

Housing Needs for the Agricultural Sector in Rural Greenbelt Communities

Supporting Farm Viability and Rural Communities

INTRODUCTION

This research examines housing challenges facing Ontario's agricultural sector, particularly within rural Greenbelt communities. It highlights the importance of aligning housing policy with agricultural needs to support farm viability, labour supply, and rural economic development.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Agriculture and agri-food are central to Ontario's economy, contributing nearly \$50 billion annually and employing approximately 10% of the workforce. However, housing shortages in rural areas are increasingly affecting farm families, agricultural workers, and agri-food businesses.

Urban spillover, rising land values, and limited housing supply are intensifying pressures. The research emphasizes the need for planning approaches that integrate housing with agricultural systems to support long-term sustainability, workforce stability, and food production.



HOW PLANNING CAN SUPPORT AGRICULTURAL HOUSING



Protect Agricultural Land

Maintain a strong and continuous agricultural land base while managing growth pressures.



Support Agricultural Housing

Enable on-farm housing, Additional Residential Units (ARLUs), and nearby settlement-based options.



Infrastructure and Services

Plan for rural infrastructure (water, wastewater, transportation) that supports both housing and agriculture.



PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNERS



Recognize housing as essential agricultural infrastructure.



Align policies with real farm and labour needs.



Streamline approvals and reduce regulatory barriers.



Encourage early collaboration between farmers, planners, and policymakers.

KEY FINDINGS

- Housing is essential to farm operations**
Farm productivity and expansion depend on access to appropriate housing for families and workers.
- Rural housing shortages are increasing**
Limited supply and rising costs are affecting labour attraction and retention.
- Policy and planning gaps remain**
Current frameworks do not fully address agricultural housing needs or flexibility.
- Non-farm development pressures persist**
Scattered rural development continues to impact farmland, operations, and land values.
- Coordinated planning approaches are needed**
Stronger alignment between provincial policy and municipal implementation is essential.

WHY IT MATTERS



Strengthens rural economies and supports agri-food employment.



Protects Ontario's food production capacity and food security.



Enhances long-term sustainability of rural communities.



Supports complete communities that integrate housing and agriculture.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Full report available at:
https://www.greenbelt.ca/housing_needs_agriculture

RESEARCH CREDITS

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