

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there are large, vibrant green agricultural fields, possibly corn or soybeans, with distinct rows. A paved road with yellow lane markings runs diagonally across the middle ground. To the right of the road, there are brown, tilled fields. The background shows more green fields and a line of trees. The overall scene is a typical agricultural landscape.

FOOD PRODUCTION SYSTEMS, POLICIES AND RURAL PLANNING: CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

PREPARED FOR: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT | JUNE 2020

Wayne Caldwell, Regan Zink, Sara Epp, & Elise Geschiere
School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University Of Guelph, Canada

SUMMARY

- Around the globe the protection and enhancement of the agri-food sector and agricultural land is critical to **preserve and enhance food security and rural economies**
- This presentation will discuss **the relationship between municipal governments and agricultural lands** and the agri-food sector in Ontario, Canada
- Little is known about the structure, knowledge base, and **capacity of municipal governments to respond to and support** agricultural and agri-food priorities and issues
- This paper seeks to provide an overview and exploration of municipal capacity in relation to agriculture and food systems and provides the **foundation for future research**





“ ...a food system that delivers food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised.

FAO, 2018

CONTEXT

Ontario, Canada

Canada:

\$110 billion

in annual revenue from
agriculture and agri-food
industries

2.3 million

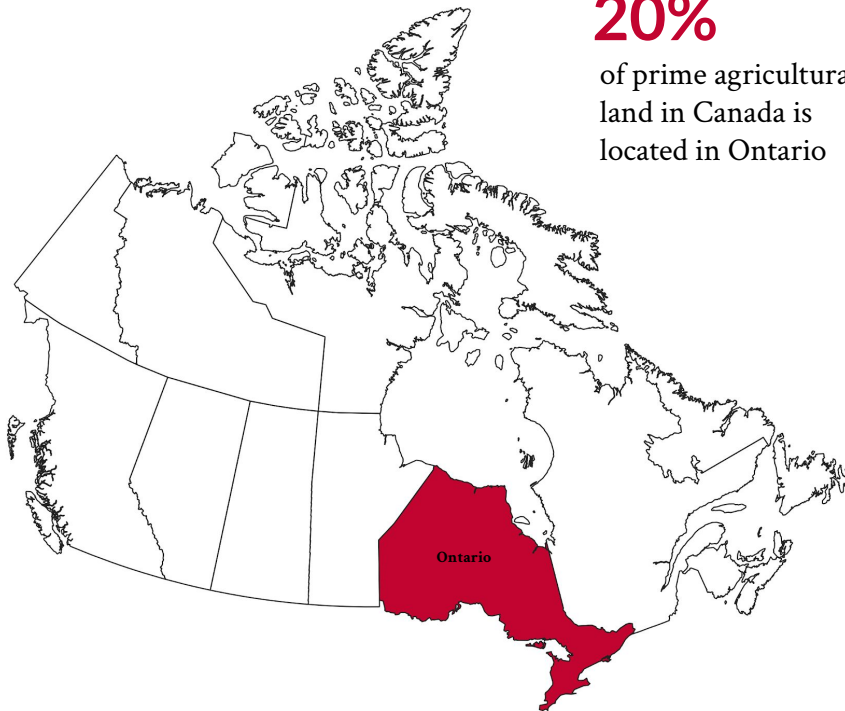
Canadians are employed by
the agri-food sector

5th largest

agricultural exporter in
the world

20%

of prime agricultural
land in Canada is
located in Ontario



SCHOOL OF
ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

PLANNING

Policy Lead Regime

- Agricultural land preservation in Canada has been **a topic of discussion for well over forty years**
- Agriculture in Canada is both a federal and provincial responsibility
- However, **municipalities are the most local level of government responsible** for land use and the agriculture and agri-food sector
- Municipalities are responsible for:
 - implementing **land-use policies**,
 - coordinating **environmental stewardship** efforts, and
 - **promoting local food systems**



MUNICIPAL CAPACITY

Overview

County	Planning Staff (full-time)	Area (km ²)	Population	Total value of agricultural sales \$'000 (CAD)
Dufferin County	<2	1,486.44	61,735	157,496
Elgin County	<1	1,881.03	88,978	432,562
Huron County	9	3,399.27	59,297	1,234,394
Oxford County	8	2,039.61	110,862	910,779
Wellington County	14	2,657.00	90,932	943,243



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Three themes have been identified and will be explored:

1

The importance of land-use planning tools to protect and ensure that a land base is available for agricultural production

2

Key actions that can be taken by municipal governments to develop a local food sector

3

Strategies to encourage more sustainable agricultural production with accompanying environmental enhancements



CASE STUDIES

Overview

HURON COUNTY

Area: **3,399 km²**

Population: **59,297**

Total value of agricultural sales: **+ \$1.2 billion (CAD)**

Planning staff: **9**

WELLINGTON COUNTY

Area: **2,657 km²**

Population: **90,932**

Total value of agricultural sales: **+ \$943 million (CAD)**

Planning staff: **14**



SCHOOL OF
ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

CASE STUDIES

Farmland Preservation

Municipalities as Regulators

Official Plans contain policies that pertain to and protect prime agricultural land.

HURON COUNTY

- Policies to allow for agricultural industrial uses in specific scenarios where the agricultural and agri-food sector may benefit
- Huron staff felt council was well positioned to make consistent decisions in favour of protecting farmland

WELLINGTON COUNTY

- Wellington staff felt that consistency was important to council but that the recent decline of farmers on council has resulted in missed perspectives and knowledge



CASE STUDIES

Local Food Systems

Municipalities as Advocates

Celebrate agriculture and publish statistics about the economic contributions of the agriculture and agri-food sectors.

HURON COUNTY

- Taste of Huron eat local program
- Huron County's AgPrize for innovation and problem solving in agriculture and food science

WELLINGTON COUNTY

- Taste Real eat local program
- Two annual rural romps celebrating the agriculture sector and providing the opportunity for residents to get “up close to your food”



CASE STUDIES

Environmental Stewardship

Municipalities as Leaders

Balance policy, education, and stewardship incentives to improve community reception of new initiatives.

HURON COUNTY

- Huron Clean Water Project began in 2004 and has completed over 2,900 projects
- Huronview Farm - leased to the Huron Soil and Crop Improvement Association and acts as a testing site for new technologies and agricultural practices

WELLINGTON COUNTY

- Wellington Rural Water Quality Program began in 1999 and has completed over 1,650 projects
- Green Legacy program - recognized by the UN Billion Tree Campaign for its role in mitigating climate change



CONCLUSION

Lessons Learned & Next Steps

This brief introduction to the role of municipalities in agriculture and food system is a base for future research and presents the following key lessons:

1

Ontario has been successful in protecting farmland. Both provincial and municipal commitment have been key in ensuring protective policies continue to be effective

2

Rural communities are unique and the issues they face are often complex and context-specific. It is imperative that staff and elected officials be equipped to support and respond to agricultural and agri-food priorities and issues

3

Understanding the structure, knowledge base, and capacity of municipal governments will be key to long-term agricultural planning in Ontario, particularly northern communities where climate change will introduce new agricultural capability





THANK YOU

We would like to thank the Greenbelt Foundation for supporting this project.

Additionally, we would like to thank Huron and Wellington County staff for their input.

To learn more or continue the discussion contact Wayne Caldwell: wcaldwel@uoguelph.ca