

# GTA Agricultural Action Plan

February 2005

## GTA Agricultural Action Plan



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## GTA Agricultural Action Plan



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Town of Milton ■ Halton Region

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

Town of Caledon ■ Peel Region

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The agricultural industry contributes significantly to the economy and quality of life in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). An agricultural action plan is needed to identify how to keep the GTA agricultural industry competitive in the face of the economic, land use and environmental pressures. The *GTA Agricultural Action Plan* provides practical strategic directions to be advanced and implemented by key agricultural interests.

All four GTA Regional Councils formally endorsed the proposed Action Plan in principle and the GTA Federations of Agriculture, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF), Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MAH), Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) all indicated their support and commitment to implementation. Considering this broad base of support, it is important for the provincial planning reforms (including the draft Provincial Policy Statement and the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt Task Force) to use the *GTA Agricultural Action Plan* as a foundation. Furthermore, in developing a provincial growth strategy - outlined in *Places to Grow-Better Choices, Brighter Future - a Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* - the province should also consider the actions identified in this report to help farming outside of the growth areas remain viable.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **The Action Plan represents a shared vision with shared actions to be undertaken by the agricultural industry and all levels of government**
- **Agriculture must be financially sustainable to enable the current and future generations of farmers to continue farming**
- **Farmland value must be protected and supported through public policy and programs**
- **GTA agriculture is distinct and its unique strengths must be capitalized on and marketed**
- **The agricultural community must ally itself with consumers to create a strong political voice**

## 1.2 ORIGIN

In June 2001, the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) Federations of Agriculture approached the GTA Regional Chairs about the long-term sustainability of agriculture in the GTA. As a first step, the GTA Regional Planning Commissioners, who were asked by the Regional Chairs to assist, established the GTA Agricultural Working Group consisting of staff from the Regions of Durham, Halton, Peel and York and the City of Toronto. One of the first endeavours of the GTA Federations of Agriculture and GTA Regions was to jointly fund the GTA Agricultural Profile Update (Planscape, 2003), summarized in Section 1.4.

In March 2003, the GTA Agricultural Working Group and the GTA Federations of Agriculture organized a one-day workshop in Richmond Hill to discuss with agricultural leaders, planners and economic development professionals, the actions necessary to sustain agriculture in the GTA. The participants confirmed that despite the loss of agricultural land to urbanization, agriculture remains a significant economic activity and way of life in the GTA. They recognized the value of sustaining a viable food production industry near the five million people who call the GTA their home. The GTA Federations of Agriculture and the GTA Agricultural Working Group then proceeded to work on an overall GTA Agricultural Action Plan addressing the following themes:

- Economic Development
- Education/Marketing
- Land Use/Policy
- Accountability and Responsibility

The directions from this exercise were summarized in the Proposed GTA Agricultural Action Plan and refined in consultation with Focus Teams consisting of farmers, planners, and community and industry leaders (see Appendix 1). The Proposed Action Plan was then discussed at the GTA Agricultural Symposium on November 22, 2003 at the Country Heritage Park in Milton. The document was finalized after incorporating the input received at the Symposium. The Proposed Action Plan was described by speakers as “impressive, thorough and creative” and supported the plan’s emphasis on what needs to be done and who needs to do it. A consistent message was to “come up with a business plan that sets a clear implementation framework, with roles, responsibilities, a budget, timelines, as well as a passionate champion” (Lura, 2004).

## 1.3 ACTION PLAN STRUCTURE

This document begins with a general profile of the GTA agricultural industry and then addresses each of the four themes (economic development, education/marketing, land use policy, and accountability and responsibility). The Accountability and Responsibility section contains a summary table of all the proposed actions. The final chapter deals with “Next Steps” and talks about the priorities and first steps in implementing the Action Plan. The various actions in this Plan are identified in general terms with definitive steps to be identified by the implementation lead and participants.

## 1.4 THE GTA AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY

The recent GTA Agricultural Profile Update (PlanScape, 2003) describes the state of agriculture in the GTA with a statistical overview of farm characteristics and financial indicators.<sup>1</sup> A few of the highlights are excerpted below as context to the GTA Agricultural Action Plan, but interested readers are encouraged to refer to the detailed report.<sup>2</sup>

Most of the land in the GTA is classified as prime agricultural (Classes 1 to 3 soil capability based on the Canada Land Inventory). In addition to productive soils, agriculture in the GTA has the following advantages: an abundant fresh water supply, heat units conducive to high crop yields, proximity to markets and consumers, an extensive transportation network, and proximity to research, development and learning facilities. Aside from these physical advantages, good business management also plays an enormous role in the competitiveness of farming in the GTA.

The GTA remains a major contributor to Ontario agriculture in terms of number of farms, land area, and productivity per acre. Census data shows that there were 3,870 census farms in the GTA in 2001. Covering 291,006 ha (719,066 acres) in 2001, farmland area has, however, declined by 16% between 1996 and 2001.

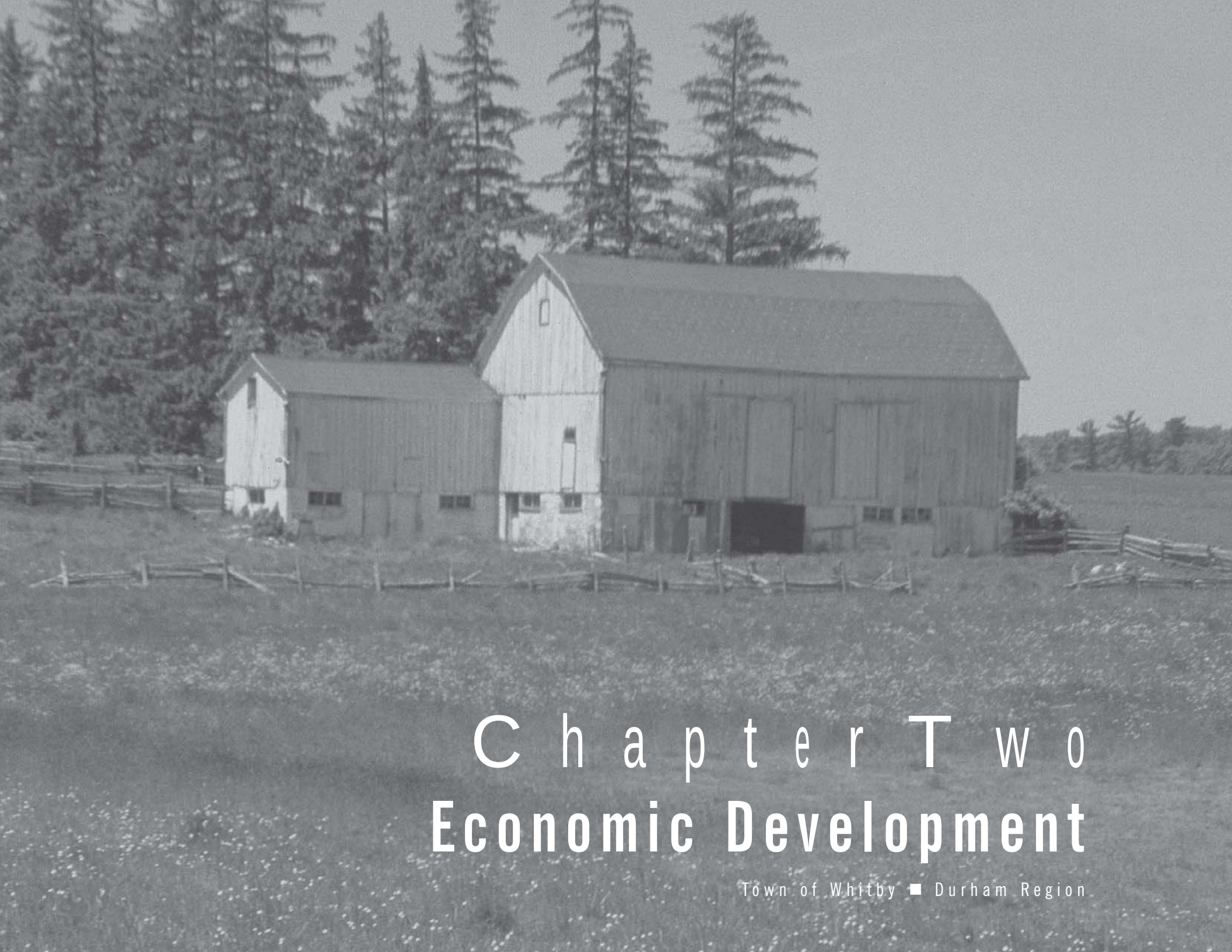
In the GTA, the average farm size of 183 acres remains below the provincial average of 226 acres. Relatively smaller GTA farms may reflect conversion of some traditional livestock or cash crop farms to less land intensive farming (e.g. equine, greenhouse and nursery) that tends to flourish near urban areas. These types of farms are less dependent on the prime agricultural soils found in the GTA. The GTA continues to support a healthy mix of other farm types, including grain and oilseed, dairy and field crops. What GTA farms lack in size, they make up for in sales, as average gross farm receipts in the GTA are substantially higher than the provincial average.<sup>3</sup>

