Canada's Capital Greenbelt: Moving Towards Sustainable Agriculture

Farm Research Project

Wayne Caldwell, PhD, MCIP, RPP
Katie Temple, MSc (candidate)

School of Environmental Design and Rural Development
University of Guelph
July, 2009

Prepared for the
National Capital Commission

Foreward

In 2009, the National Capital Commission initiated an independent research project charged with identifying actions that would encourage the appropriate evolution of agriculture in Canada's Capital Greenbelt.

The research project was led by Dr. Wayne Caldwell, who holds an expertise in rural land use planning and development, with a primary focus on issues of change in agricultural communities. His team investigated regional, national and international trends and issues in agriculture and examined particular Greenbelt farming concerns. Several focus groups were organized with Greenbelt farmers and NCC staff to provide input and feedback to the study. A vision, seven guiding principles and twenty actions to enhance Greenbelt farming in the future are presented in the report.

The final report, *Canada's Capital Greenbelt: Moving Towards Sustainable Agriculture* is intended as a reference document to encourage the informed consideration of options that could help provide agriculture with the stability to grow and prosper while protecting the Greenbelt's rural landscape and built heritage. The results of this work will be used by the National Capital Commission in two ways. First, the report will serve as a background document providing input into the review of the 1996 Greenbelt Master Plan. Second, the information will contribute to the preparation of an agricultural management plan to guide decision-making on agricultural leased properties in the Greenbelt.

The work is that of an independent consultant. Conclusions and recommendations reached and presented in the report are those of the consultant and do not necessarily represent the views of the National Capital Commission.

Canada's Capital Greenbelt:
Moving Towards Sustainable Agriculture

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Many people contributed to this report.

First and foremost, many farm tenants of the Greenbelt gave freely of their time and expertise. We hope that we have fairly reflected their knowledgeable input.

Staff at the NCC contributed enthusiastically at both the development and review stages of this report. Many thanks.

Finally, a special word to acknowledge the contributions of Eva Katic, Senior Land Use Manager with NCC. She gave freely of her time, insight and expertise. Her passion for agriculture in the Greenbelt was infectious. Without her guidance, wisdom and leadership this report might never have got off the ground.

- Wayne Caldwell and Katie Temple

SECTION 1

Introduction

Canada's Capital Greenbelt covers 20,000 hectares of land that surround the urban centre of the City of Ottawa. It encompasses forests, wetlands, watersheds and farmland, providing a distinctive rural setting to Canada's Capital. Throughout the Greenbelt, farm landscapes, whether broad, open crop fields or family dairy operations, tell the story of farming in Canada's Capital and contribute to creating a sense of place. Some of the Greenbelt farms have become landmarks in the National Capital Region due to their location on major roads. They help visitors and residents appreciate the region's agricultural history and give the region its distinctive green character.

Currently, the National Capital Commission leases approximately 5,000 hectares of farmland to 64 farmers who produce a variety of agricultural products including grain and field crops, beef and dairy cattle, and specialty crops. Agriculture in the Greenbelt faces many challenges. Over the past few decades, both the diversity of farms and number of full-time resident farmers has decreased. Factors that have contributed to these changes include shifts in the farm industry, a stressed agricultural economy, deterioration of farm buildings, effects of urban expansion and an aging farm operator population. Additionally, the number of farm assets (i.e. barns, farmhouses and other farms buildings) has decreased, affecting the preservation of scenic rural landscapes within the National Capital Region. Trespassing, illegal dumping, and encroachment issues are other common local farming concerns. Additionally, allowances for new or widened municipal roads, transit systems, subdivisions and institutional accommodations, which potentially fragment farmlands are persistent.

Background

The National Capital Commission recognizes the importance of maintaining the rural landscape quality of the Greenbelt and its farming community. The *1999 Plan for Canada's Capital* recognizes that the Capital's farming heritage plays an important part in our sense of national identity and our enjoyment of the National Capital Region. The commitment to maintain the Greenbelt's rural landscape is outlined in the *1996 Greenbelt Master Plan,* which provides direction to "foster a wide range of viable and well-managed farms as a way to conserve large, open and diverse rural areas in the Greenbelt" and "enhance the Greenbelt's contributions to the regional farm economy, agricultural research and related visitor experience." Continued support for agriculture is anticipated in the revised Master Plan that is expected to be released in 2011.

Despite statements of formal support for agriculture in the Greenbelt, however, its future is neither certain nor guaranteed. In this context a farm management plan will be prepared to guide future planning and management of farming in the Greenbelt. The plan will recommend general guidelines to enhance the Greenbelt's rural character and promote a vibrant farming community. In particular, it will provide an overview of each farm property, including a general site description, review of historical and visual significance, description of soil class and tile drain condition, and infrastructure servicing. It will also identify farm specific issues and discuss potential opportunities. This plan will, however, need to reflect the context of agriculture not only within the Greenbelt, but also within Ontario, Canada, and internationally.

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this research project is to provide information in support of the preparation of the farm management plan for the Greenbelt by detailing ways to enhance the agricultural sector in the Greenbelt. Additionally, this information will contribute to the review of the 1996 Greenbelt Master Plan currently underway, including potential amendments to its agricultural policy.

Specifically, this project 1) provides an overview of trends and issues in agriculture, 2) identifies guiding principles to support and enhance the Greenbelt's agricultural resources, and 3) develops short and long-term actions to address and implement the principles. The sections below expand on each topic and provide an overview of the organization of this report.

Methods

This report was commissioned by the National Capital Commission to look at trends in agriculture and to identify key actions that would support future prosperity and evolution of agriculture in the Greenbelt. The approach to the study included several key components. Literature and government documents were reviewed to identify current and future trends. Five focus groups were organized to provide input and feedback to the study and the researchers attended an additional meeting organized as part of the Greenbelt Master Plan review. Meetings were also held with NCC staff and individual farmers.

Overview of the Report

Trends and Issues in Agriculture

Section 2 entitled Agricultural Trends and Canada's Capital Greenbelt examines current regional, national and international agricultural trends and considers the impact of these trends on farming in the Greenbelt. The research provides both a historical and future oriented perspective, considering positive and negative implications. Section 5 of the report presents a variety of actions to help respond to anticipated changes and foster a wide-range of viable farms in the Greenbelt and enhance the Greenbelt's contribution to the regional farm economy and Greenbelt visitor experience.

Vision and Guiding Principles

Reflecting input from the Greenbelt farm community, NCC staff and the researchers' experience a vision and guiding principles were developed that help to inform a whole series of actions.

Section 4 presents seven key principles that are intended to help guide the future growth and development of the farming sector in the Greenbelt over a time period of approximately the next 25 years. These principles range from communications to sustainable agriculture and they provide the framework for a myriad of actions.

Actions (Strategies and Initiatives)

Twenty actions are presented in Section 5. These actions are summarized in Table 6.1 and include an initial evaluation concerning the time frame for implementation, the level of required resources and a suggestion as to enhance greenbelt farming in the future so as to contribute to the NCC's commitment of maintaining a diverse and sustainable farming sector.

These actions consider an enhanced role for agriculture ranging from on-farm diversification, to sustainability, to enhanced marketing to improving the profile of agriculture in the Greenbelt.

Greenbelt farm tenants participating in focus group meeting (April 7, 2009).

SECTION 2

Canada's Capital Greenbelt and Trends in Agriculture

Context for Agriculture in the Greenbelt

The Greenbelt surrounding the nation's capital includes approximately 78 farms located on 5,000 hectares of farmland spread out across the 20,000 hectare Greenbelt. This farmland has been in public ownership for nearly 50 years, over which time a unique arrangement has evolved between the farmers of the Greenbelt and the National Capital Commission. Many farmers have leased the same land for many years. The future of farming in the Greenbelt, however, is neither certain or guaranteed. Agricultural viability is a function of many trends and various contributing factors. This section looks at broader issues impacting agriculture in Canada, Ontario, Quebec and the City of Ottawa, thereby establishing the context for agriculture in the Greenbelt.

2.1 Background to the Greenbelt

The inspiration for the Greenbelt occurred more than 50 years ago when Jacques Greber, a French architect and planner, saw a unique opportunity to preserve the picturesque rural landscape that surrounded the city of Ottawa. Its original purpose was to prevent the urban sprawl which is characteristic of many Canadian cities, by containing the growth of the Capital City within the urban core. At the same time the Greenbelt was meant to ensure the protection of the scenic countryside as a beautiful backdrop to the urban centre.

Over time the purpose of the Greenbelt and its role have evolved to reflect the realities of modern planning and development. Although Greber originally planned to contain development to the urban core, the population growth in the years after the establishment of the Greenbelt, made this impossible and even undesirable. The Greenbelt has therefore become much more than just a way to contain growth – and within the context of planning could now have a much more substantial role to play, not just within the region but for the country as a whole.

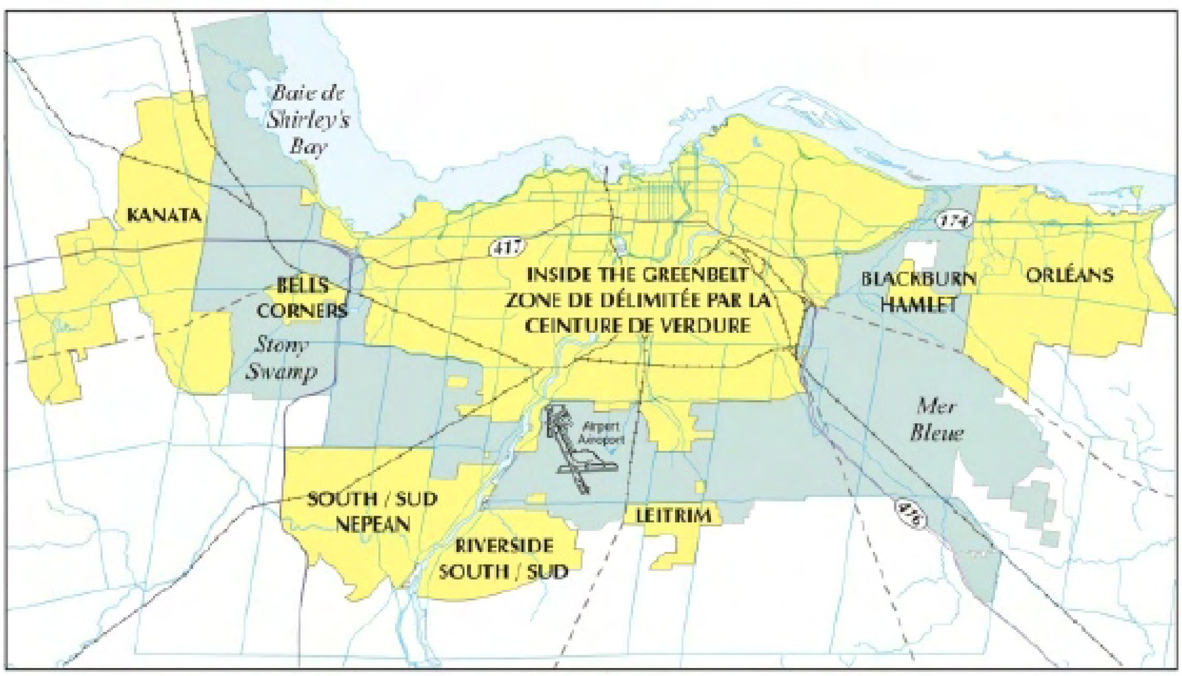
Given the rapid urban growth and the decline of rural areas in most regions in Canada, the role of the Greenbelt could now be repositioned to better meet current needs. The Greenbelt now has the potential to showcase the importance of preserving rural areas in proximity to urban settlements. The uniqueness of its location and its relative protection from development pressure ensures that small piece of rural Canada can be preserved in the Capital region.

