



Proposed **GTA Agricultural** Action Plan

November 22, 2003



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Table of Contents

Town of Milton ■ Halton Region

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	3
1.1 INTRODUCTION	4
1.2 PURPOSE	5
1.3 PROPOSED ACTION PLAN	5
1.4 GTA AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY	6
CHAPTER 2: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	7
2.1 BACKGROUND	8
2.2 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS	9
CHAPTER 3: EDUCATION/MARKETING	11
3.1 BACKGROUND	12
3.2 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS	13
CHAPTER 4: LAND USE POLICY	15
4.1 BACKGROUND	16
4.2 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS	16
CHAPTER 5: ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY	19
5.1 BACKGROUND	20
5.2 BROAD DIRECTION	20
CHAPTER 6: NEXT STEPS	21
6.1 IMPLEMENTATION	22
6.2 BEYOND THE SYMPOSIUM - NEXT STEPS	22
CHAPTER 7: BIBLIOGRAPHY	23
CHAPTER 8: APPENDIX	27
APPENDIX 1: GTA AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN FOCUS TEAM	28
APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN	29



Chapter One
Introduction

Town of Caledon ■ Peel Region

1.1 INTRODUCTION

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.

In March 2003, the 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 and it is essential to have 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 are presented in this Proposed GTA Agricultural Action Plan. The Plan was developed in consultation with Focus Teams consisting of farmers, planners, and community and industry leaders (see Appendix 1). The Proposed Action Plan will be discussed at the GTA Agricultural Symposium to be held on November 22, 2003 at the Country Heritage Park in Milton. The document will be finalized after incorporating the input received at the Symposium.

Proposed **GTA Agricultural** Action Plan**1.2 PURPOSE**

The Proposed GTA Agricultural Action Plan is intended to identify implementable strategic directions necessary to keep the GTA agricultural industry competitive in the face of the economic and land use pressures.

The Proposed Action Plan suggests how each strategic direction can be moved forward by the key stakeholders. The strategic directions and related actions are realistic steps that stakeholders can implement in collaboration with other groups.

**1.3 PROPOSED ACTION PLAN
STRUCTURE**

This document begins with a general profile of the GTA agricultural industry (Chapter 1) and then addresses each of the four themes of economic development, education/marketing, land use policy, and accountability and responsibility (Chapters 2 to 4). Chapter 5 and the accompanying Appendix 2 contain a summary of all the proposed actions. The final chapter on Next Steps talks about what needs to occur after the Nov. 22, 2003 Symposium to implement the Action Plan.

1.4 THE GTA AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY

The recent GTA Agricultural Profile Update (Planscape, 2003) describes GTA agriculture in 2001, with a statistical overview of farm characteristics and financial indicators.¹ A few of the highlights are excerpted below as context to the Action Plan, but interested readers are encouraged to refer to the detailed report.²

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 advantage of: an abundant fresh water supply to sustain the industry, heat units conducive to high yielding crops, proximity to markets and consumers, an extensive transportation network, and proximity to research, development and learning facilities. As in all businesses, management also plays an enormous role in the success of farming.

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, 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 not 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.³

A further characteristic of GTA farmland is the availability of rental land. In 2001, 47% of GTA farmland was rented.⁴ 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 because 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. Co-operation among all stakeholders is key to achieving the sustainability of agriculture.

1 The report analyzes 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 will be available to be downloaded from <http://www.rpco.on.ca/default.htm> or may be obtained from the GTA Regions and Federations of Agriculture.

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 forces and consumer preferences. A comprehensive economic development program should address:

- 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, 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 Action Plan implementation, relying on experts in industry and agencies to help make the 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 tailor businesses 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 foods⁵ 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 should also be considered. With value chains,⁶ 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.

Proposed 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. (Suggested lead: Federations of Agriculture; Suggested participants: OMAF/MMA, GTA AAC)
2. Develop the potential for GTA farms to produce pharmaceutical, nutraceutical, bio-fuels and other specialty or non-traditional products. Creating public and private partnerships is proposed to link government, academia, industry as well as other related players. (Suggested Lead: OMAF/MMA; Suggested Participants: GTA AAC, educational institutions, private industry)

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:

Proposed Actions:

3. Meaningfully differentiate GTA farm products via Foodland Ontario advertising, and initiate an "Ontario First" priority to increase sales for locally grown products. (Suggested lead: Foodland Ontario in partnership with provincial and country Federations of Agriculture and various farm fresh organizations)

⁵ Nutraceuticals and functional foods are food components that are intended to provide physiological benefits or reduce the risk of chronic disease, above and beyond their basic nutritional functions.

⁶ Value chains - a strategic collaboration of organizations for the purpose of meeting specific market objectives over the long term and for the mutual benefit of all "links" in the chain.

