginning Farmers – AAFC:** <http://www4.agr.gc.ca/AAFC-AAC/display-afficher.do?id=1270648589471&lang=eng>
- **The New Farmer - Canadian Farm Business Management Council:** <http://www.farmcentre.com/Features/TheNewFarmer/>
- **Northern Ontario Young Entrepreneur Program - NOHFC:** http://www.mndmf.gov.on.ca/nohfc/programs/northern_ontario_young_entrepreneur_e.asp
- **Northern Ontario Entrepreneur Program – NOHFC:** http://www.mndmf.gov.on.ca/nohfc/programs/northern_ontario_entrepreneur_e.asp
- **Canadian Young Farmers' Forum:** <http://www.cyff.ca/>
- **Young Farmers – Farm Credit Canada (FCC):** <http://www.fcc-fac.ca/en/learningcentre/YoungFarmers/index.asp>
- **Canadian 4-H Council:** <http://www.4-h-canada.ca/english/>
- **Beginning Farmer Group:** <http://www.beginningfarmer.ca/index.html>

Non-food producing agriculture

Strategic Action: Evaluate and disseminate opportunities for non-food producing agriculture

Recommended General Direction: Evaluate the viability of agriculture for industrial purposes and dissemination of opportunities.

There may be an opportunity for agricultural production within the NeCN catchment area which is not intended for human consumption but rather for industrial purposes.

Objectives:

- I. Evaluate opportunities for non-food producing agriculture in the NeCN catchment area.
- II. Distribute findings and promote opportunities for non-food producing agriculture to the private sector.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Undertake specific research on opportunities for non-food producing agriculture**
 - a. The idea of non-food producing agriculture as an option for the NeCN catchment area is undeveloped. Therefore, if there is interest in pursuing this option specific research will be needed to evaluate its potential and feasibility.
 - b. There may be a role for the NeCN in commissioning this research directly. Alternatively, there may be an opportunity to promote the early conceptualization to private organizations or academics to pursue on their own.

Long Term:

- **Promote opportunities for non-food producing agriculture**
 - a. At present there are too many questions around this concept to suggest it can be promoted as an opportunity. Therefore, once adequate research has been completed, it would be possible to promote the opportunities to the private sector.

Why do this?

Similar to bio-mass or bio-gas producing agriculture, the NeCN catchment area may be an ideal place for other forms of agriculture which do not produce food as an output.

For instance, there was some discussion that while potatoes grew fairly well within the conditions of the area, they did not always reach the level of quality expected by consumers. Therefore, an option may exist for industrial uses for potatoes in distilleries or other operations where the output is not intended for human consumption. In this case, potatoes have a variety of purposes aside from human consumption including: paper and board; industrial and bio-applications; pharmaceuticals and cosmetics; and animal and pet feed.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- Further research on opportunities for non-food agriculture in the NeCN catchment area.
- Eventual promotion of opportunities in the NeCN catchment area.

Impacts:

- Creation of niche products based on NeCN catchment area strengths.
- New opportunities for farming and processing alike with value added production.

Relevant Examples

Additional sources

- “Potato starch – a versatile commodity”:
[http://www.agrocourier.com/bcsweb/cscms_de.nsf/id/Potato_Starch_Agro/\\$file/potato_starch.pdf](http://www.agrocourier.com/bcsweb/cscms_de.nsf/id/Potato_Starch_Agro/$file/potato_starch.pdf)

Wildlife Damage

Strategic Action: Better compensation for wildlife damage

Recommended General Direction: Request for more sufficient wildlife damage compensation considering the conditions of Northeast Ontario.

While not a major issue for agricultural operations in the area, wildlife damage is a common problem that most farmers do contend with. Farmers also often perceived that existing compensation mechanisms were insufficient.

Objectives:

- I. New or expanded wildlife compensation programs.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Request new or expanded wildlife damage compensation programs**
 - a. While compensation programs do exist for calves lost due to wildlife, this has been deemed by some farmers to be insufficient. For instance, one farmer mentioned that compensation would be more fair if it covered the cost of wintering a now calf-less cow rather than attempting to return some lost value for the calf.
 - b. As well, Sandhill Crane flocks were frequently mentioned as doing considerable damage to grain fields, for which there is (apparently) no compensation program. This is an area where a new or expanded program could cover.
 - c. Therefore, it would be worthwhile for the NeCN to request changes to existing compensation programs or request new programs to meet the unique needs of this area's farmers.

Why do this?

Wildlife damage has been frequently cited as an obstacle by area farmers. Specifically wolves for cattle farmers, bears damaging oat fields, and cranes destroying grain fields. While farmers with calves lost to wolves do receive some compensation other damage, such as from cranes, do not.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- New or expanded compensation program for wildlife damage to agricultural production.