The Greenbelt could also play a significant role in showcasing the rural heritage and culture of Canada, and at the same time, provide open and accessible recreational space for an urban population and protection for ecologically significant natural areas. Perhaps even more importantly, at a time when farming and farmland are disappearing across the province and the country, the Greenbelt can ensure a space in the country's capital where farming is preserved, both for its heritage and cultural value, but also for our modern food needs.

2.1.1 What is the Greenbelt Today? Role and Purpose

In 1956 the federal government began acquiring lands around Ottawa, and today, the National Capital Commission (NCC), a federal body that is responsible for the National Capital Region, is responsible for close to three quarters of the 20,000 hectares of publically owned Greenbelt land that envelops the Capital City from Shirley's Bay in the west to Green's Creek in the east.

The Greenbelt is now bordered by newer urban development at its southern edges, as towns such as Kanata, Nepean, Leitrim and Orleans have sprung up within the last few decades. In addition, two residential and commercial areas, Bells Corners and Blackburn Hamlet are completed surrounded by the Greenbelt.



According to the 1996 Greenbelt Master Plan, the main purpose of the Greenbelt is

> *To support a mosaic of distinctive rural landscapes and activities in proximity to the urban area that contributes to the health and identity of the National Capital region and to the sense of pride Canadians feel for their Capital and country.*

A revised Master Plan is currently in development. Although it is anticipated that it will continue to support agriculture as in the 1996 version, it will also need to be updated reflecting the changing role of the Greenbelt in the 21st century.

According to the current Master Plan, the Greenbelt is now used for a variety of both commercial and non-commercial purposes, including recreation, forest and wetland conservation, agriculture, as well as a limited number of institutional and residential developments.

The Greenbelt houses a number of institutions such as Bell Canada and Agriculture Canada, as well as the MacDonald-Cartier Airport. It also plays a significant recreational role, with its network of trails for biking, hiking, skiing and horseback riding. Natural wetland areas such as Mer Bleue and Stony Swamp are protected within the Greenbelt, and offer important habitat for flora and fauna. As a working landscape, the Greenbelt is also home to a diversity of both commercial and hobby farms, with many of the farms supplying the local market or providing services to the urban population.

2.1.2 Agricultural Policy in the Greenbelt

Currently, agriculture is one of the main economic activities in the Greenbelt. The 1996 Master Plan sets the policy direction for the area as a whole and prioritizes agriculture as one of the five main roles of the Greenbelt.

According to the Plan, the Greenbelt is meant to sustain productive farms and forests that support a vibrant rural community near the Capital. Within this role, Greenbelt farming is intended to positively contribute to the local economy, help symbolize a vibrant and diverse rural landscape, provide research and interpretation opportunities, and sustainably manage the region's renewable resources.

Although the Master Plan is meant to support and enhance the agricultural sector in the Greenbelt, the policy is quite general and allows for a number of interpretations of its intentions, making decision making more complicated and providing less consistency in terms of planning for farming in the future. The result is a lack of a clear vision for the future of Greenbelt agriculture on the part of the National Capital Commission, as well as a lack of a common identity for the farm sector.

2.1.3 Overview of Agriculture in the Greenbelt (Summer 2008)

As of July 2008, there were 5400 hectares (13,344 acres) of farmland in the Greenbelt, with most of it tile drained and designated prime agricultural soil. There were a total of 78 farm properties in the Greenbelt with an average size of close to 70 hectares, and of these there were 63 farmsteads, which included houses and/or farm buildings.

The NCC leases farm properties to farmers through an external property management company. Some tenants farm the property themselves, and others sublease. Most of the farm leases were for commercial farms, but there are also a number of hobby farms in the area. Most farm tenants are currently on a 5-year lease. The majority of the tenants live on-site, although some of the farm properties have no tenant and/or no residence.

The Greenbelt has a diversity of main farm types, including both commercial and hobby farms, with the majority of farms in the small to medium range. The main types of commercial farms include cash crops, which is the most common; horse farming, often with boarding stables; vegetables; dairy and a number of mixed use operations with berries, flowers, fruit, beef cattle, greenhouses and so on. Three of the Greenbelt farms were certified organic and of those, one was certified biodynamic. Farmers sell their products through a variety of means including farmers markets, produce stands, on farm sales, pick your own operations, and one Community Supported Agriculture enterprise.

Growing Horse Industry
Just a 20 minute drive from downtown Ottawa, the Greenbelt is an ideal location for horse farms especially those that run boarding and riding stables. According to the most recent Census of Agriculture, the number of horses is growing across Ontario. In just five years the increase was reported at close to 17%, and this translates into a significant economic impact. Although horse farms tend to be smaller than the average Ontario farm, the estimated annual investment in horse products and services was $2.6 billion in 2006.

Most tenants resided on the farm properties, however there was a small percentage of farms where subtenants were residents. Farms were either run by on-farm tenants, or were subleased and operated by an off-farm tenant. Some farm operators relied on migrant labour, and others were family-run enterprises.

What is Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)?
A CSA consists of a community of individuals who pledge support to a farm operation so that the farmland becomes the community's farm, with the growers and consumers providing mutual support and sharing the risks and benefits of food production. CSA's focus is usually on a system of weekly delivery or pick-up of vegetables and fruit, sometimes dairy products and meat.

2.2 What are the major trends in farming?

Agriculture is increasingly becoming a globalized, commodity driven industry. Global and local economic, environmental and societal trends can have large impacts on the whole industry. At the same time there is a new trend towards alternative farming, which is challenging current notions of agriculture in the 21st century, and these new trends are also important to consider both globally and locally. Five key trends that are influencing farming around the world are discussed below.

Global Trends in Farming:
1. *Globalization*
2. *Urbanization*
3. *Rural demographics*
4. *Alternative farming*
5. *Environmental change*

Many aspects of global agriculture, such as food prices, are influenced by multiple trends. The recent spike in commodity prices in 2008, for example, was arguably caused by both globalization and environmental change, with blame given to higher production costs, growing demand for biofuels, low cereal stocks and extreme weather events. After decades of low commodity prices, the sudden peak triggered riots in many countries and forced some governments to bring in policies to control food prices or limit exports (FAO 2008; UNEP 2008). From a farmer perspective these higher prices were a welcome change.

This example is one of the signs that on a national and worldscale, agriculture is facing critical challenges. An increasing global population, rapid economic changes in developing countries, increasing urbanization, climate change, soil degradation and a number of other serious problems are putting rising pressure on farmers around the world. According to the United Nations Environment Program, our agricultural capacity to meet the coming demand for food with an increased population is uncertain (UNEP 2008).

2.2.1 Globalization

Agricultural products have long been traded on a worldwide scale, however, in recent years there has been a rapid increase in the volume and value of the global food trade (World Trade Organization 2008). Trade is now regulated internationally by the World Trade Organization and many attribute the increase in global trade at least partially to such global entities.

Currently 40% of the Earth's land area is used for cropland and pasture (IPCC 2007), compared to only 5% of Canada's land area (Agriculture Canada). Despite this small percentage, the country still ranks second in the amount of arable land per capita because of our relatively small population, which has made Canada a large net exporter and therefore very much subject to the ups and downs of international markets.

Canada is now one of the top exporters of agriculture and agri-products on a world scale, with 45% of gross farm market receipts for primary agricultural products coming from exports ($32 billion) in 2006. Grains, oilseeds and red meat all earn much of their revenue from the export rather than domestic market, with oilseeds receiving as much as 84% of its revenue from out of country sales (Agriculture Canada).

a) Fewer and Larger Farms

A prominent trend in Canada in recent decades is the dramatic loss in the number of farms, with an accompanying increase in farm size. In an export-oriented country, farms are becoming bigger in order to compete on the global market, and those that are unable to compete are squeezed out.

Globalization and Canada's Agriculture

- *Canada exported in excess of $32 billion of agricultural products in 2007*
- *Oilseed farmers receive close to 84% of revenue from world exports*
- *To achieve 'economies of scale' in a competitive world market, Canada's farms are becoming larger. Between 1981- 2006, the number of farms with annual revenue above a quarter million tripled.*

In the past 25 years, the total number of farms in Canada has decreased by a full 28%. However this decrease is seen mainly in the small-medium size farm category, as the number of large farms has actually seen large increases.

For example, farms with revenues above $250 000 increased threefold from 1981 – 2006. In the same 25 year time period, the number of farms earning less than $250 000 decreased by 38% (Agriculture Canada).

Larger farms are also generating most of the farm revenue. In 2006, million dollar farms accounted for only 2.5% of actual farms in the country but brought in over 40% of total sector revenue as compared to 18% of revenue twenty years earlier. At the same time, the share of total revenue brought in by farms worth $5 million more than tripled, from 5% to 16% (Agriculture Canada 2008).

Example of a large farm in southwestern Ontario.

b) Cost Price Squeeze

Many farmers are also stuck in the cost-price squeeze (Pierce 1994) as the trend has continued in Canada since 1981 that farm input prices are higher than product prices (Agriculture Canada 2007). Although there was a large spike in grain prices around the world in 2007, due to a number of factors including global demand for biofuels, this change is not necessarily a reliable trend on the volatile global food market (Food and Agriculture Organization 2008).

World markets also directly affect fuel prices, and these expenses, as well as other operating costs, are increasing for Canadian farmers. Farmers spent approximately $0.7 billion on fuel twenty-five years ago and are now spending over $2.0 billion (Agriculture Canada 2008). Other expenses include commercial feed, depreciation and fertilizers and chemicals.

As food prices go down, farms are forced to become more efficient, cut costs and often produce more. Many farms are also dependent on government program support to remain viable (Agriculture Canada 2008).

c) Dependence on Off-Farm Income

Many farm families in Canada must also now rely on off-farm income. For most provinces in Canada, off-farm income makes up more than half of the average family income for farm families (Agriculture Canada). In 1981, 32.8% of farms reported doing non-agricultural farm work, as compared to 48.4% of farm operators reporting an off-farm income in 2006 (Statistics Canada).

d) Agriculture as a Source of Environmental Degradation

Due to economic and political pressures, the agricultural industry has also become a major cause of environmental degradation, as farmers have been forced to use modes of production that are unsustainable in the long term. Industrial agriculture is dependent on the maximization of output, meaning an increased need for petrochemical-based inputs, such as fertilizers and pesticides, as well as monoculture crops and destructive soil management practices (Caldwell 1989).

