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Municipal Toolkit

Ten strategies municipalities in the Clay Belt can utilize to develop, support and enhance the livestock sector.



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Overview of the Ten Strategies



- 1) Promote a sense of community
- 2) Build support for agriculture
- 3) Encourage localization in the agriculture sector
- 4) Create a mapping of agricultural assets
- 5) Build knowledge within the municipality
- 6) Get to know your farm organizations and appropriate provincial staff
- 7) Maintain and enhance regional perspective within the Clay Belt
- 8) Understand and support drainage and land clearing initiatives
- 9) Understand the challenges/limitations of livestock production
- 10) Create policies in support of agriculture

1

Promote a sense of community



What is it?

A "sense of community" is a feeling of belonging that many people associate with the place where they live.

Why does it matter?

If people have a strong sense of community, they are more likely to embrace the community as home and be committed to living, contributing, and supporting activity within their locale.

What can municipalities do?

Municipalities can help to promote a sense of community through a number of activities. Examples include:

- ✓ **Community Branding.** Create a brand that helps people to recognize and acknowledge the community where they live. Promote and profile the quality of life in your community. This can include sharing success stories and publicizing agricultural forums and fairs. The community branding could include a partnership between municipalities or a broader regional approach (for example the Northeast Community Network, or from southern Ontario, an example is the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance).
- ✓ **Attracting and retaining newcomers.** Promote your community as dynamic and inclusive. This can help with recruitment efforts and can help to encourage new and beginning farmers and their families.



2

Build support for agriculture



What is it?

Building support for agriculture is developing an awareness and sharing the potential importance for agriculture in your community.

Why does it matter?

Awareness can help to develop markets, encourage people to get engaged in agriculture and support local farms.



What can municipalities do?

Municipalities can work with local agencies and farm groups to promote an awareness of agriculture throughout the community. Examples include:

- ✓ Agriculture can be promoted and profiled through municipal websites and economic development materials (e.g. local markets and road side stands).
- ✓ Municipalities can provide linkages between individual farms and schools for the purpose of education and promotion of agri-food activities to an impressionable younger audience.
- ✓ Some municipalities work with farm operators to organize regional tours that invite residents to visit local farms. Examples include Farm Connections Open House in Durham Region and Alberta Open Farm Days.

3

Encourage localization in the agricultural sector



What is it?

Localization is the production and consumption of local food and other agricultural products. It also includes farmers purchasing goods and services locally.

Why does it matter?

Agriculture is an important economic activity. Local markets are important to the agricultural sector and keep dollars within the community.

What can municipalities do?

Municipalities can help to promote the local agricultural sector. Specific examples include:

- ✓ Create an inventory of local products. Across the province various municipalities have created maps profiling local products (ranging from farmers markets to a butter tart trail).
- ✓ Help farmer-led initiatives. Farmers often pursue value added and diversified activities such as the production of cheese or local woodworking. Ensure that your policies are supportive of this type of activity and be sure to profile this activity on your municipal website.
- ✓ Encourage the service sector (local processing). Agriculture requires a range of services, from veterinarians to grain elevators, in order to prosper. Municipalities need to recognize the importance of these services and promote and encourage this activity within your community.



4

Create a mapping of agricultural assets



What is it?

Mapping provides a visual representation of key agricultural resources.

Why does it matter?

Mapping provides a foundational understanding of existing farmland, land availability and suitability that are important to new and existing farmers.

What can municipalities do?

Municipalities have access to information that can help to create certain maps and in other instances, they may need to work with the province to generate the required information.

- ✓ Municipalities should be able to develop maps that identify existing farms and privately-owned lands that are suitable for new agricultural endeavours.
- ✓ It is understood that the province is updating soil maps for the Clay Belt region and as this information becomes available, municipalities can work to promote these maps.
- ✓ Mapping of agricultural assets (e.g. businesses and services that support agriculture) can benefit new and existing farmers by providing a clear understanding of existing infrastructure. Sample mapping exists at Enhancinglocalfood.com.



5

Build knowledge within the municipality



What is it?

Helping to ensure that municipal staff and elected officials have a sound understanding of agriculture and its needs.

Why does it matter?

Municipalities make many decisions that directly and indirectly impact agriculture, it is important that officials making these decisions have a clear understanding of the agriculture sector.

What can municipalities do?

Municipalities can build agricultural knowledge through the following examples:

- ✓ Work to ensure that staff have an appreciation for agricultural issues and needs within your area.
- ✓ Agricultural organizations can be invited to speak with council regarding current issues, needs and opportunities within the local agriculture sector.
- ✓ An Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) can enhance a municipality's understanding of agriculture issues and provide an agriculture lens to new policies and initiatives. A guiding document on AACs can be found at foodandfarming.ca.
- ✓ Municipalities could enhance internal knowledge of the agriculture sector through the appointment of an existing or new staff member with a dedicated agriculture portfolio (e.g. agricultural liaison, economic development officer). This individual should take on the responsibility for being a contact for prospective new farmers and have appropriate information, such as funding opportunities, available.



