

ENHANCING LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION IN NORTHERN ONTARIO'S CLAY BELT

Understanding Barriers and Identifying Practical Solutions for a Stronger Agricultural Future

Wayne Caldwell, Sara Epp, Isabelle Chouinard-Roy, Anthony Miron, Gabriella Miron (2010)

A partnership between the University of Guelph and l'Université de Hearst



INTRODUCTION

Northern Ontario's Clay Belt contains extensive areas of productive and affordable farmland with significant potential for livestock production. This research explored the economic, social and environmental barriers facing existing and prospective farmers and identified practical strategies to strengthen agriculture throughout the region.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH



Interviews



Focus Groups



Community
Advisory Board



Highway 11
Corridor
Hearst – Cochrane

- ✓ OMAFRA New Directions grant funded project
- ✓ Joint partnership: University of Guelph and l'Université de Hearst
- ✓ Explored institutional and individual barriers to establishing livestock production in the Clay Belt region
- ✓ Involved farmers, agricultural organizations, municipal leaders and sector experts
- ✓ Used interviews, focus groups and a community advisory board to identify barriers and develop practical solutions

WHAT WE LEARNED

Participants identified barriers in three key areas:



ECONOMIC

- Land access
- Transportation
- Labour
- Markets
- Equipment
- Services
- Costs and profits



SOCIAL

- Youth retention
- Employment
- Healthcare
- Mentorship
- Sense of community
- Isolation/Remoteness
- Access to services



ENVIRONMENTAL

- Climate
- Short growing season
- Soil quality
- Unpredictable weather
- Predators and pests
- Extreme cold
- Crop limitations



While challenges exist, participants confirmed that livestock production is viable in the Clay Belt with the right supports in place.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED



Improve access to agricultural land

Create land inventories and make Crown land available at low cost to support new farms.



Strengthen business planning and grants

Promote lower interest rates, support business planning and improve access to grants and risk management programs.



Expand processing and marketing opportunities

Support local processing, marketing and direct sales to keep dollars in the community and grow markets.



Support farmer mentorship and community

Encourage partnerships between established and new farmers and build strong, welcoming rural communities.



Continue research, education and leadership

Promote research, demonstrations and school programs to inspire the next generation and build knowledge.

WHY IT MATTERS

Northern Ontario represents one of Ontario's greatest opportunities for agricultural expansion. Addressing practical barriers while building on the region's strengths can improve food production, strengthen rural communities and encourage the next generation of livestock producers.



FURTHER INFORMATION

- ✓ Final Research Report
- ✓ Municipal Toolkit – Ten Strategies Municipalities Can Use to Support Livestock Development in the Clay Belt
- ✓ Provincial Toolkit – Strategies for the Province to Strengthen Livestock Production in Northern Ontario

All resources available at:
www.waynecaldwell.ca



RESEARCH TEAM

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Ontario