In Canada there appears to be some reversal of these more destructive agricultural practices within the past few years. For example, the chemical input on Canadian farms steadily increased in the past few decades but leveled off in 2007. Soil conservation methods such as no-till or minimum tillage increased in almost all areas of Canada between 2001 – 2006, while conventional tillage decreased. However, in the same time period the amount of water used by the sector increased by 25%.

2.2.2 Urbanization

From a societal perspective, urbanization is growing both globally and in Canada. More people in the world now live in cities than they do in rural areas. There are now less people farming, but more people dependent on farmers to feed them. More than two-thirds of Canadians now live in the country's Census Metropolitan Areas. (Statistics Canada).

a) Decrease in Farmland

Increasing urban sprawl is decreasing the amount of farmland available, and farmers often now have to compete for land with non-farm development especially in areas closer to cities. Land prices increase with competition, making it even more costly for new farmers to enter the industry. As land values increase, farmers are often able to make more money selling farmland for non-farm purposes, which adds to the growing problem of urban sprawl.

According to the Ontario Farmland Trust, more than half of Canada's Class 1 soil is located in Ontario. Between 1976 – 1996, approximately 18% of Ontario's farmland disappeared from the Greater Toronto Area mainly due to urban sprawl and rural non-farm development. Farmland continues to be lost across the country, with another 600,000 acres of Ontario farmland disappearing between 1996 – 2006 (Ontario Farmland Trust).

b) Increased and Changing Food Demands

On a world scale there is an increased need for current farmers to produce more and more food, but internationally access to food often depends on the ability to buy food rather than the ability to produce food (UNEP 2007). Population growth has slowed down worldwide, but is still growing, and there is a current shift from crop-based to livestock based-diets, as the developing world switches to industrialized countries' eating habits. These trends mean there is a need to increase global food production by 55% by 2030 (IPCC 2007).

2.2.3 Rural Demographics

a) Increasing Average Age of Farmers

The average age of farmers is increasing because there are less young people replacing those who retire. Many reasons have prevented many young farmers from starting out, including the increasing capital investment needed to start farming, lack of access to land, a growing urban population with less connections to agriculture, and the perception of agriculture as a difficult career option. This is exacerbated by the trend to larger and larger farms, which tends to see those with the most equity (i.e. older farmers) buy up other farm parcels.

In 2006, the median age of Canadian farmers was the highest of all occupations in the country at 51 years, compared to the average median age of 41.2 years.

2.2.4 Alternative Farming

Around the world there are a number of organizations that are attempting to change current trends in agriculture. Based on concerns about democracy, human and ecosystem health, human rights, genetic engineering and food sovereignty, organizations, individuals and some levels of government are coming together to try and address the problems they see in the industrial agricultural system.

a) Rise in Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture Programs and Practices

There are a number of examples of programs where farmers are paid for environmental stewardship, or for the ecological goods and services they provide to society. For example, farmers in the EU can get direct financial payments for adopting environmentally friendly farming techniques (European Commission 2003). Organic agriculture is on the rise in Canada. Between 1992 – 2007, the number of certified organic farms more than tripled to reach 3,782. Sales of organic products have also continuously been climbing (Canadian Organic Growers 2008).

b) “Local Food” Movements

Organizations have sprung up in the last few decades to support social, environmental and economic justice in agriculture, largely based on supporting small and medium sized producers and their ability to make a livelihood. Internationally there are organizations such as Via Campesina, who politically advocate for the preservation of family farms, decentralized food production and supply chains and the right of communities to make decisions based on their own food needs. At the same time, Canada has seen an increase in people organizing to raise the number of farmers markets, community gardens, Community Supported Agriculture operations, and other initiatives designed to foster local food systems.

2.2.5 Environmental Change

As the natural environment changes, so too does the agricultural landscape. The earth has witnessed rapid ecological degradation over the past few decades, and change continues to accelerate, putting farmers and our food supply at risk. Global environmental problems include soil erosion, nutrient depletion, water scarcity, salinity and the disruption of biological cycles, and these are often exacerbated by climate change. These trends are predicted to worsen in the coming years, affecting agricultural outputs (UNEP 2007).

a) Climate Change

According to the United Nations, climate change is the greatest challenge currently facing humanity and a changing climate has innumerable implications for farmers. On a world scale, the IPCC predicts that a slight increase in global temperature (+2 degrees Celsius) may improve some crop yields in mid to high latitude regions, but in low latitude regions, even a slight increase may have negative impacts. With higher increases in temperature, all regions will likely experience a decrease in yield.

However, the predicted increase in extreme weather events is expected to be more destructive to agriculture than temperature alone. A region's vulnerability and ability to adapt to climate impacts will be also impacted by its social, economic and political circumstances. North America for example is expected to have an overall increase in 'potential agricultural land' of 20-50% by 2080 (IPCC 2007).

The predicted impacts of climate change in Canada vary from region to region. Overall, there is an expected increase in temperature and water scarcity. Ontario is predicted to become warmer, and to experience more extreme weather, including longer dry spells. Impacts on agriculture are varied. Warmer temperatures may increase risks of pests, and cause heat stress for livestock, but could increase crop yields in the short term (Reid et al 2007).

b) Soil Erosion

According to Agriculture Canada, soil erosion is the gravest threat to agriculture on a world scale. Soil erosion is caused by water, wind and by agricultural practices, and can have detrimental effects on farm productivity. Topsoil provides fertility to the land, however, it is the most fragile part of the soil, and its loss can reduce crop yields. In Canada, although most erosion happens on the Prairies, there is also erosion potential in Ontario especially where the soils are more sandy.

> *"Every year the planet loses an area the size of Scotland to erosion and urban sprawl. At the same time we add 70 million people to the planet's population."*
>
> *Ronald Wright, CBC Massey Lecture Series, 2004*

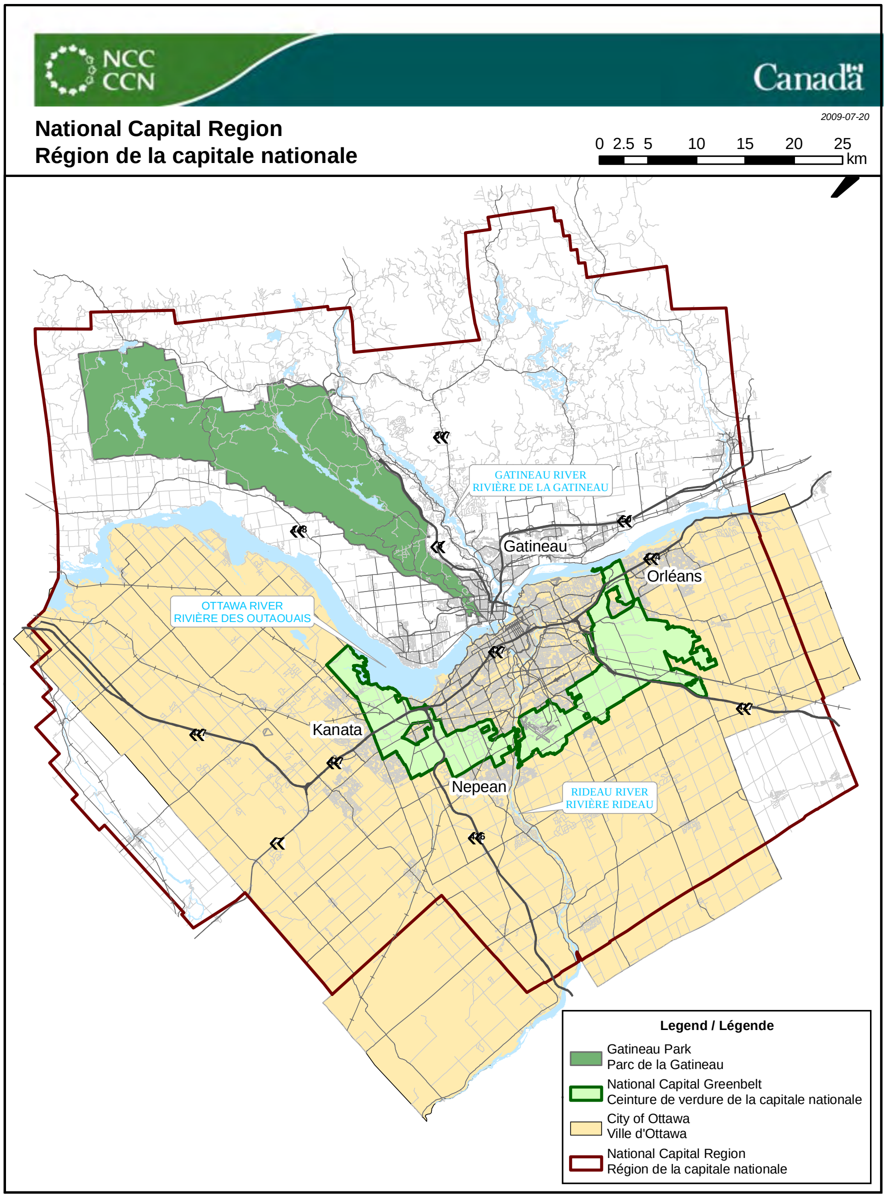
2.3 How have these trends affected agriculture in the Greenbelt?

Similar to farmers around the world, Greenbelt farmers do not farm in isolation. They are both directly and indirectly affected by international, national and regional policies and trends. These policies translate themselves into a web of trade, agricultural, health and environmental laws and regulations that control the everyday operations of individual farmers. On a broader level, there are a number of global forces influencing agriculture which have resulted in numerous trends over the past few decades.

A brief overview of the regional setting as context for examining how farming in the Greenbelt may be influenced by these trends is provided. Agricultural census data is not available for Greenbelt and the National Capital Region, therefore, information is presented for the provinces of Ontario and Quebec and where appropriate, Eastern Ontario and the Ottawa Region that represents the City of Ottawa. This section concludes by discussing what these trends mean for Greenbelt farming and how best to position Greenbelt agriculture to respond to these trends.

Regional Setting

The Greenbelt is located within the City of Ottawa and the greater National Capital Region. The National Capital Region (NCR) is defined as the jurisdictions represented on the regional map. It consists of an area of 5,319 square kilometers that straddles the boundary between the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. The NCR is similar in area to that of the Ottawa-Gatineau Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), although the National Capital Region contains a number of small neighboring communities that are not contained within the CMA. The population of the NCR is approximately 1,451,415.



City of Ottawa

For the purposes of this report, the City of Ottawa will be understood to mean the City after the 2001 amalgamation. This includes the former regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, the former cities of Ottawa, Nepean, Kanata, Gloucester, Vanier and Cumberland, the former townships of West Carleton, Goulburn, Rideau, and Osgoode, and the former village of Rockcliffe Park. The City also corresponds to Statistics Canada's Census Division.