A further characteristic of GTA farmland is the availability of rental land. In 2001, 47% of GTA farmland was rented<sup>4</sup>. This compares with 31% rented provincially. Rented farmland in the GTA land may be owned by retired farmers, speculators or other non-farmers who want a rural lifestyle but do not want to farm. While rented land provides an opportunity for some farmers to be in the business or expand their operation without the capital costs associated with purchasing farmland, short-term leasing creates instability in the agricultural community and may contribute to unsustainable farming practices, if investments are not made to ensure future productivity.

Agricultural areas make the GTA a desirable place to live by contributing to the local food supply and providing recreational, environmental, educational and heritage opportunities. Economically, considering both primary and secondary agriculturally-related businesses, the GTA generates approximately \$1.3 billion in annual gross sales and 34,762 jobs (Walton & Hunter, 1999). Preserving farmland is much more than protecting areas with prime agricultural soils; it involves protecting the livelihood of farmers and agri-businesses.

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- 1 The report uses 2001 census data to analyze the number of farms, area of farmland, trends in farmland acreage, area of land in crops, farm tenure, farm types, farm size, farm employment and characteristics of farm operators, as well as financial indicators such as gross farm receipts, farm operating costs, and farm capital.
  - 2 The report is available for downloading from <http://www.rpco.on.ca/default.htm>.
  - 3 In 2001, gross farm receipts per acre of farmland in Halton were \$1,455, Peel \$1,116, York \$1,017 and Durham \$708, for a GTA average of \$946. The provincial average is \$675/acre. Costs per acre are however, also higher in the GTA (Planscape, 2003).
  - 4 Rental farmland amounts to 56% in York, 55% in Halton and 53% in Peel, with Durham closer to the provincial average at 37%.





# Chapter Two

## Economic Development

Town of Whitby ■ Durham Region

## 2.1 BACKGROUND

Farms in the GTA contribute significantly to the local economy. If agriculture is to survive and thrive, an economic strategy that capitalizes on the area's competitiveness and opportunities, addresses policies that deter agriculture, and attracts new business, investment and farmers must be implemented. The economic health of the industry is a shared responsibility of farmers, farm groups, and the federal, provincial and municipal governments, working co-operatively for success.

As the agricultural industry changes over time, new opportunities need to be defined and promoted in a coordinated fashion. The industry will require economic and business support as it evolves with changing market conditions and consumer preferences. A comprehensive economic development strategy is needed that addresses:

- changing consumer demand
- diversification options
- new technology
- business management skills
- tax policy
- production and processing quality and efficiency
- education and market development/promotion methods
- training and labour options
- overall coordination between producers and research and development organizations

Below are references to a GTA Agricultural Action Committee (GTA AAC). This multi-stakeholder umbrella organization is proposed to provide overall co-ordination of *GTA Agricultural Action Plan* implementation, relying on experts in industry and agencies to help make the *GTA Agricultural Action Plan* happen. Action # 7 describes the GTA AAC in greater detail.

## 2.2 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

### 2.2.1 Define Economic Development Opportunities

New opportunities for GTA farmers and agri-businesses need to be defined based on the unique strengths of GTA agriculture. The agricultural industry and economic developers/marketers need market-driven research and management expertise to help businesses adapt to the vast and nearby urban market.

The first priority is to ensure that consumer preference is well understood. In terms of product development, the market for nutraceuticals and functional foods<sup>5</sup> appears to be large, global and growing. New technologies, including the production of bio-diesels and ethanols, create new options for GTA farmers. Research on value-added opportunities (e.g. processing, packaging, branding) that will improve the profitability of agri-businesses is also important. The potential to develop new value-chains<sup>6</sup> should also be considered. With value chains, all steps from producer to consumer are co-ordinated and controlled to meet a specific need, increase efficiency and provide more security to businesses along the chain.

To advance new opportunities, the farming industry, together with private, institutional and academic research and economic development organizations need to network and cooperatively find solutions.

#### Actions:

1. Define the unique strengths of GTA agriculture, and based on these, identify the priority research and development (R&D), business management, technological and marketing requirements to enable this industry to increase its profitability by capitalizing on these strengths. (Lead: GTA AAC; Suggested participants: OMAF, MAH-Rural Development Division, GTA Federations of Agriculture)
2. Develop the potential for GTA farms to produce pharmaceutical, nutraceutical, bio-based products (e.g. bio-fuels) and other specialty or non-traditional products. Creating public and private partnerships is proposed to link government, academia and industry. (Lead: OMAF, MAH-Rural Development Division; Suggested participants: GTA AAC, educational institutions, private industry)

<sup>5</sup> Nutraceuticals and functional foods are items intended to provide physiological benefits or reduce the risk of chronic disease, above and beyond their basic nutritional functions.

<sup>6</sup> Value chains - a strategic collaboration of organizations for the purpose of meeting long term market objectives for the mutual benefit of all "links" in the chain.

### 2.2.2 Promote Opportunities

The agricultural industry needs current and comprehensive information about new markets, and expertise and capacity in the development of production, processing and marketing methods to capture both local and global market opportunities. Based on the opportunities identified above, the following promotional and information dissemination actions should occur:

#### Actions:

3. Meaningfully differentiate GTA farm products via Foodland Ontario advertising/campaigns, and initiate an "Ontario First" priority to increase sales for locally grown products. (Lead: Foodland Ontario in partnership with Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) and GTA Federations of Agriculture, retail sector, and various 'farm fresh' organizations i.e. Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association, Farm Markets Ontario and Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association)
4. Increase awareness of Research and Development (R&D), business management, technology, diversification and value-added research and options, by farm organizations, farmers, bankers and economic developers. This may be done through web-based applications, forums, and publications and OMAF's provincial system of committees. (Lead: OMAF, MAH-Rural Development Division; Suggested participants: AAFC, commodity groups, financial institutions, GTA Federations of Agriculture)
5. Provide information on value chain management i.e. current examples, how to establish, accessing timely and accurate market information and potential investors. (Lead: MAH-Rural Development Division; Suggested participants: OMAF, GTA Regional and Local economic development offices)
6. Facilitate access to private and public sector industry advisors. (Lead: OMAF and AAFC; Suggested participants: GTA Regional and Local economic development offices)

### 2.2.3 Coordination

Improved coordination between the agricultural industry and government will positively impact the industry's competitiveness and agency effectiveness. To accomplish this, organizations operating at all levels of the industry must be coordinated in a new way.