Impacts:

- Fewer discouraged agricultural producers.
- More adequate compensation programs for the context of the Northeast.

Relevant Examples**Additional sources**

- Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program (OMAFRA):
<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/predation.htm>

Services/Subsidies Comparable to Quebec

Strategic Action: Services/subsidies comparable to Quebec to even playing field

Recommended General Direction: Request improved services and subsidies comparable to Quebec for agricultural operators in Northeast Ontario.

There is a widely held perception among NeCN catchment area farmers that farmers on the Quebec side of the border have a competitive advantage resulting from an increased number of service and subsidies from their provincial government.

Objectives:

- I. Request that the Ontario government provide equivalent services/subsidies as Quebec for farmers in Northeast Ontario to maintain competitiveness.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Request services and subsidies equivalent to Quebec's for Northeast Ontario farmers**
 - a. Farmers in the NeCN catchment area often mentioned unequal support provided to farmers in Northwest Quebec when compared to their own situation.
 - b. While some of this sentiment may be the result of perception rather than reality it would be worth exploring further with the case put forward to the Ontario government regarding the opportunities the area could hold if it could be made competitive with its Quebec counterparts.
- **Make use of the situation in Quebec in arguments for improved services and support**
 - a. When observing the agricultural situation in Northwest Quebec in comparison to that of Northeast Ontario it is clear that those on the Quebec side have been particularly successful in farming within the conditions of the Northern Claybelt.
 - b. Given the almost identical physical conditions, a commonly heard argument is that the Quebec side benefits from increase provincial support.
 - c. Therefore, the situation of Northwest Quebec should be utilized by the NeCN when making the case for improved support from the Ontario government. Indeed, it provides an example of what the NeCN catchment area could be if provided with the right support and services as well as undermining arguments that physical conditions make agriculture in the area unviable.

Why do this?

Particularly due to the proximity to the Quebec border, farmers in the region frequently cited unequal benefits provided to Quebec farmers. There were a range of added government provided benefits presented, such as stronger outreach and information services and a

wintering subsidy for cattle farmers. There is a perception that these benefits put Northeast Ontario farmers at a competitive disadvantage, such as driving down the price of outputs. Therefore, there may be a role to lobby the Ontario government for similar benefits for Ontario farmers.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- Improved services and subsidies for farmers in Northeast Ontario.

Impacts:

- More competitive agriculture sector in the NeCN catchment area.
- More equality for farmers on either side of the Ontario-Quebec border.

Recognition of Agricultural Value and Potential

Strategic Action: Recognition of agricultural value and potential in the NeCN catchment area from other levels of government

Recommended General Direction: Request formal recognition and support for the agricultural sector of the NeCN catchment area.

The value and potential of agriculture in the NeCN catchment area should be formally recognized by other levels of government. This recognition should be carried through into actions to support farming in the region.

Objectives:

- I. Meet with the relevant Ministers from the federal and provincial governments.
- II. Obtain better information on soil and climate conditions in the area.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Meet with the Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs for Ontario**
 - a. A meeting should be requested with the Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs for Ontario in order to present the needs, opportunities, and value of agriculture in the NeCN catchment area and request recognition and support.
 - b. The approach to this meeting should be positive and non-confrontational with recognition that Ontario is a large province with many agriculturally productive areas throughout. Therefore, limited attention should not be perceived as neglect or disinterest.
 - c. There is also an opportunity to make use of the *Growth Plan for Northern Ontario* during this meeting. Indeed, the *Growth Plan* includes agriculture as an area of focus for economic growth in Northern Ontario. It would be valuable to follow up to inquire as to *how* this growth will be achieved.
 - d. An opportunity to set up this meeting may be presented at the annual Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) conference.
 - e. It may also be useful to include visuals of the stark divide between the agricultural coverage on the Ontario and Quebec sides of the border in Northeast Ontario; such as near the Quebec town of La Reine. Due to the similar climate and soils it would appear that the key differences are political.
- **Request improved soil and climate data**
 - a. The existing information on soils in the NeCN catchment area is outdated or unspecific in most cases. It would be very beneficial for future considerations of agriculture in the area to have updated soil maps with improved quality at a lower scale. These are being created by OMAFRA for the province however to date improved soil maps have not been created for Cochrane District.
 - b. Climate information, specifically in regard to crop heat units, are not very accurate within the context of the NeCN catchment area. Indeed, it has been found that climate information