In 2006, the population of the Capital City reached 812,135 constituting close to a 5% increase since 2001. In the past 25 years, Ottawa's population has grown by more than a quarter of a million people. If temporary residents such as students are included, the actual population to which the City provides services was closer to 870,000 in 2006 (Census 2006; City of Ottawa). It is the fourth largest city in Canada.

About 50% of the land in Ottawa is currently considered to be of agricultural value, compared to less than 15% of land in nearby counties such as Lanark and Renfrew. However, population growth is affecting the rate of farmland loss, especially in the areas of Kanata and Goulbourn (Cummings 2000). Although the percentage of population growth within Ottawa remains highest in the outer urban areas (64% of total growth between 1996-2001) the rate of this growth is in decline. In that same period thirty percent of overall growth occurred in the urban core of Ottawa. The rural population of Ottawa saw only a slight increase in population, as its growth rate declines. Its growth only accounted for 7% of overall Ottawa growth between 1996–2001.

In 2006, Ottawa had 2.21% of all farms in Ontario and this figure has remained constant since 2001. Ottawa has a diverse agricultural sector. Beef farms were the dominant type in 2006 with 267 farms and 7,832 beef cattle. The main commodities currently in Ottawa are dairy, floriculture, nursery & sod, corn, mushrooms, soybeans, cattle & calves, greenhouse vegetables and wheat.

Trend #1: Globalization

a) Fewer and Larger Farms

- *Farms continue to decline in number as they grow in size.*

Table 1:
Comparison in Change in Number of Farms
Source: Statistics Canada

Location	1986	2006
Ontario (21.3% decrease)	72,713	57,211
Quebec (26% decrease)	41,448	30,675
Canada (21.7% decrease)	293,089	229,373

The number of farms in the provinces straddling the National Capital Region has been in steady decline for decades, which is consistent with national and global trends. Since 1986, the number of Quebec farms has declined 26%, higher than the national average of 21.7%. The Ottawa region had a total of 1267 farms in 2006 compared to 1674 census farms in 1986, indicating a 24.3% decrease. Even before this period however, the number of farms in Ontario was in decline with a decrease by 45% between 1950-1980.

Since 1986, the average size of farms in Canada has increased 27.7%, from 231 hectares to 295 in 2006. Average farm size in Quebec was slightly above the national average while Ontario's average was considerably lower. The average size of farms in the Ottawa Region in 2006 was 90.5 hectares as compared to 76.7 hectares in 1986. As an example of this trend, in the period between 1986–1996, although the number of beef farms actually declined by 35% the number of beef cattle increased by 11.6%. There was also a similar trend in the dairy industry, as the number of farms decreased by a quarter between 1986–1996, but the actual decline in milk cows was much smaller at 13.6% (Cummings 2000).

Table 2:
Comparison in Change in Average Farm Size (ha)
Source: Statistics Canada

Location	1986	2006
Ontario (20.5% increase)	78	94
Quebec (28.4% increase)	88	113
Canada (27.7% increase)	231	295

Farms in Eastern Ontario, including Ottawa, generally tend to be smaller than those in other parts of the province. For example, 34.9% of all Ottawa Region farms earned less than $10 000 in 2005, as compared to 25% for the province as a whole. Overall, although individual farmers, especially small ones are being squeezed out, the overall value of gross farm receipts has stayed relatively consistent because of the increased output of those that remain.

b) Cost Price Squeeze

- *In general, expenses rose slightly faster than farm revenues*

The total gross farm receipts for 2006 in the Ottawa region was $164.7 million. Business operating expenses were $142.2 million. The total numbers do not give the full picture however, because according to Statistics Canada, larger operations are much more likely than small farms to earn enough from sales to cover their expenses. Given that Ottawa has smaller farms, the potential for the cost price squeeze may be higher. This issue was also raised specifically by Greenbelt farmers as a problem they are grappling with.

c) Dependence on Off-Farm Income

- *Farm families more dependant on off-farm income*

Almost half (47.4%) of Ottawa Region farms report relying on off-farm income in 2005, with close to 20% of those farmers working more than 40 hours per week off-farm.

Trend #2 Environmental Change

- *In general, farmers across the country are adopting more environmentally-friendly farming practices.*

According to the 2006 Census of Agriculture, more farmers are reporting using soil conservation practices and no till practices are becoming more popular as they reduce input costs and soil erosion from wind and water. Generally, farmers are also using less fertilizer and pesticides on a per acre basis. There is also increasing attention given to organic production.

Trend #3: Urbanization

a) Decrease in Farmland

- *Total farm area is steadily decreasing.*

In the Ottawa region the total farm area is steadily diminishing, as is occurring across the country. Although farms are getting larger, farmland is still being lost at a rapid rate, especially in areas closest to urban areas. Between 1981 and 2006 the Ottawa region lost 10.7%% of its farmland.

Table 3:
Total Farm Land Area in Hectares
Source: Statistics Canada

Region	1986	2006
Ottawa (% decrease)	128,433	114,674 (-10.7%)
Ontario (% decrease)	5,646,581	5,386,453 (-4.6%)
Quebec (% decrease)	3,638,801	3,462,935 (-4.8%)

In the Greenbelt, farmers rent rather than own the land and are therefore affected differently than farmers who are tempted to sell their land. However, urbanization still threatens farmland due to development pressure from neighbouring cities, and it is the role of the National Capital Commission rather than the farmers themselves to make decisions around farmland preservation.

Because of the Greenbelt's proximity to urban areas, there are often requests to widen roads and expand infrastructure. Some of these developments occur on Greenbelt farmland, and can result in farm fragmentation. Although individual farmers may be compensated, the overall loss of the land is permanent.

Trend #4: Rural Demographics

- *The share of farmers over the age of 54 has climbed.*

Similar to the national trends, the average age of farmers is increasing in the Ottawa region as fewer young farmers are entering the industry. However the change has been even more dramatic in the Ottawa region as compared to the rest of the country.

Since the early 1980s, the number of farmers under the age of 35 in Ottawa has decreased by 8.2%, while at the same time the percentage of farmers above the age of 55 has increased dramatically by 15.6%. In 2006 the average age of farm operators in Ottawa was 54.7, which was slightly higher than the Canadian average of 52.

Trend #5: Alternative Farming

- *Small but increasingly number of farmers are growing organic products.*

In Ottawa and Ontario similar to trends across the country, people are coming together to support local food systems and more ecologically friendly forms of agriculture. The number of organic farms in Quebec increased by 105% between 2001 and 2006 from 372 farms to 765 in 2006. In 2006, there were 593 farms in Ontario reporting certified organic products compared to 405 in 2001, an increase of 46.4%.

a) Connecting Producers and Consumers

There has been growing attention to connecting consumers with producers, resulting in initiatives such as farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture, agri-tourism and educational farm tours. Between 1998–2008, the estimated annual growth in direct sales at farmers markets in Ontario was 7.3%, with $641 million in sales at 154 markets in 2008 (Farmers Markets Ontario 2009). For the past eight years, Harvest Ontario has been published to promote agricultural tourism across the province (Harvest Canada 2009). The free publication lists pick your own farm operations, farmers markets, local food celebrations, food festivals and other opportunities to bring consumers in contact with farms and farmers. The Ottawa Buy Local Food Guide features local farms and markets in Ottawa, including several Greenbelt farms.

b) Organic Agriculture and Ecological Services

Organic agriculture is also a growing industry in Canada, as well as in Ontario. Although the overall number of farms in Ontario is decreasing, the number of certified organic farms is increasing in most regions (Blay-Palmer 2005). Organic retail sales continue to grow in Canada, with a 17% increase from 2006 to 2007 (OMAFRA 2009). However, Canada still imports most of its organic food (AAFC 2002), perhaps offering an opportunity for Canadian producers.

c) Supportive Partnerships

There are a number of initiatives based in Ottawa that support the local agriculture industry. Savour Ottawa, for example, is a partnership between Ottawa Tourism, JustFood (a non profit food security organization) and the Ottawa Rural Affairs office. This initiative coordinates events to help market local food products and bring producers in contact with buyers such as restaurants and caterers. They are also in the process of creating an online local food inventory which would allow producers to list the products they currently have in season, allowing buyers to more easily access local foods.

2.4 Summary:

What do these trends mean for Greenbelt farming?

Given the trends in agriculture on a global, national and regional scale, there is both opportunity and risk in the agricultural sector in the Greenbelt. In late March and early April, 2009 there were a number of focus group discussions with farmers as part of this project and as part of the exercise to review and update the 1996 Greenbelt Master Plan. As learned from these meetings, many Greenbelt farmers are affected in similar ways as their counterparts in the region, in the country, and indeed around the world. The number of farms in the Greenbelt is in decline, with many farmers feeling the cost-price squeeze and the constant threat of competition from outside markets. Urban development competes with their farmland and many farmers depend on income from off the farm. In many ways, however, Greenbelt farmers are in a unique situation due to their location within a publicly owned, federally managed landscape within the capital city. As described by the farmers, the Greenbelt offers both advantages and disadvantages for the farm sector, many of which affect the everyday operations of individual farms.

How could Greenbelt agriculture be repositioned to optimize farming?

In light of these changes in agriculture, the predicted continuation of these trends into the future, and the distinctiveness of the Greenbelt, the National Capital Commission now has the opportunity for setting a new direction for Greenbelt agriculture. As the purpose and vision for the Greenbelt evolves to meet today's needs, it seems increasingly clear that the Greenbelt can play a critical role within a modern farm sector, at the same time as it preserves an important piece of Canadian agricultural history. This will be enhanced by increasing public interest in food security and safety, environmental responsibility, cultural and heritage preservation and the economic viability of farming.

In summation the Greenbelt can be a window into a modern, sustainable and viable farm sector that is rooted within the cultural and historical legacy of Canada's past. The following themes are intended to strengthen the farming sector and ultimately contribute to long-term sustainability of Greenbelt agriculture.

1. The Greenbelt as a Place for Sustainable Farming:

   Farming in the Greenbelt is much more than a remnant of the Greber Plan, it is an opportunity to showcase sustainable farming in Canada's Capital. Sustainable agriculture integrates environmental stewardship, economic profitability, and social responsibility. Greenbelt farmland is an irreplaceable, non-renewable resource. According to agricultural census data, the number of farms and farm hectares in the NCR is decreasing. The continued loss of farms and farmland can have many repercussions that affect the local and regional economy, environment, and quality of life. Conversely, the Greenbelt can help to establish the connection between farmers and consumers. Greater awareness has the potential to increase market opportunities and related economic stability for the farm sector. This is a critical component of sustainability. Stronger marketing opportunities provide the opportunity for enhanced environmental stewardship. Prosperous farms can more easily absorb the costs of environmental improvements. This will become increasingly important as change – economic, environmental and social, accelerates in the years ahead.

2. Greenbelt Farms as a Living Example of Canada's Farming Heritage, where the past and the future of farming can meet.

The Greenbelt provides a unique opportunity to blend the past with the future. The National Capital Commission has a specific interest in maintaining the heritage aspects of the Greenbelt. Through leasing arrangements there is the potential to identify priority buildings and landscapes and to see that these are maintained. At the same time, there is a wonderful agricultural resource, with a capable and knowledgeable farming sector that can implement modern agricultural practices contributing to a productive landscape. This represents a unique opportunity within Canada for a private – public partnership that preserves and enhances a working agricultural landscape for future generations.