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 or publications. (Suggested lead: Federation)
5. Provide information on value chain management i.e. examples of existing value chains, how to establish them, accessing timely and accurate market information and potential investors. (Suggested lead: OMAF/MMA; Suggested participants: local and regional economic development offices)
6. Facilitate access to private and public sector industry advisors. (Suggested lead: OMAF/MMA; Suggested participants: local and regional 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.

Proposed Actions:

7. Create a GTA Agricultural Action Committee (GTA AAC) to provide a coordinating function for agriculture in the GTA, share information, raise awareness of issues, act as liaison with the three levels of governments, and encourage innovation and diversification within the industry. (Suggested lead: Federations of Agriculture; Suggested participants: all major implementers of the GTA Agricultural Action Plan including OMAF/MMA, municipalities and industry experts)

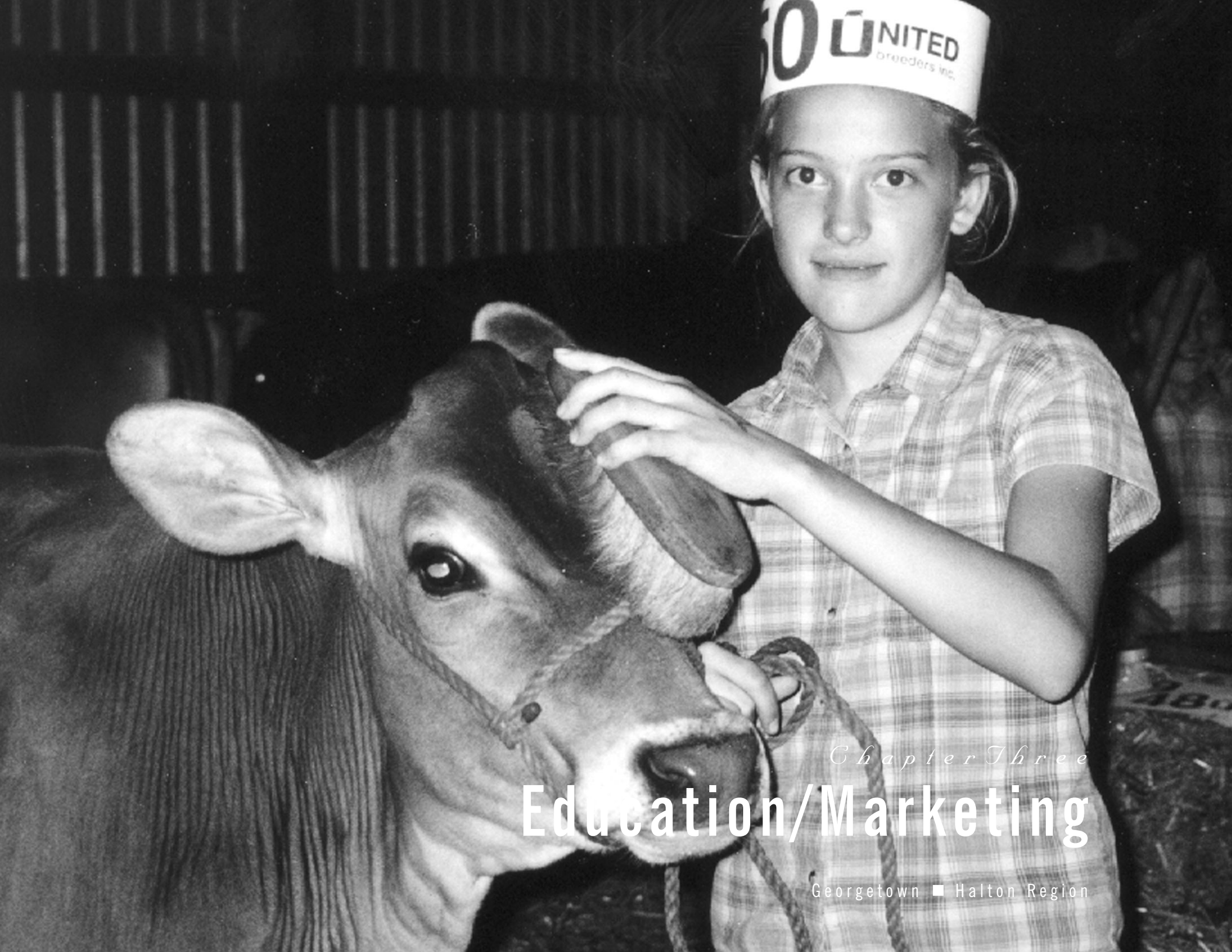
8. Raise awareness of funding opportunities for GTA agri-businesses to capitalize on the local urban market. (Suggested lead: GTA AAC; Suggested participants: OMAF/MMA, financial institutions, funding agencies such as the Agricultural Adaptation Council)
9. Provide for dedicated agricultural economic 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. (Suggested lead: local and regional economic development officers; Suggested participants: 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.