#### Actions:

7. Create a GTA Agricultural Action Committee (GTA AAC) comprised of dynamic champions, to provide a coordinating function for agriculture in the GTA, share information, raise awareness of issues, act as liaison with all levels of government, and encourage innovation and diversification within the industry. (Lead: GTA Federations of Agriculture; Suggested participants: OMAF, MAH-Rural Development Division, GTA Regional and Local Municipalities, industry experts)
8. Raise awareness of funding opportunities for GTA agri-businesses to capitalize on the local urban market. (Lead: GTA AAC; Suggested participants: OMAF, MAH-Rural Development Division, financial institutions, funding agencies such as the Agricultural Adaptation Council)
9. Provide for dedicated agricultural economic development capability at the GTA municipalities and overall GTA coordination to promote local agriculture, connect producers with local markets including retailers and restaurants, and provide business support. (Lead: MAH-Rural Development Division with Regional and Local economic development offices; Suggested participants: GTA Chambers of Commerce, GTA AAC)

#### 2.2.4 Taxation

It will not be possible to sustain agriculture over the long term if the industry is not financially viable. Taxation and tax assessment are significant parts of the economic equation for farmers.

**Actions:**

10. Collaboration between the agricultural industry and municipalities in lobbying the Ontario Ministry of Finance for fair farmland and value-added tax assessment. Tax incentives should be also be considered to reduce speculation in urban fringe areas, promote the industry to young farmers and encourage innovation. (Lead: OFA, GTA Federations of Agriculture; Suggested participants: Municipal Property Assessment Corporation, Ministry of Finance, GTA Regional and Local Municipalities, GTA AAC, MAH-Municipal Finance Branch, Ontario Farmland Trust)
11. Municipal governments should explore options for reducing farmland tax assessment. (Lead: GTA Regional and Local Municipalities; Suggested participants: Municipal Property Assessment Corporation, GTA AAC, Ministry of Finance)





# Chapter Three

## Education/Marketing

Georgetown ■ Halton Region

### 3.1 BACKGROUND

Agriculture is important to the GTA from many perspectives. Its contributions to the GTA economy, environment and local and regional character have been noted but perhaps never articulated in a unified message to decision makers. The GTA agricultural sector needs to improve awareness of the needs and capabilities of consumers and the agricultural industry. They then need to identify and educate decision-makers on these issues. The strategy should complement and build on other programs like the province's Foodland Ontario and Ontario Farm Fresh initiatives, and the education and marketing campaigns of individual food producers' organizations. Education and marketing should also be directed to address farm succession.

The aims of an agricultural education and marketing strategy should be to:

- Raise awareness of the contribution of agriculture to the economy, environment and local and regional character of life in the GTA;
- Communicate the importance of preserving agricultural practices and land to allow the industry to remain viable;
- Promote local farm products as well as recreation, entertainment and education opportunities to expand the markets for GTA agriculture;
- Recognize and support the role of urban gardens in supplying food and serving as an education tool for broader agricultural practices;
- Identify and build on existing marketing and education programs; and
- Assess the impact and opportunities of the GTA's changing cultural diversity on the agriculture industry.

## 3.2 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

### 3.2.1 Educating Decision-Makers

Affecting change to promote a healthy agricultural industry in the GTA requires the articulation of well-crafted messages to decision-makers. There are many interests competing for the attention of the same players, underscoring the importance of a unified and clear expression of the industry's needs and capabilities. Identifying the key decision-makers is one that demands attention. Decision-makers include politicians at the federal, provincial, Regional and Local municipal levels, farmers and farm associations, marketing and commodity boards, financial and educational institutions, grocers and other food based retailers, value-added producers and other related industries.

The consumer, as is the case in most industries, carries perhaps the most influence on the agricultural industry. Continued effort is needed to educate the public on the realities of farming and the quality of the food produced.

Between agricultural producers and consumers lay a host of stakeholders who influence producers' ability to deliver the goods to the consumer. Educating decision-makers begins with some basic understanding of what is currently being done to influence the decision-makers and by whom, and where the gaps are that need to be filled in a comprehensive and strategic approach.

#### Actions

12. Identify and compile key contacts and staff within each level of government and/or agency as key decision-makers within their organization. (Lead: OFA; Suggested participants: OMAF, GTA Regions, financial institutions, processors, retailers)
13. Develop specific communication strategies to reach key decision-makers. (Lead: GTA AAC, financial institutions, processors, retailers)
14. Use the GTA Agriculture Profile Update as the basis for communication with the identified decision-makers and to promote/educate agriculture to the broader public audience and key decision-makers. (Lead: OFA and GTA Federations of Agriculture; Suggested participants: Junior Farmers, 4H members, educational institutions)

### 3.2.2 Co-ordination of Education and Marketing Efforts

The agricultural industry currently has many successful education tools and marketing campaigns. There are, however, many sectors within the industry without access or the capabilities to develop those tools. New alliances and the sharing of information among the various agricultural sectors would create opportunities to discover common interests and leverage experience, expertise and resources. This type of cooperation will provide the tools for those that do not have them and, perhaps more importantly, to facilitate a clear, unified message to particular target audiences.

#### Actions

15. Develop a comprehensive inventory of marketing programs and initiatives, organizations and education curricula. (Lead: GTA AAC; Suggested participants: commodity groups, GTA Regional and Local economic development officers, OMAF)
16. Produce an Agricultural Education and Marketing Best Practices document for use throughout the agriculture industry. (Lead: GTA AAC; Suggested participants: commodity groups, OMAF, Junior Farmers, 4H)
17. Create a forum to facilitate alliances among the different agricultural sectors and outside agencies such as school boards, conservation authorities and the development industry. (Lead: GTA AAC; Suggested participants: GTA Regions and City of Toronto, commodity groups)
18. Design a comprehensive communications strategy to promote local farm products and recreation, entertainment and education opportunities on the farm. For example, consider developing a TV channel specifically for agriculture to promote food safety, environmental stewardship, new marketing and other ideas. (Lead: GTA AAC; Suggested participants: school boards, OFA, GTA Regional and Local economic development offices)

### 3.2.3 Understand the Evolving Cultural Diversity of the Greater Toronto Area Marketplace

The 2001 census confirms the ongoing cultural diversification of the GTA's population. This is an opportunity for the agricultural industry to review its marketing and education practices and the commodities it produces in order to achieve a competitive advantage over producers outside the GTA. The demand for the types of food has changed. However, the agriculture industry has not yet capitalized on these emerging markets. Generally, information on farm commodities are only produced in English, rather than translated into different languages to reach more readers and thus potential consumers.