<p>on this area is quite limited and will require specific study.</p> <p>c. In both cases OMAFRA plays a role in obtaining and distributing information. Therefore, it would be beneficial to formally request that this information be obtained or improved for Cochrane District.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request improved accuracy of estimates for agricultural production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The research for this report found that estimates for yearly production of agriculture prepared by OMAFRA were significantly underestimated. For instance, estimates from OMAFRA indicate no presence of wheat or canola in Cochrane District, which the fieldwork found to be inaccurate. As well, numbers for livestock (particularly sheep) are well below the numbers presented in interviews and observed throughout the fieldwork. b. While there is a disclaimer that comes along with these numbers relating to possible inaccuracy at this level, this may still pose an issue if decisions are being made based off of this data. c. Therefore, the NeCN may wish to include a request for improved estimate numbers for their District during their discussions with OMAFRA representatives.
<p>Why do this?</p> <p>There is a common perception in the NeCN catchment area that agriculture in the region is not valued, or even discouraged, by other levels of government. Therefore, the value and potential of agriculture in the NeCN catchment area should be formally recognized by the federal and provincial governments and this consideration should be carried forward into future agriculture policies. It should also lead to actions from these levels to support agriculture such as funding opportunities and the presence of an OMAFRA representative for the region.</p>
<p>Outcomes and Impacts</p> <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with relevant Ministers from other levels of government; specifically OMAFRA. • Better information on agricultural conditions in the NeCN catchment area. <p>Impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal recognition and increased awareness of the opportunities for agriculture within the NeCN catchment area. • More support from other levels of government for agriculture within this region. • Better soil and climate information to help make the case for extended agriculture in the area.
<p>Relevant Examples</p> <p>Additional sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth Plan for Northern Ontario: https://www.placestogrow.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=53&Itemid=65

Unconventional Agriculture

Strategic Action: Evaluate and promote the potential of unconventional agricultural opportunities.

Recommended General Direction: Evaluate the potential of unconventional or non-traditional agricultural ventures and promote opportunities.

An opportunity might exist for unconventional, or non-traditional, forms of agriculture in the NeCN catchment area. For instance, agri-tourism; non-forest timber products; and freeze dried berries might all build off of the inherent strengths of the region.

Objectives:

- I. Evaluate potential opportunities for unconventional or non-traditional agriculture.
- II. Promote opportunities once they have been identified and evaluated.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Evaluate opportunities for unconventional and non-traditional agriculture**
 - a. At present, it is difficult to say what the opportunities are within the NeCN catchment area for unconventional and non-traditional agriculture. Therefore, specific and targeted studies will be necessary if this is deemed to be an area of interest.
 - b. There is speculation that freeze dried products or non-timber forest products may benefit from the area's inherent strengths, however their commercial viability is also in question.
 - c. Similarly, there may be potential for using horses as an agritourism tool making use of this existing resource. However, at this stage it is difficult to speak to the viability of this.

Long Term:

- **Promote opportunities for unconventional and non-traditional agriculture**
 - a. Assuming that studies identify that this form of agriculture is viable in the area, the NeCN may play a role in promoting it to those within the area or businesses elsewhere.

Why do this?

By building off its inherent strengths there may be an opportunity for the NeCN catchment area to pursue unconventional or non-traditional agricultural ventures. For instance, it has frequently been mentioned that this area has a considerable number of horses. This resource could be utilized as a form of agritourism. Another potential opportunity rests with non-forest timber products which may be an opportunity to make use of the area's vast forests. Further still, it has been speculated that due to the relatively cool temperatures of the area there may be an inherent opportunity to pursue freeze dried products, such as berries which have been found to grow relatively well in the area.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- Specific studies to evaluate the potential opportunities for unconventional and non-traditional agriculture in the area.
- Eventual promotion of opportunities.

Impacts:

- New opportunities for agriculture in the area building off of inherent strengths.

Relevant Examples

Additional sources

- **Economic Impact of the Ontario Horse Industry (OMAFRA):** <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/horses/facts/ecimpact.htm>
- **Sandaraska Park Equestrian Camping:** <http://www.sandaraskapark.ca/equestrian-camping>
- **Non-Timber Forest Products – British Columbia:** <http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hre/ntfp/>
- **Non-Timber Forest Products Network of Canada:** <http://ntfpnetwork.ca/>
- **Non-timber forest products (NRCAN):** <http://canadaforests.nrcan.gc.ca/article/borealntfp>

Opportunities for Learning

Strategic Action: Create and promote opportunities for learning within the agriculture community

Recommended General Direction: Create and promote opportunities for learning within the agricultural community through the use of peer-learning, extension, and outreach.

