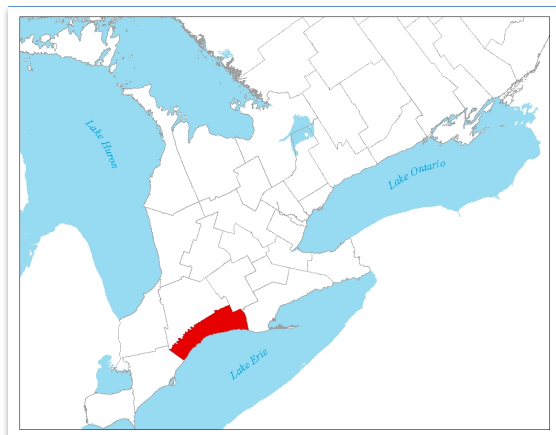


ELGIN COUNTY



Total Land Area (Census 2016)¹: 1,881.03 km²
Area of Census Farms (2016)²: 152,675 ha
Area of Census Farms (2001): 154,907 ha
Gross Farm Receipts (2016)⁴: \$432.6 Million
Gross Farm Receipts per Hectare of Census Farm: \$2,833.47
Population (2016)¹: 88,978
Growth Rate 2006-2011⁵: 2.5%
Growth Rate 2011-2016¹: 1.7%

Prime Agricultural Area Redesignated To A Development Designation (Including Urban, Residential, And Employment) 2000–2017	241.81 ha
Prime Agricultural Area Redesignated To A Rural Designation 2000–2017	0
Land Designated As A Prime Agricultural Area With A Site-Specific Amendment To Allow Additional Uses 2000–2017	0
Total Amount of Prime Agricultural Land Loss 2000–2017	241.81 ha
Total Prime Agricultural Land Loss in Relation to Census Farm Area 2001	0.16%

Purpose of the Summary

This county summary is part of a wider study on farmland availability in Ontario. The study quantifies the conversion of prime agricultural areas based on Official Plan Amendments in upper and single-tier municipalities across the province over a 17-year study period from 2000-2017. This summary is meant to provide detail of the findings in Elgin County. In conjunction with similar case studies from other counties/regions in Ontario, these findings will form the basis of the University of Guelph’s *Measuring Farmland Conversion* research project.

Methods in Brief

The study involved the examination of Official Plan Amendments (OPAs) approved by Elgin County, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and/or the Ontario Municipal Board for Elgin County during the years 2000—2017. The first Official Plan (OP) for Elgin County was approved in 2013 and the County became the approval authority in 2014. As such, data for the County was collected from the

seven lower-tier municipalities within the County for the years 2000–2014 and the upper tier for the years 2014–2017. The lower-tier municipalities within Elgin County are the Municipality of Central Elgin, Township of Malahide, Town of Aylmer, Municipality of Bayham, Municipality of West Elgin, Township of Southwold, and the Municipality of Dutton Dunwich. The City of St. Thomas is a single-tier municipality located within the geographic boundary of Elgin County. Their land use planning has still been captured within this summary as the City continues to have a planning services agreement with Central Elgin. Staff at Planning and Archival departments across Elgin County provided data at the upper- and lower-tier. Their assistance is appreciated in making this research possible.

Changes in farmland availability have been captured in three categories:

- 1) Prime agricultural areas redesignated to a development designation (including but not limited to urban, residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational designations);
- 2) Prime agricultural areas redesignated to a rural designation;
- 3) Land designated as a prime agricultural area with a site-specific amendment to allow additional uses.

Housekeeping type amendments have not been tallied as contributing to farmland conversion. Housekeeping type amendments arise as OP schedules are updated to align land use designations with more accurate parcel lines, or to reflect existing physical features.

Agricultural Land Use Designations in Elgin County

Elgin County protects its prime agricultural area under the Agricultural Area designation. This designation applies to all lands outside the Settlement Area, which are considered to be the County's prime agricultural area. There are some discrepancies between the upper and lower tier Official Plans where some lands outside of settlement areas have been designated for non-agricultural development at the lower tier. In these cases, the lower tier Official Plan designations take precedent and these areas are deemed to not be prime agricultural areas.

The lower-tier Municipalities of Southwold, West Elgin, Dutton Dunwich, and Aylmer reported that there were no OPAs relevant to prime agricultural land during the 2000–2014 time period. The captured OPAs reflect land use changes in Bayham, Central Elgin, the City of St. Thomas, and Elgin County from 2014–2017.

Trends in Agricultural Land Conversion

Development Designations: Seven OPAs were captured that converted prime agricultural land in the Agricultural Area designation within the 2000–2017 timeframe. These OPAs were used to move land from an agricultural designation to a residential (hamlet, rural, and urban development) or industrial designation. Aside from being catalyzed by a Boundary Adjustment (OPA 3, 16, & 66) or a Five Year

Official Plan Review (OPA 10), the purpose of the remaining OPAs were to facilitate the establishment of a golf course (OPA 3), accommodate an existing salvage yard and recycling depot (OPA 1). OPAs of this kind are captured under category 1 of Table 1.

Rural Designation: Elgin County does not use a rural land use designation to define prime agricultural area. No amendments of this kind were captured, as reflected in category 2 of Table 1.

Site-Specific Amendments: Site-specific policy amendments were not used in Elgin County within the time frame permit additional uses within the Agricultural Policy Areas. No amendments were captured under category 3 of Table 1.

Table 1. Prime Agricultural Area Converted Through OPAs In Elgin County By Adoption Date (2000-2017)

Year of Regional OPA adoption or approval by the OMB	Number Of OPAs Related To The Conversion Of Prime Agricultural Area	CATEGORY 1 Prime Agricultural Area Redesignated To A Development Designation (ha)	CATEGORY 2 Prime Agricultural Area Redesignated To A Rural Designation (ha)	CATEGORY 3 Land Designated As A Prime Agricultural Area With Additional Site-Specific Permitted Uses (ha)
2000	1	13.57	0	0
2001	1	3.8	0	0
2002	1	2.3	0	0
2003	0	0	0	0
2004	1	23.74	0	0
2005	0	0	0	0
2006	0	0	0	0
2007	0	0	0	0
2008	0	0	0	0
2009	1	10.7	0	0
2010	1	182.5	0	0
2011	0	5.2	0	0
2012	0	0	0	0
2013	0	0	0	0
2014	1	0	0	0
2015	0	0	0	0
2016	0	0	0	0
2017	0	0	0	0
Grand Total	7	241.81	0	0

**Totals may not add due to rounding

Provincial Land Use Plans:

Elgin County does not fall into the Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Plan, nor the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Official Plan Amendments in Elgin County are not subject to the policies of these provincial land use plans.

1. Statistics Canada. 2017. *Elgin, CTY [Census division], Ontario and Ontario [Province] (table). Census Profile. 2016 Census.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017.

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed April 26, 2020).

4. Statistics Canada. [Table 32-10-0436-01 Farms classified by total gross farm receipts in the year prior to the census](#)

5. Statistics Canada. 2012. *Elgin, Ontario (Code 3534) and Ontario (Code 35) (table). Census Profile. 2011 Census.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-XWE. Ottawa. Released October 24, 2012.

<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed April 26, 2020).