#### Actions

19. Develop a GTA population profile to identify the emerging consumer groups. (Lead: GTA Regions and City of Toronto; Suggested participants: OMAF, MAH-Rural Development Division, OFA, GTA Federations of Agriculture, educational institutions)
20. Develop a suite of new marketing techniques, using the population profile, which will capture the different consumer groups e.g. use of different languages and media outlets. (Lead: GTA AAC, OMAF, MAH-Rural Development Division; Suggested participants: GTA Regions and City of Toronto, ethnic media representatives, educational institutions)
21. Investigate new opportunities to cater to changing cultural diversity and demographics, e.g. production of healthy products for consumers who value locally-grown food. (Lead: GTA Federations of Agriculture, OMAF, MAH-Rural Development Division; Suggested participants: GTA Regions and City of Toronto, commodity groups, grocer industry representatives, educational institutions)

### 3.2.4 Succession and Farm Business Planning

Farm succession is the process of preparing and transferring both the ownership and the management of farm businesses to the next generation of farmers. A recent study by Deloitte & Touche found that over 75% of family businesses are going to be changing hands (either to the next generation or outright sale) over the next 10 to 15 years. Current realities such as the high capital costs of farming, low profit margins and labour shortages, will make it all the more difficult for farms to be passed on to family members. This suggests the need for earlier initiatives to facilitate desirable succession planning in the industry.

#### Actions

22. Promote and conduct workshops and other educational opportunities to address unique GTA financial and farm business management needs. OMAF and business development offices may be able to tailor existing business management courses to be more GTA specific. (Lead: OMAF, GTA Regional or Local business development offices)
23. Provide GTA relevant farm succession educational opportunities. (Lead: OMAF, Centre for Family Farm Succession, Canadian Farm Business Management Council)
24. Programs to promote and support entry-level farmers should be implemented, such as apprenticeship programs and co-op placements for high school, community college and university students. (Lead: OMAF, Centre for Family Farm Succession, Canadian Farm Business Management Council, School Boards, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities)





# Chapter Four

## Land Use Planning

City of Toronto

## 4.1 BACKGROUND

As a non-renewable resource, GTA agricultural land faces many challenges. Retaining and growing agriculture as an industry in the GTA depends on a number of economic factors (discussed in Section 2). The aim of this section is to focus on protection of the land base and complementary initiatives to keep farmers on GTA farms.

## 4.2 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

### 4.2.1 Protect the Agricultural Land Base

The existing Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) indicates that prime agricultural lands are to be protected for agriculture. Areas may be excluded from prime agricultural areas for limited non-agricultural use subject to criteria. While the PPS allows considerable scope in interpretation, municipalities are free to be more definitive and restrictive. Strengthening agricultural policies in the new PPS will help to ensure that policies are consistently interpreted and upheld. Once converted to another use, agricultural land is permanently lost.

All GTA Regional Municipalities are fundamentally consistent in their Official Plan approach by recognizing the significance of the agricultural land base. All four GTA Regions also have the benefit of Agricultural Advisory Committees that advise on planning matters affecting agriculture.

Agricultural policies traditionally aim at maintaining a critical mass of agricultural land and preventing fragmentation of the land base into farm and non-farm parcels. Policies must also help to ensure that farmers have some flexibility to adapt to market forces (for example, by enabling compatible secondary businesses on the farm). Policies and programs should also help to achieve greater understanding of normal farm practices and promote good neighbour relations between farmers and non-farmers.

Urban policies focused on sustainable development or “strong community” principles also support agriculture in that they focus on reducing land consumption through firm urban boundaries, compact, transit-oriented development, etc. Municipal natural area policies also impact farmers. In the GTA, many of the remaining natural areas are located on farms. On a GTA-wide basis, 21% of all land on farms contains natural areas.

|               | Ha (acres) of Farmland   | Ha (acres) of Natural Areas Located on Farms <sup>7</sup> |
|---------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Durham Region | 133,666 (330,286)        | 22,501 (55,600)                                           |
| Halton Region | 39,967 (98,758)          | 11,327 (27,989)                                           |
| Peel Region   | 42,264 (104,433)         | 18,292 (45,200)                                           |
| York Region   | 71,213 (175,965)         | 8,402 (20,760)                                            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>299,252 (739,442)</b> | <b>60,522 (149,548)</b>                                   |

\* numbers do not add up due to rounding

Farmers appreciate the important functions of natural areas, but they also understand the impact of environmental designations and restrictions on their ability to farm and their land values. Many find it unfair that they are required to protect these areas for the public good without compensation. Careful consideration must be made of the net impact to farmers from protecting the natural areas they own in designated greenspace or the future Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt as farmers feel that they are impacted more than any other sector.

Farmers are urging municipalities to recognize that restrictive agricultural and environmental policies need to be balanced with the farmer’s right to farm and their need to make a decent living. Policies that enable the farmer to increase their income on the farm are needed.

## GTA Agricultural Action Plan

## Actions

25. Continue to promote urban development policies that encourage compact urban development, give priority to infill and re-development (including brownfields), prohibit extension of hard services like municipal water and wastewater infrastructure within agricultural areas, and retain firm urban/agricultural area boundaries. This should be done via Official Plan policies consistent with the provincial growth strategy. (Lead: GTA Regional and Local municipalities)
26. Increase investment in and promotion of public transit and travel demand management to complement urban development policies and enhance urban quality of life. The federal and provincial governments' commitment to re-direct gasoline taxes to provide sustained funding for public transit will help. (Lead: Ontario Ministry of Finance; Suggested participants: Department of Finance Canada, Ministry of Transportation Ontario, GTA Regional and Local Municipalities, City of Toronto)
27. Continue protecting a critical mass of high priority agricultural land through a strengthened PPS, together with municipal agricultural designations. Prevent fragmentation of land by restricting or prohibiting rural severance policies in Official Plans. (Lead: MAH-Provincial Planning and Environmental Services Branch; Suggested participants: OMAF, University of Guelph, GTA Regional and Local Municipalities)
28. Recognizing the evolving needs of farmers and reality of non-farm uses in the agricultural area, ensure Minimum Distance Separation requirements are included in zoning by-laws and implemented by Building Officials, and ensure there is public, staff and Council awareness of Normal Farm Practices, as represented in the Farming and Food Production Protection Act and MOE regulations governing pesticide use, Nutrient Management, etc. (Lead: OMAF, GTA Regional and Local Municipalities; Suggested participants: federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency)
29. The new Provincial Policy Statement should strengthen the criteria that need to be assessed in justification studies for taking land out of agriculture. Current approaches are too discretionary. (Lead: MAH-Provincial Planning and Environmental Services Branch; Suggested participants: GTA Regions)
30. Investigate and evaluate different approaches to protecting GTA agricultural land via agricultural preserves for example, building on Markham, Pickering, Niagara, Oak Ridges Moraine and U.S. experiences. (Lead: OMAF; Suggested participants: GTA Regional and Local Municipalities, agricultural organizations)
31. Facilitate farmer adoption of mandatory and voluntary Best Management Practices (BMP) like Nutrient Management Plans and Strategies, Environmental Farm Plans, source water protection measures, good forestry practices, and long-term lease arrangements to encourage sustainable farm practices. (Lead: OMAF; Suggested participants: OFA and GTA Federations of Agriculture, conservation authorities, stewardship councils, Soil & Crop Improvement Association)
32. Encourage the Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT) to develop programs, identify securement mechanisms (including financial) and obtain support from the province, municipal Councils and agricultural organizations. (Lead: OFT; Suggested participants supporting the OFT: OFA and GTA Federations of Agriculture, GTA Regional and Local Municipalities, OMAF)
33. Investigate and make available, GTA-wide mechanisms for promoting natural area protection such as conservation easements, provision of professional forestry advice and tree stock to private landowners, and environmental payments for example. Promote the use of tax benefits to reduce the cost to farmers of retaining natural areas. (Suggested participants: co-ordination between the GTA Federations of Agriculture, conservation authorities, OMAF, stewardship councils, Soil & Crop Improvement Association, other farm groups)

8- The Ontario Farmland Trust aims to protect and preserve farmlands via acquisition, securement, management or other means.