The NeCN catchment area contains few opportunities for learning within the agricultural community such as limited extension and outreach services.

Objectives:

- I. Create or foster the growth of a peer-learning network for the NeCN catchment area agricultural community.
- II. Request more involvement from formal extension services and an eventual return to a dedicated representative for Cochrane District.
- III. Request increased involvement from research stations within the area in regards to outreach and information distribution.

Implementation Strategy:

Specific actions in support of recommended general direction

Short term:

- **Promote existing opportunities for learning**
 - a. While it is responsible for a large area with limited personnel, it is important to remember that the Northern Ontario Regional Office in New Liskeard is responsible for providing extension/outreach services to Cochrane District. However, interviews with farmers during the fieldwork seemed to indicate little awareness of this offer. Therefore, the existing of this office and the services it provides should be better promoted to the NeCN catchment area's agricultural community.
 - b. As well, the Kapuskasing Beef Research Farm does provide some outreach and tours to area farmers which could be better promoted. Indeed, it may be expected that an increased uptake of these existing opportunities could help justify the creation of new ones.
 - c. Further, OMAFRA personnel indicated that they do make use of online opportunities for extension and outreach, such as broadcasting presentations via WebEx. However, there seemed to be little awareness of this within the agricultural community.
 - d. One idea, particularly considering the limited awareness and potential discomfort with computers and internet, is to create a combined in-person networking event with a particularly relevant WebEx presentation projected for the group.
- **Request increased involvement of research stations in outreach and information distribution**
 - a. The presence of NLARS and the Kapuskasing Beef Research Farm in the region provide great assets for learning which are currently being underutilized.
 - b. Therefore, a request should be made in each case to have each institution more engaged in the agriculture community to share their expertise and the important findings that they produce.

- **Support the creation of a peer-to-peer learning network**
 - a. It would be beneficial for farmers across the NeCN catchment area to have a means for sharing information/ideas and requesting advice from peers in their own area.
 - b. This could take the form of a mixed online and in-person network with a forum hosted on the NeCN website along with in-person workshops and networking opportunities.
 - c. This would also be an opportunity to involve guests from the research stations or OMAFRA to reach a large audience with limited time and resources.
 - d. Further, it is an opportunity for role models in the area to share their experiences, knowledge, and ideas to others in the area.

Long Term:

- **Request a dedicated OMAFRA extension office located within Cochrane District**
 - a. While contrary to current trends of centralization, it would be worthwhile to request a dedicated OMAFRA office be returned to Cochrane District with staff responsible for extension and outreach exclusively for the area.
- **Support creation of formal agricultural learning opportunities through Contact North**
 - a. Due to the large geography of the area it may be possible to make use of the existing resource of Contact North to create formal, online learning opportunities for area residents on topics related to agriculture and agri-business.

Why do this?

In the past, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) had two extension offices in Cochrane District; the North Cochrane office in Kapuskasing and the South Cochrane office in Matheson. However, today the area is served by the Northern Ontario Regional Office in New Liskeard. This office serves a very large geography creating a situation where staff is responsible for very long distances and therefore those in the NeCN catchment area perceive that they are underserved.

Similarly, the New Liskeard Agriculture Research Station (NLARS) and Kapuskasing Beef Research Farm used to play a larger role in community outreach and knowledge distribution. However, today their mandates and resources allow for very little of this to occur.

Overall, there is limited opportunity for learning within the agriculture community within the NeCN catchment area. During the fieldwork it was identified that this also creates a situation where farmers are sometimes unaware of advancements in agricultural practices, varieties, etc.

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes:

- Creation of a peer-to-peer learning network for farmers in the NeCN catchment area.
- Better awareness and increased use of existing learning opportunities and extension services.
- Increased involvement of research stations in outreach and information sharing.
- Dedicated extension service for Cochrane District from OMAFRA.

Impacts:

- Improved knowledge within the NeCN catchment area farming community in regards to advancements in farming practices, varieties, funding opportunities, among other relevant information.
- Opportunity for farmers to request help or advice from a range of sources including peers dealing with similar conditions or issues as well as professional extension staff.
- More effective, efficient, and profitable agricultural operations within the NeCN catchment area.

Relevant Examples**Additional sources**

- **Agricultural Information Contact Centre (OMAFRA):**
<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/realign/aicc.htm>
- **Farm Advisory Services - Canadian Farm Business Management Council:**
<http://www.farmcentre.com/FarmAdvisors/>
- **The Ag Business Centre:** <http://www.ridgetownc.uoguelph.ca/abc/index.cfm>
- **Season Extension Techniques for Vegetable Crops (OMAFRA):**
http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/hort/Season_Extension.htm