6

Get to know your farm organizations and appropriate provincial staff



What is it?

Farm organizations include provincial, regional and local groups that represent and advocate for specific commodities and general farm interests.

Why does it matter?

These organizations provide a conduit into the specific needs of individual farmers and farm interests more generally. They serve as a helpful point of contact between the community and individual farmers.

What can municipalities do?

Municipalities should develop relationships with local farm leaders who represent these organizations and agricultural interests.

- ✓ Most farmers are part of one of three provincially recognized general farm organizations (Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario and National Farmers Union). Municipalities should connect with their local representative.
- ✓ There are also farm organizations for specific commodities (e.g. Beef Farmers of Ontario, Dairy Farmers of Ontario, Grain Farmers of Ontario), municipalities should be aware of and connect with local representatives.
- ✓ Municipalities can help to build relationships between farm organizations and the population at large. For example, the International Plow Match is typically sponsored jointly by municipalities and farm organizations.
- ✓ The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) is the provincial government's representative for agriculture in the province. Staff are based throughout the province, with a dedicated staff in Temiskaming Shores, Cochrane, Verner and other locales. There are other provincial ministries with an interest in agriculture to connect with.

7

Maintain and enhance regional perspective within the Clay Belt



What is it?

Working together with neighbouring communities to achieve common goals within agriculture.

Why does it matter?

Given the uniqueness of the Clay Belt region, more can be accomplished by working together and promoting a common interest than working individually.

What can municipalities do?

Municipalities can work together with neighbouring communities within the Clay Belt region.

- ✓ For example, the Northeast Community Network has been focused on creating a regional economic strategy that recognizes the unique characteristics of each community within the Clay Belt.
- ✓ There are also opportunities to work with neighbouring municipalities to support social and economic activities (e.g. fairs, festivals and farm gate sales).



8

Understand and support drainage and land clearing initiatives



What is it?

Land drainage is critical to achieving optimal soil conditions for crop production and in some instances, land clearing must also be undertaken.

Why does it matter?

Cleared lands is a necessity for most agricultural activities (e.g. hay, crop and pasture production). Crop production requires appropriate drainage conditions to ensure optimal crop yields. It can also be important for the production of hay and pasture and is also beneficial for livestock.

What can municipalities do?

Municipalities can work to understand the role and importance of land clearing and drainage.

- ✓ Municipalities should understand what lands are drained/not drained within their municipality and potentially map this data.
- ✓ Municipalities should task a staff member with understanding drainage programs, funding sources and relevant legislation.
- ✓ Municipalities should identify best practices for land clearing.

9

Understand the challenges and limitations of livestock production



What is it?

There are unique challenges to livestock production in the North and municipalities can work with the farm sector to identify and address these challenges.

Why does it matter?

The viability of livestock production is enhanced by the resolution of certain key challenges.

What can municipalities do?

Municipalities can build an understanding of the challenges and work with the farm community to develop responses.

- ✓ A key issue for livestock farmers is the impact of certain predators (e.g. wolves, coyotes and bears).
- ✓ As proposed by a member of a First Nations community, there are opportunities to work with local First Nations to develop strategies for predator control.
- ✓ Municipalities should build knowledge on the variety of predator control options available, including hunting, fencing and best management practices.
- ✓ There are certain myths (e.g. social, economic and environmental) pertaining to livestock production in the North and municipalities should work with the farm sector to identify and dispel these myths.



10

Create policies in support of agriculture



What is it?

Developing policies that are supportive of the agricultural sector, including livestock and crop production.

Why does it matter?

Municipal policies, including official plan and zoning by-laws can hinder or help the farm sector.

What can municipalities do?

Municipalities can review their policies to ensure that they are supportive of agriculture and various agri-food related activities.

- ✓ For example, OMAFRA has released the Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas, as a tool to help diversify the agricultural sector.
- ✓ Municipalities can develop an agricultural strategy to help support local farms.
- ✓ Municipalities should utilize an Agricultural Advisory Committee to review all municipal by-laws and expenditures that may impact agriculture.
- ✓ Municipalities should review and revise policies in their Official Plan and Zoning By-law to be more specific and supportive of the agriculture sector (e.g. an appropriate lot size, farm diversification policies, minimum distance separations and appropriate range of agricultural uses).
- ✓ As areas are opened to agriculture and farms, the municipality may need to revisit their policies for road creation and maintenance.



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