#### 4.2.2 Complementary Initiatives to Keep Farmers on GTA Farms

At the municipal level, many policies and programs are already being implemented to complement traditional land use policies, protect the agricultural land base and promote best management practices. These complementary initiatives may include source water protection programs; assistance in preparing Nutrient Management Plans, Nutrient Management Strategies and Environmental Farm Plans; programs to keep roads safe for slow-moving farm vehicles; and policies to enable farmers to increase income generated on their farm through value-added products or secondary uses.

However, there is only so much that municipalities have the power to do. Over and over again, stakeholders lament the absence of strong federal and provincial visions for agriculture. At the federal and provincial levels respectively, the Agricultural Policy Framework and PPS Review provide opportunities to increase federal and provincial commitment to protecting agricultural land and farm viability.

#### Actions

34. Ensure there is a strong, clear, and highly promoted provincial vision for agriculture that articulates the role of GTA agriculture in the context of the provincial growth plan. (Lead: OMAF; Suggested participants: MAH)
35. Councils should consider adopting policies to permit secondary uses on the farm to enable the farm entity to improve economic viability. To ensure compatibility with existing farm and non-farm uses, secondary uses must be subject to tests that must be met based on local circumstances. (Lead: GTA Regional and Local Municipalities)
36. Adopt policies to permit value-added and agri-tainment operations that are compatible with surrounding agriculture, as these uses can increase farm income and provide an excellent opportunity to improve public appreciation of and support for GTA agriculture. (Lead: GTA Regional and Local Municipalities)
37. Adopt consistent transportation policies and programs for Regional and Local roads to ensure safe movement of farm vehicles e.g. efficient public transit to keep commuters off rural roads, slow-moving vehicle signage, consultation with farmers during transportation master planning, Class Environmental Assessments and during capital and operating budget deliberations. Farmers need to be consulted on rural road designs and upgrades (e.g. road type, alignments, shoulders, cross-sections, and sign placement). (Lead: GTA Regional and Local GTA Municipalities)

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9 Environmental payments, as advocated by the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO), are payments made to farmers for identified societal benefits (e.g. protection of natural areas). CFFO envisions the funds being derived from a small charge on the retail sale of food in Ontario.

10 Agri-tainment includes agricultural-related activities that are provided for entertainment purposes.



# Chapter Five

## Accountability and Responsibility

Township of Brock ■ Durham Region

## 5.1 BACKGROUND

A key challenge in identifying implementable directions to keep the GTA agricultural industry competitive relates to accountability and responsibility. Currently, there are many government and non-government agencies with some involvement in advocating for agricultural interests.

To sustain agriculture as an industry in the GTA, cooperative working partnerships need to be built between government, agencies and the agricultural industry. The GTA Agricultural Action Plan provides a framework that will lead to success by creating a sense of co-ownership among the many stakeholders involved in sustaining the agricultural industry. Stakeholders will share the responsibility, decision-making and accountability for implementing the GTA Agricultural Action Plan.

This Action Plan is results based, plotting a course of action that will benefit farmers and consumers in the GTA. Support depends, in part, upon raising awareness of agriculture as an industry to be supported and enhanced. Decision-makers need to understand the needs of the farming industry to make informed decisions and provide necessary supports.

Various individuals, groups and stakeholders (ie, producers, processors, distributors etc.) need to take ownership in carrying out specific tasks, assigning groups to assist, and to follow-up and report back to the agricultural community at large.

In particular, federal, provincial and municipal governments need to ensure their policies, regulations and programs are complementary to effectively protect agricultural land and promote economic well-being. For example, in reforming provincial planning, the province should use this Action Plan as a foundation. GTA Regional and Local Municipalities should continue to ensure farm friendly policies and by-laws are in place.

## 5.2 BROAD DIRECTION

### 5.2.1 Everyone Needs to Take Ownership

If the agricultural industry, GTA residents, businesses and government want to protect farmland and promote a healthy industry, increased awareness of agricultural issues in the GTA is required. Groups that influence decisions, to a large extent, are disconnected from each other. Improved coordination and cooperation among these groups is essential.

## 5.3 IMPLEMENTATION

### 5.3.1 The GTA Agricultural Action Plan

The GTA Agricultural Action Plan provides a GTA-wide framework with identified implementable directions and clear actions in the areas of Economic Development, Education and Marketing and Land Use Planning to keep the GTA agricultural industry competitive.

The Action Plan has undergone broad consultation through the GTA Agricultural Workshop held in March of 2003, the Agricultural Action Plan Symposium held the following November, and the work of the GTA Regional Municipalities, GTA Federations of Agriculture, and the Focus Teams, involving many individuals representing agricultural, planning and business sectors.

The Symposium brought together leaders interested in GTA agriculture to review the Action Plan and begin building collective support and taking ownership of the initiative.

To reinforce the notion that GTA agriculture remains a major contributor to Ontario's economy, the GTA Agricultural Action Plan has been endorsed by all four GTA Regional governments, the four GTA Federations of Agriculture, and is supported by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and the provincial Ministries of Agriculture and Food and Municipal Affairs and Housing, as well as the various agricultural sectors. This endorsement represents a clear public and political statement of the collective vision and goals of the GTA municipalities and agricultural industry, to facilitate the implementation of the proposed actions.

### 5.3.2 Next Steps

The GTA Regions and Federations of Agriculture should develop a Terms of Reference for the establishment of a GTA Agricultural Action Committee (GTA AAC), comprised of dedicated leaders as champions, representatives of the federal, provincial and regional governments, and key agricultural industry stakeholders. The GTA AAC will have the following key responsibilities:

- Facilitate and coordinate all agricultural interests and levels of government to focus these groups on Action Plan implementation;
- Meet regularly to review the Action Plan and assess progress on action implementation; report back to all stakeholders via a report card;
- Build upon the existing GTA Economic Development Partnership to enhance GTA agricultural economic development initiatives;
- Confirm 'who' the key government bodies and influential parties in the agricultural industry are, to move the Action Plan forward
- Develop the action strategies more fully;
- Develop a budget and business plan for the whole project including timelines, based on priorities as identified in the Action Plan. As well, identify key potential sources of funding.