Proposed Actions:

10. GTA municipalities and the agricultural industry need to collaborate to lobby the Ontario Ministry of Finance for fair farmland and value-added tax assessment. Tax incentives should be considered to reduce speculation in urban fringe areas. (Suggested lead: agricultural industry; Suggested participants: Ministry of Finance, local and regional GTA municipalities; Municipal Property Assessment Corporation)
11. Municipalities should consider taking advantage of the flexibility they have to reduce farmland assessment. (Suggested lead: Regional and Local Municipalities; Suggested participants: Municipal Property Assessment Corporation, GTA AAC)



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 and delivered in a unified message to key decision makers and those who carry influence within agriculture and associated industries, such as food processors and food retailers. A strategic, strong and specific effort is needed to raise awareness about the wants, needs and capabilities of the industry and 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. It should also address the farm succession issues.

The aims of an agricultural **education and marketing strategy** are 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, as a means of expanding 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 Education of Decision Makers

Affecting change to promote a healthy agricultural industry in the GTA requires the articulation of well-crafted messages given to decision-makers whom are willing to listen. It is perhaps self-evident that there are many interests competing for the attention of the same groups of influencers, which underscores the importance of a unified and clear expression of the industry's wants, needs and capabilities. The question of identifying the key decision-makers, in and of itself, is one that demands careful analysis. 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, 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 living in an agricultural area.

It becomes apparent that between the producer of agriculture products and services and the consumers lay a host of stakeholders that influence the producers' ability to deliver the goods to the consumer. Educating decision-makers begins with some basic understanding of who the decision makers are, what is currently being done with the decision makers and by whom, and where the gaps are that need to be addressed in a comprehensive and strategic approach.

Proposed Actions

12. Identify and compile key contacts and staff within each level of government and/or agency as key decision makers within their organization. (Suggested lead: OFA; Suggested participants: Province, Regions, financial institutions, processors, retailers)
13. Develop specific communication strategies to reach each decision maker. (Suggested 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. (Suggested lead: Provincial and County Federations of Agriculture; Suggested Participants: young farmers, educational institutions)

3.2.2 Co-ordination of Education and Marketing Efforts

The agricultural industry has many successful education tools and marketing campaigns. There are also many sectors within the industry that do not have 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.

Proposed Actions

15. Develop a comprehensive inventory of marketing programs and initiatives, organizations and education curriculum. (Suggested lead: GTA AAC; Suggested participants: commodity groups, local economic development officers, Province)
16. Produce a Best Practices document for use throughout the agriculture industry. (Suggested lead: GTA AAC; Suggested participants: commodity groups, Province, young farmers)
17. Create a forum to facilitate alliances among the different sectors in the agriculture industry as well as with outside agencies such as school boards. (Suggested lead: GTA AAC; Suggested participants: Regions/Toronto, local and regional economic development officers, commodity groups)

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. Another example of the impact on the cultural diversification is seen in the way that literature, which has typically been produced in English only and found in traditional media outlets, represents lost opportunities to capture the changing consumer groups.

Proposed Actions

18. Develop a GTA population profile to identify the emerging consumer groups. (Suggested lead: Regions/Toronto; Suggested participants: Provincial government, county and provincial Federations of Agriculture, educational institutions)
19. Using the population profile, develop a suite of new marketing techniques that will capture the different consumer groups e.g. use of different languages and media outlets. (Suggested lead: GTA AAC; Suggested participants: local and regional economic development offices, Regions/Toronto, ethnic media representatives, educational institutions)
20. Investigate new market opportunities created by diversity. (Suggested lead: Federation of Agriculture; Suggested participants: Province, local and regional economic development officers, Regions/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 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 may trigger the need for earlier planning.

Proposed Actions

21. Conduct and promote workshops and other educational opportunities to address the 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. (Suggested lead: OMAF and local or regional business development offices)
22. Provide GTA relevant farm succession educational opportunities. (Suggested lead: OMAF, Centre for Family Farm Succession & Canadian Farm Business Management Council)



Chapter Four

Land Use Policy

City of Toronto

4.1 BACKGROUND

As a non-renewable resource, there is only one chance to save GTA agricultural land. For all intents and purposes, once converted to another use, agricultural land is permanently lost. Retaining and growing agriculture in the GTA depends on economic factors and education (discussed in Sections 2 and 3), as well as the ability to protect the land base. This section focuses on the ways of achieving the latter.