This partnership can recognize the important role of family farms both within the Greenbelt and to the country as a whole. Indeed, a number of the farmers who participated in this study have children who aspire to take over the family farm. Where this doesn't occur, the Greenbelts unique location and quality soils provides an attractive opportunity for young, creative farmers to contribute to a diverse, vibrant agricultural sector. Unlike most near urban locations where the cost of land acquisition is prohibitively expensive, young farmers can secure land within the Greenbelt at rental rates reflective of the agricultural potential versus speculative urban values. With a huge market and affordable entry into farming the potential for young, progressive farmers is immense.

3. Productive Greenbelt Farms Ensure a Local and Regional Food Supply

Current and future generations of Ottawa residents have the potential to benefit from the production of food within the Greenbelt. Local food is healthier, fresher and tastier. Once a market is established it can also enhance the viability of agriculture and the rural community. Food can become a social event bringing together producers and consumers. In the future, it may also become an increasing necessity. Food security and concerns over energy availability are likely to increase the need for locally available food supplies.

4. Diversify Greenbelt Farming as a Place for Agritourism

The geographic location of Greenbelt farms provides an ideal opportunity to blend agriculture and tourism. Agritourism has the potential to enhance farm incomes, provide wonderful learning opportunities and create linkages between city residents and the Greenbelt. With close to 1.5 million residents residing in the region and many visitors and tourists, this function of Greenbelt farms is currently underutilized. Agricultural tourism examples potentially include:

- Recreational and educational farm tours/visits: Walking tours of orchards, guided tour of dairy farm, observing farm animals up close, learning about the lifecycle of bees, etc
- Purchase of local products (fruit, vegetables, cheese, etc.): Discover local products, pick-your-own, roadside stands and centralized Greenbelt markets.
- Dining: farmhouse meals, country-style dining, sugar shack or regional cuisine
- Farm stays: B&B, country inn, rental home or camping on a farm.

5. Greenbelt Farmland Creates Rural Character and a Diverse Natural Landscape.

Greenbelt farms provide much benefit to the Greenbelt and the National Capital Region as a whole. Greenbelt farmlands provide wildlife habitats, a buffer to sensitive environmental areas and other natural resources. They provide viewscapes and recreational opportunities that enhance the quality of life for residents across the National Capital Region and from across the country. There is a risk, however. Across Canada, farmland is threatened and there are fewer farmers. The Greenbelt is not immune to these risks. As farmers and farmland is lost the character of an area is permanently changed. Without the footprint of agriculture, much of the human interest in the Greenbelt would be lost. The preservation of this scenic landscape and cultural heritage of Canada's Capital Region is bound to the preservation and enhancement of the Greenbelts agricultural resource.

SECTION 3

Farmer Perspectives from the Greenbelt
Current Challenges

The Greenbelt is a unique area of agricultural production in Canada. The lands are owned by the National Capital Commission and leased to approximately 65 farmers. For the farm community there are both advantages and challenges associated with this arrangement. Farmers for example benefit from significantly reduced capital expenditures and for some forms of agriculture there is a significant benefit being immediately adjacent to the City of Ottawa. This report, however, while acknowledging a number of benefits, recognizes the need to identify and remedy the concerns or challenges Greenbelt farmers face in the interest of enhancing overall farm viability.

As learned from the focus group discussions held with Greenbelt farmers in late March and early April, 2009 they are affected by many of the local, national and global trends outlined in this document. The following is a summary of some of the main issues voiced by Greenbelt farmers. It should be noted that not all Greenbelt farmers were present at consultations and these issues may not be fully exhaustive nor accurately represent the situation for all Greenbelt farmers. As previously discussed, there is a diversity of farm type and size in the Greenbelt and each farmer has his/her own individual challenges and successes.

The following summarizes the key issues that were identified. These issues are from the perspective of the farmers and are discussed further in Section 4 and are addressed in Section 5 with a number of suggested principles and actions.

3.1 Cultural Heritage and Modernization Balance

Generally within the Greenbelt there is a goal of protecting the heritage value of buildings and the traditional rural character of the region. Greenbelt farmers understand the NCC's interest in retaining the heritage and aesthetic value of these buildings, but current practices on the part of both the farmers and NCC result in neglected and dilapidated farm buildings. Farmers would often like to modernize their operations (sometimes requiring the addition of new buildings) to make them more economically viable, however, because they are located in the Greenbelt, they may not be permitted to modify their properties as they would be if outside the Greenbelt. At the same time, without NCC investment, older buildings, which may have heritage value, are not maintained and eventually become unsightly. The effect is to make both modernization and heritage preservation a greater challenge, especially as it is sometimes unclear who is responsible for the cost input required.

3.2 Urban Meets Rural

Although sometimes beneficial, there are a number of serious challenges that arise with farming near urban areas. Farmland loss is a common occurrence in Canada, but its effects are especially acute in areas like the Greenbelt. Many farmers fear the ‘death by a thousand cuts’ from urban encroachment into the Greenbelt, and more specifically into farmland. There is continued pressure to use land for infrastructure developments to serve the urban population, which may include road construction, road widening, water and sewer infrastructure, residential and institutional developments and so on.

Recreational uses of the Greenbelt also sometimes conflict with agriculture, including hot air balloon landings and public trails immediately adjacent to farm property, especially if visitors are unaware that some of the lands are working farms and not for public use. There are also limits to the type of wildlife control that is permitted in the Greenbelt due to its proximity to the urban population.

3.3 Cost-Price Squeeze

Increasing operating costs, including fuel and fertilizer, without an accompanying product price increase has meant a cost-price squeeze for many farmers, especially for those who are not quota-managed. Many farmers mentioned that global economic competition is a problem for them, and they feel that there is not enough government support in the face of this competition. Some farms struggle to remain economically viable, and need to supplement their family income with off-farm work.

The global push to modernize and become more efficient is made especially difficult for Greenbelt farmers, as they may hesitate to invest in farm improvements when their lease is short term or they may simply not have the right to make modifications to the farm property.

3.4 Short Term Leases

One of the overarching problems for Greenbelt farmers is the standard short term lease offered by the National Capital Commission. As previously stated, most leases are only for five years, which has a number of serious implications for the agricultural industry. They are generally unable to build equity over time, and hesitate to make large investments in farm property without the security of knowing that they will be there 10 – 20 years into the future. Although there appears to be a move towards longer leases at the NCC, there are still many farmers who have 5 year leases.

It is important to acknowledge that not all farmers desire a longer term lease for a variety of reasons, however, most of the farmers attending the consultations expressed the need for longer term security on their property which would allow for increased investment in farm capital.

The short-term lease is also an issue for NCC. It is difficult to invest in property improvements without the certainty that the farmer has a long-term commitment to the property.

This issue of short-term leases is a structural concern that is fundamental to many other issues.

3.5 Responsibility for Property Management

One of the issues unique to Greenbelt farming is the landlord/tenant relationship. Farmers expressed the feeling of a 'disconnect' with the NCC, which may be partially due to the fact that the leasing and property management responsibilities are sub-contracted out to a separate company. There appears to be a lack of clarity around who is responsible for maintaining different aspects of farm properties, often leading to a lack of maintenance. For example, although much of the land is tile drained, it is felt that some if it is beyond repair and needs to be replaced. Tenants are responsible for its upkeep, but they are unsure who should pay for its replacement. Farmers also cite problems such as a lack of agricultural knowledge on the part of the property management company, slow response times for maintenance requests, and incomplete repairs.

SECTION 4

Vision and Guiding Principles for Agriculture in Canada's Capital Greenbelt

Introduction

The treatment of agriculture in the NCC Greenbelt should be based on certain guiding principles reflecting an overall vision for agriculture in the Greenbelt. Clearly, the NCC Greenbelt currently exists as a testament to the legacy of leadership and vision that was brought to the Greenbelt concept when it was first contemplated in the 1950's. The Greenbelt was initially conceived "as a means to limit the extent of urban growth in the expanding Capital, to protect its scenic countryside and to provide a home for large institutions" (National Capital Commission. Greenbelt Master Plan. 1996). The result according to the 1996 Master Plan for the Greenbelt is one of the most complete greenbelts in the world, and the only greenbelt that is publically owned in its entirety.

Over time, however, the role of agriculture within the Greenbelt has changed. Farmers on poorer soils abandoned their farms instead of leasing them back from the NCC. This led to reforestation of much of the abandoned and marginal farmland. Remaining, however is a core of excellent farmland including approximately 65 active farms. While there are advantages and disadvantages associated with the leasing of farmland, it can lead to a situation where neither the leasee or the lesser are inclined to invest in farm operations. By the 1970's for example in a report entitled "Agriculture in the Greenbelt" and prepared for the Chairman and Members of the National Capital Commission there was a call "to undertake immediately a major capital investment program to upgrade, improve, or replace existing farm buildings and facilities." Thirty-five years later this call to action is even more urgent.

The future of agriculture in the Greenbelt is neither certain nor guaranteed. It will only remain as long as agriculture remains a viable activity, providing farmers and their families with an acceptable standard of living and quality of life. The underlying framework or vision for agriculture in the Greenbelt will be critical to its' long-term success. The following vision statement for the long-term future of agriculture reflects the input from farmers, NCC staff and others with an interest in supporting agriculture in the Greenbelt.

The Greenbelt is a unique feature within the National Capital Region and perhaps no other capital in the world has such an active agricultural landscape in such close proximity. The following vision statement is intended to guide future land use planning and management.

Vision:

Canada's Capital Greenbelt will be the permanent home of an active, productive and stable farm community. Nationally, it will serve as an example of Canadian farming by including a diversity of individual farms and farm types. Locally, agriculture will strengthen the relationship between the Greenbelt and the City providing rural viewscapes, opportunities for local food production, environmental protection and enhanced quality of life. There will be traditional established farms and opportunities for new farm operations. Innovation and the continued evolution of agriculture into the 21st century in harmony with the environment will be encouraged. The Greenbelt will maintain the integrity of the rural landscape, protecting important viewscapes and heritage buildings while sensitively integrating new farm buildings and facilities in support of agriculture.

Guiding Principles

The following seven principles guide future growth and development of agriculture in the NCC Greenbelt. These principles were developed following focus group discussions with farm and non-farm stakeholders, including National Capital Commission (NCC) staff. These principles establish the framework for a number of specific actions to be pursued by the NCC and the Greenbelt community.

Principle 1: The continued recognition and protection of the Greenbelt as a nationally and locally significant rural landscape.

The value of continued protection of the Greenbelt and the rural landscape, including important building stock is critical. The Greenbelt is under much external pressure for development of its land. If its protection is a priority, then existing measures must continue to deny urban development proposals.