## 5.4 RESPONSIBILITY AND PRIORITY MATRIX

The table in Appendix 2 summarizes all actions and responsibilities resulting from this exercise. This matrix has been refined based on discussions held at the November symposium, focus teams and comments received from the public, government and stakeholders of the agricultural community. The matrix highlights nine 'high' priority actions identified through the consultation process as well as some other actions that have been identified as 'on-going' priorities. The highest priorities are summarized as:

1. Create the GTA AAC
2. Provide dedicated agricultural economic development capability at the municipalities, with GTA-wide and provincial co-ordination
3. Seek reforms in farmland and value-added taxation
4. Recognize and adapt to cultural diversity and demographic realities
5. Provide programs to assist in farm succession and support new farmers
6. Work to achieve PPS and Official Plan changes that better protect agriculture
7. Identify a variety of mechanisms for protecting natural areas while benefiting the landowner
8. Enable farmers to supplement farm income through compatible secondary uses on the farm
9. Adopt transportation policies and programs that keep roads safe for farmers



# Chapter Six

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City of Toronto

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# Chapter Seven

## Appendix

City of Oshawa ■ Durham Region

## APPENDIX 1: GTA AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN FOCUS TEAM MEMBERS

### Economic Development Focus Team

Co-Chairs: Shelley Partridge, Region of Peel and Allan Thompson, Peel Federation of Agriculture

John Ayling, Region of Halton, Economic Development  
 June Barnes, Halton Region Federation of Agriculture  
 Dave Birkett, Halton Region, Finance  
 Jane Clohecy, Region of Halton, Planning  
 Nick DeBoer, Peel Federation of Agriculture  
 Nick Ferri, Peel Federation of Agriculture  
 Martin Gooch, Agricultural Adaptation Council  
 Gary Johnson, York Federation of Agriculture  
 Janine Kilburn, Ministry of Municipal Affairs  
 Denis LeBrun, Municipal Property Assessment Corporation  
 Anne Livingston, Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group  
 Rick Reitmeier, Region of Peel  
 Ben Roberts, Town of Caledon

### Education and Marketing Focus Team

Co-Chairs: Neil Garbe, York Region and Karen Yellowlees, Durham Federation of Agriculture

Marilyn Bidgood, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food  
 Dorene Collins, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food  
 Alex Georgieff, Region of Durham,  
 Planning Commissioner & RPCO Chair  
 Sandy Grant, Halton Region Federation of Agriculture  
 Anne Howden Thompson, Ontario Farmer  
 Gary Johnson, York Federation of Agriculture  
 Deb Lethbridge, Ontario Federation of Agriculture  
 John Michailidis, City of Toronto, Planning  
 John O’Gorman, Toronto Food Policy Council  
 Don Rickards, Durham Farmer

### Land Use Policy Focus Team

Co-Chairs: Helma Geerts, Region of Halton and David Lyons, Peel Federation of Agriculture

Harvey Brown, York Federation of Agriculture  
 Michael Bunce, University of Toronto  
 Ruth Coursey, Town of East Gwillimbury  
 Donna Mundie, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food  
 Carol Neumann, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food  
 John O’Gorman, Toronto Food Policy Council  
 Rizaldo Padilla, Ministry of Municipal Affairs  
 Marsha Paley, Town of Caledon  
 Michelle Sergi, City of Hamilton  
 Nick Tunnacliffe, Region of Peel, Planning Commissioner  
 Ted Watson, Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee

### Accountability and Responsibility Focus Team

Co-Chairs: Nancy Rutherford, Region of Durham and Peter Lambrick, Halton Region Federation of Agriculture

Neil Currie, Ontario Federation of Agriculture  
 Ron Deeth, Ontario Independent Meat Processors Association  
 Clarence Haverson, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food  
 Rick Kush, Canadian Agricultural Rural Communities Initiative  
 Deb Lethbridge, Ontario Federation of Agriculture  
 Roy Maxwell, Chicken Farmers of Ontario  
 Donna Mundie, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food  
 Julia Munroe, MPP York North  
 John O’Toole, MPP Durham  
 Marilyn Pearce, Councillor, Township of Scugog  
 Bryan Tuckey, York Region, Planning Commissioner

## APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN

|   | ACTIONS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | WHO -<br>AGENCIES / GOVERNMENT / INDUSTRY                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | HOW -<br>IMPLEMENTATION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Define the unique strengths of GTA Agriculture, and based on these, identify the priority research and development (R&D), business management, technological and marketing requirements to enable this industry to increase its profitability by capitalizing on these strengths. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: GTA AAC</li> <li>• Suggested participants: OMAF/MAH, GTA Federations of Agriculture</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capitalize on the strengths of GTA agriculture to identify priorities</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 2 | Develop the potential for GTA farms to produce pharmaceutical, nutraceutical, bio-based products (e.g. bio-fuels) and other specialty or non-traditional products. Creating public and private partnerships is proposed to link government, academia and industry.                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: OMAF, MAH Rural Development Division</li> <li>• Suggested participants: GTA AAC, educational institutions, private industry</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating public and private partnerships is proposed to link government, academia and industry</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 3 | Meaningfully differentiate GTA farm products via Foodland Ontario advertising/campaigns, and initiate an "Ontario First" priority to increase sales for locally grown products.                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: Foodland Ontario in partnership with OFA and GTA Federations of Agriculture, retail sector, and various 'farm fresh' organizations i.e. Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association, Farm Markets Ontario and Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political will is required at a provincial and local level</li> <li>• Coordination is required to provide a consistent GTA-wide approach</li> <li>• An accreditation body may be required for quality standards i.e. if Farm Fresh was to expand GTA-wide</li> <li>• Explore flexibility in local, smaller grocery retailers</li> <li>• Raise awareness that successful branding depends on achieving consistent quality and quantity outcomes according to market-driven criteria</li> <li>• Look at lessons learned from other industries that can be used as templates to encourage agriculture to move from a 'volume &amp; commodity' produce and supply mindset, to a 'value-based' market and demand business approach</li> </ul> |

**APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN**

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 | Increase awareness of Research and Development (R&D), business management, technology, diversification and value-added research and options, by farm organizations, farmers, bankers and economic developers. This may be done through web-based applications, forums, and publications and OMAF's provincial system of committees. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: OMAF, MAH-Rural Development Division</li> <li>• Suggested participants: AAFC, commodity groups, financial institutions, GTA Federations of Agriculture</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Web-based applications, forums or publications</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 5 | Provide information on value chain management i.e. current examples, how to establish, accessing timely and accurate market information and potential investors.                                                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: MAH-Rural Development Division</li> <li>• Suggested participants: OMAF, GTA Regional and Local economic development offices</li> </ul>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit of international government-sponsored programs focused on stimulating commercial competitiveness</li> <li>• Audit of legislation that hampers business development             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- From that, develop a long term strategy that encourages and challenges industry to take advantage of (and adapt to) market developments</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ensure service providers have capabilities required to facilitate initiatives that enable individual commercial organizations to explore new market-driven business approaches</li> <li>• Develop initiatives that provide managers of individual organizations with the "capacity to act" and increase the long-term international competitiveness of their business. Individual businesses supply markets, not industries</li> <li>• Raise industry's awareness that successfully innovating and profiting from innovation is linked to businesses possessing the vision, culture, and organizational structure that enables them to develop and take advantage of market-driven opportunities</li> <li>• Involve private industry in the development of infrastructure for new technologies</li> </ul> |

## GTA Agricultural Action Plan

## APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6 | Facilitate access to private and public sector industry advisors.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: OMAF and AAFC</li> <li>• Suggested participants: GTA Regional and Local economic development offices</li> </ul>                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit of international activities related to this field. What can GTA learn from others?</li> <li>• Develop initiatives that encourage individual businesses to look "outside the box" and acquire new capabilities</li> <li>• Explore development-related funding initiatives looking beyond generic public good 'industry' level initiatives</li> <li>• Develop university level courses and research that encourage industry to explore new business models</li> </ul> |
| 7 | Create a GTA Agricultural Action Committee (GTA AAC), comprised of dynamic champions, to provide a coordinating function for agriculture in the GTA, share information, raise awareness of issues, act as liaison with all levels of government, and encourage innovation and diversification within the industry. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: GTA Federations of Agriculture</li> <li>• Suggested participants: OMAF, MAH-Rural Development Division, GTA Regional and Local Municipalities, industry experts</li> </ul>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate sharing of information, raising awareness of issues, liaison with the three levels of governments, and encouraging innovation and diversification within the industry</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 8 | Raise awareness of funding opportunities for GTA agri-businesses to capitalize on the local urban market.                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: GTA AAC</li> <li>• Suggested participants: OMAF, MAH-Rural Development Division, financial institutions, funding agencies such as the Agricultural Adaptation Council</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Materials/seminars that raise individual managers' ability to develop successful long term strategies and secure funds that can support these endeavours</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 9 | Provide for dedicated agricultural economic development capability at the GTA municipalities and overall GTA coordination to promote local agriculture, connect producers with local markets including retailers and restaurants, and provide business support.                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: MAH-Rural Development Division with Regional and Local economic development offices</li> <li>• Suggested participants: GTA Chambers of Commerce, GTA AAC</li> </ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide individual businesses with the capability to identify, develop, implement, and manage such opportunities</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

## APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN

|    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10 | Collaboration between the agricultural industry and municipalities in lobbying the Ontario Ministry of Finance for fair farmland and value-added tax assessment. Tax incentives should be also be considered to reduce speculation in urban fringe areas, promote the industry to young farmers and encourage innovation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: OFA, GTA Federations of Agriculture</li> <li>• Suggested participants: Municipal Property Assessment Corporation, Ministry of Finance, GTA Regional and Local Municipalities, GTA AAC, MAH-Municipal Finance Branch, Ontario Farmland Trust</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-term approach addressing taxes and related charges for new farm buildings, policies that may limit innovation or diversification on the farm, etc.</li> <li>• Consideration of tax incentives to development industry to entice development to urban areas</li> </ul> |
| 11 | Municipal governments should explore options for reducing farmland tax assessment.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: GTA Regional and Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Suggested participants: Municipal Property Assessment Corporation, GTA AAC, Ministry of Finance</li> </ul>                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of farmland assessment procedures and options</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 12 | Identify and compile key contacts and staff within each level of government and/or agency as key decision-makers within their organization.                                                                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: OFA</li> <li>• Suggested participants: OMAF, GTA Regions, financial institutions, processors, retailers</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need each agency/organization to appoint appropriate individual(s) with accountability, to participate in Ag Action Plan</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                        |
| 13 | Develop specific communication strategies to reach key decision-makers.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: GTA AAC, financial institutions, processors, retailers</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grassroots programs like 4H &amp; Junior Farmers can help bridge gap through farm tours, etc. to increase awareness in GTA</li> <li>• Networking opportunities explored</li> </ul>                                                                                         |
| 14 | Use the GTA Agriculture Profile Update as the basis for communication with the identified decision makers and to promote/educate agriculture to the broader public audience and key decision-makers.                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: OFA and GTA Federations of Agriculture</li> <li>• Suggested participants: Junior Farmers, 4H members, educational institutions</li> </ul>                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to advance respect of this important industry while dealing with massive growth pressures (e.g. through smart growth)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                      |
| 15 | Develop a comprehensive inventory of marketing programs and initiatives, organizations and education curricula.                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: GTA AAC</li> <li>• Suggested participants: commodity groups, GTA Regional and Local economic development officers, OMAF</li> </ul>                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inventory completed</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

## GTA Agricultural Action Plan

## APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN

|    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 16 | Produce an Agricultural Education and Marketing Best Practices document for use throughout the agriculture industry.                                                                                                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: GTA AAC</li> <li>• Suggested participants: commodity groups, OMAF, Junior Farmers, 4H</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inventory completed</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                             |
| 17 | Create a forum to facilitate alliances among the different agricultural sectors and outside agencies such as school boards, conservation authorities and the development industry.                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: GTA AAC</li> <li>• Suggested participants: GTA Regions and City of Toronto, commodity groups</li> </ul>                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold info sessions hosted by farm organizations like the OFA to build awareness</li> <li>• Link producers with grocers (large/small)</li> <li>• Identify applicable regulations</li> </ul> |
| 18 | Design a comprehensive communications strategy to promote local farm products and recreation, entertainment and education opportunities on the farm. For example, consider developing a TV channel specifically for agriculture to promote food safety, environmental stewardship, new marketing and other ideas. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: GTA AAC</li> <li>• Suggested participants: school boards, OFA, GTA Regional and Local economic development offices</li> </ul>                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GTA-specific news and education channel</li> <li>• Comprehensive marketing program, including branding.</li> </ul>                                                                         |
| 19 | Develop a GTA population profile to identify the emerging consumer groups.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: GTA Regions and City of Toronto</li> <li>• Suggested participants: OMAF, MAH-Rural Development Division, OFA, GTA Federations of Agriculture, educational institutions</li> </ul>                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Profile developed and disseminated</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                              |
| 20 | Develop a suite of new marketing techniques, using the population profile, which will capture the different consumer groups e.g. use of different languages and media outlets.                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: GTA AAC, OMAF, MAH-Rural Development Division</li> <li>• Suggested participants: GTA Regions and City of Toronto, ethnic media representatives, educational institutions</li> </ul>                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration and inventory of marketing techniques that can be used to appeal to different groups</li> </ul>                                                                                |
| 21 | Investigate new opportunities to cater to changing cultural diversity and demographics, e.g. production of healthy products for consumers who value locally-grown food.                                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: GTA Federations of Agriculture, OMAF, MAH-Rural Development Division</li> <li>• Suggested participants: GTA Regions and City of Toronto, commodity groups, grocer industry representatives, educational institutions</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reality of rapid population growth (visible/minority)</li> <li>• Look at needs/crops for new Canadians</li> </ul>                                                                          |

**APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN**

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| 22 | Promote and conduct workshops and other educational opportunities to address unique GTA financial and farm business management needs. OMAF and business development offices may be able to tailor existing business management courses to be more GTA specific.                                                                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: OMAF, GTA Regional or Local business development offices</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business management workshops and other educational opportunities</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 23 | Provide GTA relevant farm succession educational opportunities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: OMAF, Centre for Family Farm Succession and Canadian Farm Business Management Council</li> </ul>                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farm succession workshops and other educational opportunities</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 24 | Programs to promote and support entry-level farmers should be implemented, such as apprenticeship programs and co-op placements for high school, community college and university students.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: OMAF, Centre for Family Farm Succession, Canadian Farm Business Management Council, School Boards, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities</li> </ul>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grassroots educational curricula and opportunities in schools through agencies and OMAF</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 25 | Continue to promote urban development policies that encourage compact urban development, give priority to infill and re-development (including brownfields), prohibit extension of hard services like municipal water and wastewater infrastructure within agricultural areas, and retain firm urban/agricultural area boundaries. This should be done via Official Plan policies consistent with the provincial growth strategy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: GTA Regional and Local municipalities</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote GTA Ag Action Plan to Councillors via staff reports and presentations to Council</li> <li>• Workshop for GTA Councillors, Building Officials and other municipal staff to facilitate understanding of importance of GTA agriculture and methods for protecting the land</li> <li>• Council resolutions</li> </ul> |
| 26 | Increase investment in and promotion of public transit and travel demand management to complement urban development policies and enhance urban quality of life. The federal and provincial governments' commitment to re-direct gasoline taxes to provide sustained funding for public transit will help.                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: Ontario Ministry of Finance</li> <li>• Suggested participants: Department of Finance Canada, Ministry of Transportation Ontario, GTA Regional and Local Municipalities, City of Toronto</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-direct federal &amp; provincial gas taxes to provide sustained funding for public transit</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

