

ESSEX COUNTY



Total Land Area (Census 2016)¹: 185,090 ha
Area of Census Farms (2001)²: 135,214 ha
Area of Census Farms (2016)²: 141,728 ha
Gross Farm Receipts (2016)⁴: \$1,056,448,369
Gross Farm Receipts per Hectare of Census Farm: \$7,454.1
Population (2016)¹: 398,953
Growth Rate 2006-2011⁵: -1.2%
Growth Rate 2011-2016¹: 2.6%

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 Essex 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 Essex County, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and/or the Ontario Municipal Board during the years 2000–2017. Essex County, an upper-tier municipality, had its first Official Plan (OP) adopted in 2002 and approved in 2005. This OP sets the framework and guidelines for the lower-tier municipalities that comprise Essex County. These lower-tier municipalities include the Town of Amherstburg, the Town of Essex, the Town of Kingsville, the Town of Lakeshore, the Town of LaSalle, and the Town of Tecumseh. During data collection, planners at Essex County confirmed that zero OPAs relevant to prime agricultural soils had been approved in the timeframe of this study. Their assistance in making this research possible is greatly appreciated.

Agricultural Land Use Designations in Essex County

Essex County's OP highlights that agriculture is one of the predominant features of the county. The OP states that approximately 90 percent of the land within Essex County is considered to be prime agricultural land, whereas 80 percent of the County's land area is used as farmland. Essex County's definition of prime agricultural land is consistent with the Canada Land Inventory system, and includes

specialty crop areas and/or Class 1– 3 soils. Prime agricultural land is designated in Essex as *Agricultural* and includes everything outside of *Settlement Areas* and *Natural Environment* areas.

Trends in Agricultural Land Conversion

Zero approved OPAs affecting prime agricultural land were captured in this study. Possible explanations include historically permissive policies regarding severances. Essex County also has smaller farm lot sizes that originate from the original land survey system. Essex County continues to have a productive and profitable agricultural sector. In fact, data on the area of census farmland from 2001 to 2016 suggests a 4.8% growth rate in the total amount of farmland in Essex.

Provincial Land Use Plans:

Essex County's Official Plan is subject to the Provincial Policy Statement, however Essex County does not fall under the Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Plan, or the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

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1. Statistics Canada. 2017. Essex County, CV [*Census subdivision*], Ontario and Canada [*Country*] (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).
 - 2 OMAFRA (adopted). 2017. Area of Census Farms (Acres) by County, Ontario: 1991, 1996,2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016. With data from Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture.
 - 3 Statistics Canada. Table 004-0233 –Census of Agriculture, farms classified by total gross farm receipts in the year prior to the census, every 5 years (number of farms reporting unless otherwise noted), CANSIM (database).
 - 4 Statistics Canada. 2012. Ottawa, Ontario (Code 3531) and Canada (Code 01) (table). Census 2011 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-XWE. Ottawa. Released October 24, 2012.
 5. Statistics Canada. 2012. Essex County, Ontario (Code 3506008) and Ottawa, Ontario (Code 3506) (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).