The Greenbelt was first conceived in the 1950s with the intention to limit urban growth in the capital and to preserve scenic rural landscape. These original intentions have transformed into its current purpose, which is to support rural landscapes and activities near the urban area that contributes to the health and identity of the region and to a sense of Canadian pride. This purpose includes a role to sustain productive farms that support a vibrant rural community near the Capital.

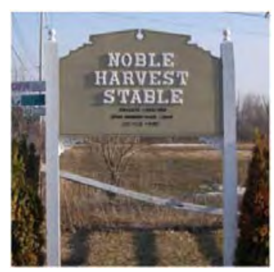
Principle 2: A healthy, working agricultural landscape is maintained that recognizes the historical legacy while allowing for appropriate evolution.

A balance must be achieved that allows farmers to modernize their operations, but at the same time, the cultural and historical value of the landscape must be recognized and planned for. This balance requires that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and that innovative solutions for farmstead preservation and new investment are actively sought out by the National Capital Commission. For example, whereas farmers may be prepared (in a long term lease situation) to invest where there is a corresponding increase in productivity, they may not be prepared to invest in the heritage aspect of the property.

Principle 3: Encouraging diversity and evolution of agricultural practices that harness innovative opportunities connected to the Greenbelt location.

Because of its unique character, the Greenbelt should be valued as a place for innovative farm practices and to provide opportunities for new farmers to get established. Its rural identity coupled with its proximity to the large urban centres of Ottawa-Gatineau has advantages that should be explored. On-farm diversity may provide new opportunities for creative farmers who are willing to adapt to an urban market. While conventional agricultural practices are likely to continue, green technologies and environmentally responsible farming techniques are examples of such opportunities. Farmers could potentially take advantage of alternative energy sources such as geothermal, wind or solar, and could look into the possibilities of transitioning to organic, biodynamic or other forms of environmentally-responsible agriculture.

Principle 4: A sense of pride, ownership, and a strong common identity for the Greenbelt.



A united identity fosters a sense of community that can promote long-term tenants and long-term investment into a property. At the same time, a strong sense of ownership, belonging, pride and confidence in decision-making on the behalf of farmers can promote an improved aesthetic value to the land. This can then lead to stronger recognition and connection to the urban community, which can then in turn enhance the overall commitment to the Greenbelt and improve opportunities for linkages for on-farm diversification.

Principle 5: The ability of farmers to make livelihoods.

The future of agriculture in the Greenbelt is dependent upon the existence of working and economically viable farms. If farmers cannot make a living working in the Greenbelt, then commercial agriculture will simply cease to exist there. This must be the starting point for any action focused on future development.

Greenbelt farmers should not face inappropriate economic disadvantages by virtue of being in the Greenbelt. For example, short leases, the ability to modernize production practices, wildlife control limitations are issues that were mentioned during the public consultations. It is recognized that Greenbelt lands are in public ownership and therefore will reflect a broader public perspective. Farmers will recognize the importance of protecting heritage buildings while acknowledging potential advantages to farming in the Greenbelt (for example reduced need for capital investment.)

Principle 6: The National Capital Commission as a landlord that supports the farm sector

As a landlord, the NCC has a unique opportunity and responsibility inherent in that role. The NCC maintains this publicly-owned land, makes decisions on its use and should get a fair return on their investment. At the same time, they are responsible for the proper maintenance of farm properties and, if committed to the continued agricultural presence in the Greenbelt, they must offer the flexibility and support needed by the sector to remain viable. The NCC in partnership with the farmers themselves should be seen as land custodians and mutually dedicated to the protection of the natural environment, the landbase and a prosperous and productive agricultural rural landscape.

Principle 7: Open, transparent and regular communication between NCC, farmers and other stakeholders in support of a common vision for the future of the Greenbelt

Communication between Greenbelt stakeholders (i.e. farmers, city, area residents, etc.) is vital for the continued growth and management of Greenbelt agriculture. During the public meetings and workshops, concerns related to communication were identified relating to both the property management company and the NCC. Greenbelt farm tenants expressed uncertainty of the NCC's continued commitment to agriculture.

Regular communication can improve and build upon current relationships, promote accountability and has the potential to prevent or mitigate future conflict situations. Effective communication will enhance the overall commitment of tenants and NCC staff to a clear common vision for the future of the Greenbelt.

Greenbelt farm tenants considering the future of agriculture at a focus group meeting (April 7, 2009).

SECTION 5

Actions and Strategies

Introduction

The following section proposes numerous actions in support of the Guiding Principles identified in the previous section. These actions reflect farm, non-farm and NCC staff input. There are a number of actions for each of the seven guiding principles and a rationale is provided. A table summarizing the actions and outlining various aspects of implementation is presented in the Discussion Section (see Section 6).

PRINCIPLE 1: The continued recognition and protection of the Greenbelt as a nationally and locally significant rural landscape.

Action 1.1 Federal Government and NCC support for Agriculture

It is recommended that the NCC and the Federal government make a strong public statement of support for the continuance of a viable agricultural sector in the Greenbelt. This could occur in a variety of ways ranging from the adoption of a renewed Master Plan to a public statement from senior NCC or government officials. Greenbelt farmers and the public as a whole need to know that the federal government, through the NCC, is fully committed to continuing to preserve the Greenbelt and the agricultural sector within its borders. This renewed commitment sets the stage for increased public support and visibility for the Greenbelt and its agriculture.

Rationale: During discussions with the farm community there was some questioning of the on-going commitment to agriculture. Farmers noted minor changes such as road widening, but fear much more substantive land use changes. Farmers also noted the gradual deterioration of the existing building stock which diminishes the integrity of the rural landscape. There is a concern that the agricultural sector and the connectivity of the rural landscape will gradually be lost through many individual small decisions.

Action 1.2 Respecting the importance and role of agriculture

It is recommended that any decisions made by NCC related to new non-agricultural uses consider the importance of agriculture and the protection of the land base. The farm community suggested that agricultural lands should receive the same level of protection as natural areas.

Rationale: During discussions with the farm community concerns were raised over the impact of infrastructure and other forms of development on agriculture. These uses and their impact should be kept to an absolute minimum because of their cumulative detrimental impact not only on individual farms but to the overall integrity of the rural and agricultural system.

Action 1.3 Helping farmers to deal with land use decisions that may negatively impact their farming operation.

It is recommended that if land is lost from an individual farm or if existing farms are fragmented NCC should work with the farmer to mitigate the impacts, especially if it affects the farmers livelihood. To recognize that land loss affects not only the individual farmer but also the integrity of the Greenbelt as a whole, assistance to help the farmer to maintain income potential needs to be considered. This may involve potential investment in farmland or buildings or potentially finding other lands in proximity to substitute for lost potential. While farrmers are currently compensated for loss of farmland that may result from municipal road widening projects, there continues to be a need to evaluate the overall impact on the farm operation.

Rationale: The loss of land should be considered as a last resort, but in cases where it does occur, assistance could ensure minimum impact on farmers and to the Greenbelt landscape. This assistance also sends a clear message of respect for farmers' livelihoods and the recognition of the importance of protecting the Greenbelt.

PRINCIPLE 2: A healthy, working agricultural landscape is maintained that recognizes the historical legacy while allowing for appropriate evolution

Action 2.1 Encourage the evolution and expansion of farm business

It is recommended that the growth and expansion of the farm sector be anticipated and supported. Agricultural production and practices are changing across North America and a farmstead naturally evolves with time. This speaks to the need to sensitively accommodate the new while protecting older traditional buildings. This may require investment in new and existing building stock.

Rationale: New buildings and structures sensitively integrated into the farmstead can enhance the vitality and attractiveness of the rural landscape. Across Ontario there is a constant and evolving blend of the old with the new. Receptivity to this type of change will help to ensure the maintenance of the greenbelt as a working agricultural landscape for generations. This may be of particular relevance for large parcels of land that are cash cropped and which over time could potentially support more labour intensive smaller farm operations.

Adaptive Barn Re-Use

Adaptive Reuse is the conversion of a building from one purpose to another. In Italy for example, older farm buildings are often converted to provide limited accommodations. In Wisconsin farm buildings have been turned into antique shops, restaurants and performing art centres. In the Edmonton area, an old barn was transformed into the A.J. Ottewell Community Hall, which is operated by the Art Society of Strathcona County, and is a unique venue for art classes, social gatherings and community-based programs The Berry Barn in Saskatoon is a successful business venture, where a farm property including a barn was converted into a dining room, craft shop and U-Pick operation. The Saskatoon berry features prominently and brings in many visitors each year to enjoy views of the South Saskatchewan River and indulge in superb local cuisine and culture.

Although this idea has potential It is important that such uses be compatible with the surrounding agricultural industry.

Action 2.2 Identify priority heritage buildings, landscapes and vistas

It is recommended that the NCC identify landscapes, vistas and properties that have the highest priority for preservation based on heritage, aesthetic and cultural values. This will provide a mechanism for allocating funds that will achieve the highest return on investment and also ensure the visibility and preservation of the most significant properties. As part of this initiative, the NCC could offer a Heritage Plaque Program to highlight significant properties, or create a tourist brochure outlining the heritage and cultural features of the Greenbelt landscape.

Rationale: It is recognized that the NCC has limited funds for heritage and cultural preservation, however, it is unrealistic to expect tenants to spend money on the upkeep of building stock purely for aesthetic value. This action will help to achieve one of the main stated aims of the Greenbelt, which is to protect the rural landscape in proximity to the Capital.

Action 2.3 Explore opportunities to enhance NCC funding for Heritage Preservation

It is recommended that NCC provide enhanced funding for heritage preservation. It is important that those buildings with heritage significance be protected and enhanced.

Rationale: Based on observations, and discussion with farmers there is a general sense that the existing building stock is in a state of decline. This is particularly evident with farm buildings. Where buildings are retained exclusively for their heritage value and have limited use to the agricultural sector it is unlikely that farm tenants will actively maintain these buildings. As owner of these buildings the NCC needs to invest in their long-term maintenance.

Action 2.4 Identify appropriate agricultural uses and agri-tourism activities consistent with the vision for the Greenbelt

It is recommended that the scale and range of agricultural uses be carefully considered to ensure compatibility with the location of and vision for the Greenbelt. Because of its proximity to an urban area, issues with large scale livestock operations, for example, should be recognized. A diversity of small and medium-sized farm enterprises, many examples of which are currently present in the Greenbelt such as vegetable production, orchards, field crops, horse farms and other similar farm types, are appropriate for the area. There is an increasing emphasis on local food production. Elsewhere in Ontario there is a tendency to build larger and larger livestock operations – dairy operations of several hundred cows and hog operations with several thousand feeder hogs are commonplace. This scale of operation needs to be sensitively integrated if in close proximity to residential, recreational or commercial uses. Across Ontario Minimum Distance Separation formulae developed by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs are used to identify appropriate separation distances between livestock and other land uses.

Potential farmers should be carefully screened to ensure that they have a legitimate interest in pursuing a productive farming operation that supports the Greenbelt vision for agriculture.