## GTA Agricultural Action Plan

## APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN

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| 27 | Continue protecting a critical mass of high priority agricultural land through a strengthened PPS, together with municipal agricultural designations. Prevent fragmentation of land by restricting or prohibiting rural severance policies in Official Plans.                                                                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: MAH-Provincial Planning and Environmental Services Branch</li> <li>• Suggested participants: OMAF, University of Guelph, GTA Regional and Local Municipalities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure new PPS improves protection of agriculture</li> <li>• Amend Official Plans to prohibit rural severances</li> <li>• Monitoring to track loss and fragmentation of agricultural land</li> </ul>                                                                                                                      |
| 28 | Recognizing the evolving needs of farmers and reality of non-farm uses in the agricultural area, ensure Minimum Distance Separation requirements are included in zoning by-laws and implemented by Building Officials, and ensure there is public, staff and Council awareness of Normal Farm Practices, as represented in the Farming and Food Production Protection Act and MOE regulations governing pesticide use, Nutrient Management, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: OMAF, GTA Regional and Local Municipalities</li> <li>• Suggested participants: federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency</li> </ul>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote GTA Ag Action Plan to Councillors via staff reports and presentations to Council</li> <li>• Workshop for GTA Councillors, Building Officials and other municipal staff to facilitate understanding of importance of GTA agriculture and methods for protecting the land</li> <li>• Council resolutions</li> </ul> |
| 29 | The new Provincial Policy Statement should strengthen the criteria that need to be assessed in justification studies for taking land out of agriculture. Current approaches are too discretionary.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: MAH-Provincial Planning and Environmental Services Branch</li> <li>• Suggested participants: GTA Regions</li> </ul>                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint Submission(s) to Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 30 | Investigate and evaluate different approaches to protecting GTA agricultural land via agricultural preserves for example, building on Markham, Pickering, Niagara, Oak Ridges Moraine and U.S. experiences.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: OMAF</li> <li>• Suggested participants: GTA Regional and Local Municipalities, agricultural organizations</li> </ul>                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OMAF Report</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

## APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN

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| 31 | Facilitate farmer adoption of mandatory and voluntary Best Management Practices (BMP) like Nutrient Management Plans and Strategies, Environmental Farm Plans, source water protection measures, good forestry practices, and long term lease arrangements to encourage sustainable farm practices.                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: OMAF</li> <li>• Suggested participants: OFA and GTA Federations of Agriculture, conservation authorities, stewardship councils, Soil &amp; Crop Improvement Association</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordination between farm groups and provincial ministries</li> <li>• Jointly sponsored workshops for farmers</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 32 | Encourage the Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT) <sup>11</sup> to develop programs, identify securement mechanisms (including financial) and obtain support from the province, municipal Councils and agricultural organizations.                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: OFT</li> <li>• Suggested participants supporting the OFT: OFA and GTA Federations of Agriculture, GTA Regional and Local Municipalities, OMAF</li> </ul>                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote GTA Ag Action Plan to Councillors via staff reports and presentations to Council</li> <li>• Workshop for GTA Councillors, Building Officials and other municipal staff to facilitate understanding of importance of GTA agriculture and methods for protecting the land</li> <li>• Council resolutions</li> </ul>                                               |
| 33 | Investigate and make available, GTA-wide mechanisms for promoting natural area protection such as conservation easements, provision of professional forestry advice and tree stock to private landowners, and environmental payments <sup>12</sup> for example. Promote the use of tax benefits to reduce the cost to farmers of retaining natural areas. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggested participants: co-ordination between the GTA Federations of Agriculture, conservation authorities, OMAF, stewardship councils, Soil &amp; Crop Improvement Association and other farm groups</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stewardship program across the GTA</li> <li>• Promote GTA Ag Action Plan to Councillors via staff reports and presentations to Council</li> <li>• Workshop for GTA Councillors, Building Officials and other municipal staff to facilitate understanding of importance of GTA agriculture and methods for protecting the land</li> <li>• Council resolutions</li> </ul> |
| 34 | Ensure there is a strong, clear, and highly promoted provincial vision for agriculture that articulates the role of GTA agriculture in the context of the provincial growth plan.                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: OMAF</li> <li>• Suggested participants: MAH, Agricultural stakeholders</li> </ul>                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued consultation between the stakeholders and the Province</li> <li>• Information campaign outlining the Province's vision for agriculture.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

<sup>11</sup> The Ontario Farmland Trust aims to protect and preserve farmlands via acquisition, securement, management or other means.

<sup>12</sup> Environmental payments, as advocated by the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO), are payments made to farmers for identified societal benefits (e.g. protection of natural areas). CFFO envisions the funds being derived from a small charge on the retail sale of food in Ontario.

**APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN**

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| 35 | Councils should consider adopting policies to permit secondary uses on the farm to enable the farm entity to improve economic viability. To ensure compatibility with existing farm and non-farm uses, secondary uses must be subject to tests that must be met based on local circumstances.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: GTA Regional and Local Municipalities</li> </ul>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secondary use policies and zoning considered across the GTA</li> <li>• Promote GTA Ag Action Plan to Councillors via staff reports and presentations to Council</li> <li>• Workshop for GTA Councillors, Building Officials and other municipal staff to facilitate understanding of importance of GTA agriculture and methods for protecting the land</li> <li>• Council resolutions</li> </ul>                                                                                   |
| 36 | Adopt policies to permit value-added and agri-tainment <sup>13</sup> operations that are compatible with surrounding agriculture, as these uses can increase farm income and provide an excellent opportunity to improve public appreciation of and support for GTA agriculture.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: GTA Regional and Local Municipalities</li> </ul>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value-added and agri-tainment policies and zoning across the GTA</li> <li>• Promote GTA Ag Action Plan to Councillors via staff reports and presentations to Council</li> <li>• Workshop for GTA Councillors, Building Officials and other municipal staff to facilitate understanding of importance of GTA agriculture and methods for protecting the land</li> <li>• Council resolutions</li> </ul>                                                                              |
| 37 | Adopt consistent transportation policies and programs for regional and local roads to ensure safe movement of farm vehicles e.g. efficient public transit to keep commuters off rural roads, slow-moving vehicle signage, consultation with farmers during transportation master planning, Class Environmental Assessments and during capital and operating budget deliberations. Farmers need to be consulted on rural road designs and upgrades (e.g. road type, alignments, shoulders, cross-sections, and sign placement). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead: GTA Regional and Local GTA Municipalities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GTA-wide transportation policies and programs to ensure safe movement of farm vehicles</li> <li>• Promote GTA Ag Action Plan to Councillors via staff reports and presentations to Council</li> <li>• Workshop for GTA Councillors, Building Officials and other municipal staff to facilitate understanding of importance of GTA agriculture and methods for protecting the land</li> <li>• Council resolutions (See Action #24 for actions related to public transit)</li> </ul> |

13 Agri-tainment includes agricultural-related activities that are provided for entertainment purposes

For more information, please visit the website of the  
Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario at:

<http://www.rpco.on.ca/RPCO+GTA+Caucus/Agricultural+Action+Plan+for+GTA.htm>

Or contact the Durham, Halton, Peel and York Federations of Agriculture.  
Their contact information can be found at:

[http://www.ofa.on.ca/site/main.asp?pic=../cutting/maintit\\_county.jpg&line=900&Inc=../whoweare/county.asp](http://www.ofa.on.ca/site/main.asp?pic=../cutting/maintit_county.jpg&line=900&Inc=../whoweare/county.asp)