Rationale: The Greenbelt is a unique agricultural resource. There are opportunities associated with the potential for new uses and limitations as well. Through discussions with the public and NCC staff it was observed that a smaller scale of agriculture would be desirable considering the location and agri-tourism potential and market opportunities within the National Capital Region.

Agricultural tourism:

Agri-tourism is a way to encourage the appreciation of all the different facets of agriculture. From maple season in March, through apple-picking season in late fall and into Christmas tree season in December, many farm communities invite visitors to enjoy the scenery and discover an area's agricultural heritage. In Quebec, numerous opportunities exist to make contact with agricultural producers. Agri-tourism in Québec has close to 700 agricultural producers, spread throughout all the tourist regions of Québec. Agritourismquebec.com represents a consortium of agricultural producers who promote agricultural tourism activities offering people the opportunity to discover the huge diversity of crops, livestock and specialty products that Québec has to offer, and at the same time, meet the local Québec farmers who produce them.

PRINCIPLE 3: Encouraging diversity and evolution of agricultural practices that harness innovative opportunities connected to the Greenbelt location

Action 3.1 Sustainability Strategy

It is recommended that a sustainability strategy be created that encompasses the interlocked components of environment, economy, culture and society. In particular, this strategy should focus both on environmentally friendly farm practices (such as organic and biodynamic) as well as promoting expansion into the domestic market. This action will allow farmers to tap into the growing consumer demand for sustainable, local, and place-based foods. Existing initiatives in the Ottawa region already provide ready-made opportunities in this area, including Savour Ottawa. A long-term strategy will enable farmers to plan strategically for how they could potentially adapt to take advantage of some of these ideas.

Rationale: As concerns about the environmental impacts of conventional farming grow, the demand for alternatives is growing, and consumers are often willing to pay a premium for these products. There is an important opportunity to encourage the development and increased profile of this form of agriculture side by side with more traditional farms. Moreover, small productive operations do have the opportunity to be economically viable.

Savour Ottawa – Local Food Opportunities!

The Savour Ottawa program is a partnership between JustFood, Ottawa Tourism and the City of Ottawa's Marketing Management and Rural Affairs branches (www.ottawatourism.ca/savourottawa/)

One of Savour Ottawa's most exciting events is Speed Dating for Farmers and Buyers! Farmers showcase their wares at individual tables, and buyers visit each farmer to check out what is available. Important relationships are built which ensure farmers have markets for their products and buyers are able to access local food.

Alternative Land Use Services
Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) is an award winning multi-stakeholder organization that compensates farmers for putting in place environmentally sound practices, including planting native vegetation for wildlife habitat and carbon sequestration, as well as exploring methods to reduce energy usage and chemical inputs.
http://www.norfolkalus.com/

Action 3.2 Recruitment of New Farmers

It is recommended that the NCC focus on recruiting innovative, new, potentially beginning farm tenants who will take advantage of the opportunities of near-urban agriculture, including both the options for sustainable agriculture e as well as the move towards on-farm diversification. Farmers are increasingly looking for opportunities to diversify farm operations to increase their economic viability. Opportunities include agro-tourism (culinary tours, corn mazes), pick your own operations, value-added processing, special event bookings and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), etc.

Rationale: The Greenbelt is in a unique position to take advantage of a number of innovative opportunities related to their connection to a large urban market. If the NCC recruits entrepreneurial farmers who are able and willing to adapt to the urban market, the potential or success is relatively high considering the demographics of the Ottawa-Gatineau population. The Greenbelt offers a specific opportunity for individuals with great ideas, especially young farmers, but who are lacking in the capital to purchase farms elsewhere in Canada. In addition, there are already a number of farmers in the Greenbelt who are proving the economic sustainability of some of these strategies, such as pick your own operations and a CSA, and they could act as helpful examples for new farmers.

PRINCIPLE 4: A sense of pride, ownership, and a strong common identity for the Greenbelt

Action 4.1 Enhance Marketing and Branding Opportunities to Create a Greenbelt Identity

It is recommended that marketing and branding opportunities be enhanced to create a stronger identity for agriculture in the Greenbelt. This should be a joint initiative of the NCC and Greenbelt farmers. Suggestions include:

- Annual farm tour (a coordinated effort amongst farmers to showcase their products and services)
- Create Greenbelt farm stand at Ottawa market. Branding of Greenbelt products, consistent with the movement towards "local food" is important – the Ottawa market is a perfect opportunity to put the agricultural face of the Greenbelt in front of the City's residents.
- Prominent promotional signs. The Greenbelt should be recognized as an active vibrant agricultural landscape. Signage will help.
- Website to highlight Greenbelt agriculture.

Branding Local Places and Products
By focusing on their uniqueness, many places have been able to successfully market their products to tourists and consumers. Using place-based branding, little Pelee Island has been able to make a name for itself with its award winning winery. With wine bottles adorned with images of the natural world, the Pelee brand brings to mind visions of a warm and friendly island, replete with ecological treasures and a comfortable lifestyle *www.peleeisland.com*

The Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association *is a producer led initiative that provides support to farmers (http://www.ontariofarmfresh.com/).*

Examples include roadside stands and farm stores, u-pick operations farmers markets and direct sales to restaurants, as well as increasing value through agri-tourism which attracts people to a farm to enjoy the rural atmosphere and take part in activities such as tractor rides, farm tours, corn mazes, culinary tours and horse riding.

Rationale: The best opportunities for farmers in the Greenbelt relate to the marketing opportunities associated with the close proximity to the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau. An evolving agricultural sector needs to increasingly take advantage of this opportunity. These efforts can best proceed as a partnership between the NCC and the farm community.

Action 4.2 Encourage farmers to reside on property

It is recommended that the NCC encourage farmers to live on the properties on which they are farming (as opposed to off-site farmers). For example, if all things are equal, priority should be given to agricultural tenants prepared to live and actively farm on-site.

Rationale: It is expected that tenants who live on their properties will have a stronger sense of ownership which may enhance the 'live-in' look and feel of the property, which can add aesthetic value to the rural landscape. This will also strengthen the agricultural community living in the Greenbelt.

Action 4.3 Encourage revival of Farm Tenants Association

It is recommended that Greenbelt farmers revive the Farm Tenants Association that was originally established to deal with common issues and concerns faced by the farming community. This association would enable the farmers to stay in touch with each other, share information, express concerns and problems, as well as build a sense of community. This organization could meet periodically, keep up to date contact lists for Greenbelt farmers and be a public voice for the community. It would also be a useful tool for new tenants to more quickly integrate into the Greenbelt farming community.

Rationale: At meetings with farmers, it was expressed that a community organization would provide a much needed and desired tool for communication amongst the farming community. This would be a farmer lead initiative.

PRINCIPLE 5: The ability of farmers to make livelihoods

Action 5.1 Innovative Leasing Options

It is recommended that NCC continue recent initiatives in the development and issuing of lease agreements. Standard practice for production farms should include the option of a 25 year lease (with the potential for renewal at certain time periods). Other innovative options will lead to the potential for innovative financing that encourages farmers and NCC to partner in investments that enhance and add to the building stock (farm residential and agricultural buildings – barns and driving sheds, etc.) and land base (field tile drainage, fencing, etc.). Where farmers make personal investments that enhance productivity (as they might with a long-term lease) this should not in the short term influence rental rates; where NCC makes investments that increase productivity – this should fairly be reflected in rental rates. In many instances this will be a negotiated arrangement, although the potential options should be known to the tenants. A negotiated arrangement might lead to the sharing of costs, recognizing that the farmer will benefit over a long-term lease and the NCC will benefit through improved equity. Standard practice for lease renewal should ensure that the intergenerational transfer of an active farm is encouraged (for example parents to children).

Rationale: One of the most obvious issues in the Greenbelt is a deteriorating building stock. In many instances barns and to a lesser extent, houses look they have not received any new investment in many years. While there are exceptions and NCC does its best to maintain buildings, there is an enhanced role for the tenants – and this will most likely occur when there is a sense of "ownership and longevity" – something which a long-term lease can help to provide. The long term lease will partially address these issues, but there is also the need to find means to share expenditures, or at least give farmers the confidence to invest their personal finances. For example in Southwestern Ontario many farmers are reinvesting in improved tile drainage. They do this on the grounds that it will lead to higher yields and will reasonably pay for itself in a certain defined period.

Action 5.2 Develop Strategies for Investing in New and Existing Housing Stock

It is recommended that there be enhanced investment in existing farm residences and opportunities for the construction of new farm residences. An investment strategy will help to answer questions concerning how this should best occur. Farmers and their families are encouraged to spend their career farming in the Greenbelt. In some instances there are heritage homes that must be protected and in other instances an existing residence may be a detriment to the farm operation. There may also be the need for new farm residences as specialized farming operations are potentially established (for example some commercial farm types require a much smaller land base). This will enhance the Greenbelt, retain and attract farmers and build the equity that exists. Clearly enhanced or new residences will need to be fairly factored into lease rates.

Rationale: Throughout Ontario farmers make periodic decisions to replace residences with new modern homes. This does not appear to have occurred within the Greenbelt. While there are clearly heritage residences in the Greenbelt to be preserved there are other homes that detract from the notion of the greenbelt as a healthy agricultural community. Moreover, they may be a negative when it comes to attracting or retaining professional farmers. This can also help to encourage farmers to live on site and develop the farmstead. Clearly rental rates will need to reflect any new and enhanced investment (keeping in mind that there will be a corresponding increase in equity).

PRINCIPLE 6: The National Capital Commission as a landlord that supports the farm sector

Action 6.1 Effective Property Maintenance

It is recommended that NCC continue to improve the approach to property management. Specific actions include:

- Establish improved criteria for building maintenance (both NCC and the tenant). This should include approaches to preventative maintenance and guidelines for farmers.
- Regular maintenance plans should be established and followed for individual farms.
- Ensure maintenance projects are managed and monitored from beginning to end

(there needs to be a good tracking system demonstrating work and scheduling of maintenance for individual buildings by property).

- Performance reports and evaluations should be completed annually detailing the success of property management efforts.
- Communicate clear messages concerning the role of NCC, the Property Management Company and farmers.

Rationale: The farmers who reside in the Greenbelt have chosen to make the Greenbelt their home. They make a living here, they raise their children here and they have built a community. The buildings- residences and farm buildings are essential to their family and livelihoods. In this context, NCC has a critical responsibility to ensure that there is effective property management that supports the agricultural sector. While this is about these farms, it is also about the appearance and viability of the Greenbelt as a National resource.

Action 6.2: NCC to show appreciation for “good’ tenants

It is recommended that the NCC actively work to show appreciation for “good” tenants. In as much as the goals of the NCC are met by well maintained and attractive farmsteads it would be beneficial to raise the profile of farmers who profile the Greenbelt in the best possible light. Sample actions include annual awards for the best maintained farm; for the most environmentally friendly farming practices, etc.

Rationale: The farms are the “face” of the Greenbelt. Building maintenance is key, but it is equally about “love of property” and on-going day to day management, from an attractive farmstead to manicured fields and crops.

PRINCIPLE 7: Open, transparent and regular communication in support of a common vision for the future of the Greenbelt

Action 7.1 Agricultural Advisory Committee

It is recommended that a committee be established with representatives from both the Greenbelt farming community as well as NCC staff. This action would be mutually beneficial as it would ensure farmers have input into decision-making that directly impacts them, as well as give the NCC critical feedback to help guide their decisions. This committee would meet periodically to ensure a two-way flow of information.

Rationale: Discussions with the farming community revealed the disconnect that was felt with the NCC. They would like to have a direct connection to the NCC in order to have their questions and concerns adequately addressed. This will also address NCC goals of working closely with the farm community.

Action 7.2 Communication of the Master Plan

It is recommended that once the Master Plan revision is complete, that it be clearly communicated to farmers. Farmers need to be fully aware of the NCC's future vision of the Greenbelt, and it is expected that the Master Plan will be a critical implementation tool for that purpose.

Rationale: A clear vision for the future can provide a strong sense of security to the farming community and allow for more confidence in decision making. A long-term plan for agriculture will encourage enhanced commitment in farm property.

Action 7.3 Clarify responsibilities of NCC and Property Management Company

It is recommended that the roles and responsibilities of NCC and the Property Management Company be clearly communicated to the farmers in the Greenbelt. There needs to be a clear point of contact or farmer liaison with the NCC in the leasing department who can assist farmers as required with leasing-related questions and concerns. As part of this, the rental process needs to be transparent and clearly understood. It is important that the Property Management Company understands the vision for agriculture in the Greenbelt and is able to act in support of this vision. The farm community suggested that within NCC there should be a staff person who can serve as there point of contact.

Rationale: This was an issue of considerable interest to the farm community. At times in the past they have found the approach with the Property Management Company to be confusing and challenging. They are not always certain as to who has responsibility and at times feel like they are "falling between the cracks." Moreover, many people were unclear concerning their rights and options related to leasing and the process by which a new lease is prepared.

Action 7.4 Orientation Kit for Tenants

It is recommended that an information package be provided to new and renewed Greenbelt tenants that provides a clear, concise summary of the details of the lease agreement process, background information about the history and purpose of the Greenbelt, contact information for the NCC and the property management company, as well as any additional information about specific policies or regulations that affect the agricultural sector (such as federal, provincial and local funding programs and best management practices). Where feasible it is suggested that a leasing representative meet with a new tenant to discuss the leasing summary.

Rationale: Through discussions with farmers, it was discovered that new tenants may not be fully aware of all the details of the lease agreement process, including their personal responsibilities as tenants and the corresponding responsibility of NCC and the Property Management Company.

SECTION 6

Implementation and Further Considerations

The preceding section presented 7 principles and 20 specific actions. This section summarizes these actions and offers some commentary concerning implementation. This section also identifies key questions that require further consideration prior to the development of specific actions. These include questions related to the vision for agriculture (hobby farms and sustainable agriculture).

The Greenbelt is a unique asset growing out of a vision that 50 years ago led to the acquisition of thousands of hectares of land. This Greenbelt protects the rural lands surrounding the nation's capital and encourages the use of these lands for agricultural purposes. There are also unique issues connected with the Greenbelt. Section 3 presents key issues and Section 4 identified Principles and Section 5 Actions. These actions are summarized in Table 6.1. Table 6.1 also identifies these actions as short, medium and long term and provides direction concerning who should assume responsibility and the level of resources required.

Many of the actions have been identified as short-term, and are expected to require a low level of resources in order to proceed. Understandably there is an important role for the NCC, but there is also a role for farmers who can assist with a number of the suggested actions.

Based on discussions with farmers and NCC staff and a review of relevant documents it is key that the vision for these lands reconfirm the role of agriculture as a prominent land use within the Greenbelt. The identified actions are intended to raise the profile of agriculture and make adjustments that will allow farms to remain productive and profitable. Incremental decisions, however can still challenge this long-term vision. Several issues that need to be considered further and which were not discussed in detail by the farm sector include the role of hobby farms, and sustainable agriculture.

Table 6.1: The National Capital Greenbelt: Actions, Anticipated Time-Frame, Resource Requirements and Responsibility

Action #	Actions	Actions - Anticipated timeframe to start: Short Term <1 yr	Medium Term 1-3 yrs	Long Term >3 yrs	On-going	Anticipated Resource Requirements (low, medium, high)	Responsibility: Who is best positioned to lead this action?
Principle 1: The continued recognition and protection of the Greenbelt as a nationally and locally significant rural landscape							
1.1	Federal Government and NCC support for Agriculture	*				low	NCC
1.2	Respecting the importance and role of agriculture				*	low	NCC
1.3	Helping farmers to deal with the loss of land				*	low	NCC
Principle 2: A healthy, working agricultural landscape is maintained that recognizes the historical legacy while allowing for appropriate evolution							
2.1	Encourage the evolution and expansion of farm business	*				low/medium	NCC
2.2	Identify priority heritage buildings, landscapes and vistas		*			medium	NCC
2.3	Explore opportunities to enhance NCC funding for Heritage Preservation		*			high	NCC
2.4	Identify priority agricultural uses and agritourism activities consistent with the vision for the Greenbelt		*			low	NCC
Principle 3: Encouraging diversity and evolution of agricultural practices that harness innovative opportunities connected to the Greenbelt location							
3.1	Sustainability Strategy		*			medium	NCC
3.2	Recruitment of New Farmers		*			medium	NCC
Principle 4: A sense of pride, ownership, and a strong common identity for the Greenbelt							
4.1	Enhance Marketing Opportunities to Create a Greenbelt Identity		*			medium	NCC/Farmers
4.2	Encourage farmers to reside on property				*	low	NCC
4.3	Revive Farm Tenants Association	*				low	Farmers
Principle 5: The ability of farmers to make livelihoods							
5.1	Innovative Leasing Options	*	*			medium	NCC/Farmers
5.2	Investment in New and Existing Housing Stock		*	*		high	NCC/Farmers
Principle 6: The National Capital Commission as a landlord that supports the farm sector							
6.1	Effective Property Maintenance		*			medium	NCC

Action #	Actions	Actions - Anticipated timeframe to start: Short Term <1 yr	Medium Term 1-3 yrs	Long Term >3 yrs	On-going	**Anticipated Resource Requirements** (low, medium, high)	**Responsibility:** Who is best positioned to lead this action?
6.2	NCC to show appreciation for “good’ tenants	*				low	NCC
Principle 7: Open, transparent and regular communication in support of a common vision for the future of the Greenbelt							
7.1	Farmers Advisory Committee	*				low	NCC/Farmers
7.2	Communication of the Master Plan		*			low	NCC
7.3	Clarify responsibilities of NCC and Property Management Company		*			low	NCC
7.4	Orientation Kit for New Tenants	*				low	NCC/Farmers

Items for Further Consideration

Hobby farms by definition are farms without a substantive interest in producing agricultural commodities and are not in the business of farming. There is a number of this type of operation in the Greenbelt and given the interest of a working agricultural sector these operations are generally not consistent with this vision. Hobby farms may, however ensure that parcels are occupied and buildings utilized and may protect rural areas from development. Findings elsewhere tend to suggest that in many instances, however, hobby farms are no more than large residential parcels that lock the land into non-agricultural uses. The challenge for the NCC will be to manage this ensuring that farms and farmland remain supportive of active farming.

Sustainable agriculture means different things to different people. It potentially includes elements related to the economy (is agriculture as an industry financially sustainable?), society (is the community vibrant and viable?) and the environment (does agriculture contribute positively to environmental health e.g. air and water quality, ecological diversity, etc.). During discussions leading to the preparation of this report the key focus was on the environment. This should not imply, however a narrow vision of sustainable agriculture. While organic farming (certified and uncertified), soil and water conservation, etc., should be encouraged, it needs to be recognized that production agriculture across North America uses a variety of tools to produce food including fertilizer and herbicides. Farmers in the Greenbelt need to have the same options as farmers outside of the Greenbelt, however there may be a unique opportunity for the NCC to work with farmers to showcase best practices in sustainable agriculture (potentially using tools such as incentives built into the lease agreement, ALUS (Alternative Land Use Services etc.).

SECTION 7

Conclusion

Agriculture in Canada’s Capital Greenbelt is a unique and special resource. It will not continue in the long term however, unless there is a concerted effort to implement policies that ensure long-term viability. This report presents 20 specific actions that can assist agriculture in the Greenbelt to remain a vibrant and productive industry, while protecting the rural landscape that is so important.

Agriculture in the Greenbelt is worth protecting and enhancing. A successful approach will benefit the farmers, but perhaps more importantly will contribute to the vision of a near urban agricultural industry that helps to define our nation’s capital. Agriculture is the face of the Greenbelt. If it looks prosperous, productive and well maintained it reflects positively on the capital and our country. Conversely, it can also have the opposite effect.

The policies included within this report are intended to help provide agriculture with the stability that it requires to grow and prosper while protecting natural spaces and the built heritage that define the Greenbelt.

Sources

Agriculture and the Environment: Fact Sheet (2003). European Commission. http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/envir/index_en.htm

Agriculture Canada. (2008). An Overview of the Canadian and Agriculture and Agri-Food System.

Blay-Palmer, Alison (2005). Growing Innovation Policy: The Case of Organic Agriculture in Ontario, Canada. Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy 23, 557 – 581.

Busch, Lawrence and Carmen Bain (2004). New! Improved? The Transformation of the Global Agrifood System. Rural Sociology 69 (3). 321 – 346.

Canadian Organic Growers (2007). Organic Statistics 2007. http://www.cog.ca/organicstatistics.htm

Cummings, Harry and Associates. (2000). The Economic Impacts of Agriculture on the Economy of the New City of Ottawa: Final Report.

Donald, B. and A. Blay-Palmer (2006). The urban-creative food economy: producing food for the urban elite or social inclusion opportunity? Environment and Planning A, (38) 1901 – 1920.

Easterling, W., P. Aggarwal, P. Batima, K. Brander, L. Erda, S. Howden, A. Kirilenko, J. Morton, J.-F. Soussana, J. Schmidhuber and F. Tubiello. (2007). *Food, Fibre and Forest Products. Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the 4th Assessment report of the IPCC.* M Parry, O Canziani, J Palutikof, P van der Linden and C Hansen, Eds. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 273 -313.

Eastern Ontario Region at a Glance. (2009). 2006 Census of Agriculture and Economic Development Policy Branch, OMAFRA.

Farmers Markets Ontario (2009). Customer Profile and Impact Study 2009 Report. Retrieved May 13, 2009 from http://www.farmersmarketsontario.com/History.cfm

Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute. (2008). US and World Agricultural Outlook. Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

Food and Agriculture Organization. (2008). The State of Food and Agriculture 2008: World Food and Agriculture in Review.

OMAFRA Strategic Research Themes: Priorities for 2008-2012. (2008). Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Reid, S., B. Smit, W. Caldwell, and S. Belliveau. (2007). Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Risks in Ontario Agriculture. Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies to Global Change, 12: 609 – 637.