4.2 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Many of the proposed land use directions will require local and regional Councils to make a commitment to implement the GTA Agricultural Action Plan. Generally, the regional municipalities can lead the way by developing upper tier policies, setting the stage for local municipalities to adopt local policies that conform. Municipal staff and the GTA Federations of Agriculture can support this through staff reports and presentations. A province-led workshop for GTA Councillors, Building Officials and other municipal staff will also help to build understanding of the importance of GTA agriculture and methods for protecting the land. Council, OMAF, and Federation of Agriculture endorsement of the Action Plan will lend credibility to the Plan. Additional directions are outlined as follows.

4.2.1 Protect the Agricultural Land Base

The 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. Many still feel that strengthening agricultural policies in the PPS is necessary to ensure that policies are consistently interpreted and upheld.

The GTA Regional Municipalities are fundamentally consistent in their Official Plan approach to recognizing the significance of the agricultural land base. All benefit from Agricultural Advisory Committees advising on 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 and minimize conflicts between farm and non-farm interests.

Urban policies focused on sustainable development or Smart Growth 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, almost 20% of all land on farms is in a natural area. Farmers appreciate the important functions of natural areas, but they are concerned about the impact of environmental designations on their land values. Many find it unfair that they are required to protect these areas for the public good without being compensated. This issue should be addressed in the context of societal, not just personal, benefits being derived.

	Ha (acres) of Farmland	Ha (acres) of Natural Areas Located on Farms ⁷
Durham Region	145,808 (360,286)	22,501 (55,600)
Halton Region	39,967 (98,758)	6,754 (16,690)
Peel Region	42,264 (104,433)	18,292 (45,200)
York Region	71,213 (175,965)	8,402 (20,760)
TOTAL	287,111 (709,442)	55,949 (138,250)

* numbers do not add up due to rounding

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

Proposed GTA Agricultural Action Plan

Proposed Actions

23. Promote urban development policies and programs that encourage compact urban development, give priority to infill and re-development, and retain firm urban boundaries. (Suggested Lead: GTA regional and local municipalities)
24. Increase investment in and promotion of public transit and travel demand management to complement urban development policies and enhance urban quality of life. The provincial government's suggestion that gasoline taxes be re-directed to provide sustained funding for public transit will help. It is recommended that the federal government follow suit by directing federal gas taxes towards public transit. (Suggested Participants: co-ordination and investment at all levels of government and the private sector)
25. 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. (Suggested Lead: OMAF-educational activities; GTA regional and local municipalities-consider removing rural severance provisions; MMA-PPS Reform)
26. 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. (Suggested Lead: OMAF has held workshops/training session in the past addressing these areas and it is recommended that these be restored; Suggested Participants: federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency, local and regional municipalities)
27. Guidelines should be developed through the Provincial Policy Statement review to strengthen the tests for taking land out of agriculture. Current approaches are too discretionary. (Suggested lead: GTA AAC to co-ordinate a joint submission from agricultural organizations and GTA municipalities; submission to be considered by province, led by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs)
28. Investigate and evaluate different approaches to protecting GTA agricultural land e.g. agricultural preserves, building on Markham, Pickering, Niagara & U.S. experiences. (Suggested lead: OMAF; Suggested participants: GTA regional and local municipalities and agricultural organizations)
29. 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. (Suggested participants: collaboration between groups currently promoting BMPs e.g. Federations of Agriculture, conservation authorities, OMAF, Stewardship Councils, Soil & Crop Improvement Association)
30. To protect farmland, assist the Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT)⁸ in becoming established, developing programs, and being supported by the province, municipal Councils and agricultural organizations. (Suggested lead: OFT; Suggested participants supporting the OFT: provincial and county Federations of Agriculture, local and regional municipalities and OMAF)
31. 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 payments⁹ for example. Promote the use of tax benefits to reduce the cost to farmers of retaining natural areas. (Suggested Participants: co-ordination between the Federation of Agriculture, conservation authorities, OMAF, Stewardship Councils, Soil & Crop Improvement Association and other farm groups)

4.2.2 Complementary Initiatives to Keep Farmers on GTA Farms

Municipalities are already implementing many policies and programs 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. The fact that the federal and provincial government can proceed with transportation projects even if they are at odds with local and regional goals is concerning. At the federal and provincial levels, the Agricultural Policy Framework and PPS Review respectively provide opportunities to bolster the commitment to agricultural land and farm viability.

Proposed Actions

32. 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 based on local circumstances. (Suggested lead: GTA local municipalities, supported by Regional policies)
33. Adopt policies to permit value-added and agri-tainment¹⁰ operations on the farm as these uses can increase farm income and provide an excellent opportunity to improve public appreciation of and support for GTA agriculture. (Suggested lead: GTA local municipalities, supported by Regional policies)
34. 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). (Suggested lead: GTA regional municipalities)

⁷ Numbers estimated by GTA Regional Municipal staff.

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

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 proposed Action Plan provides a framework that will lead to success by creating a sense of co-ownership among the many stakeholders involved in protection of the agricultural economy. Stakeholders in the industry will share the responsibility, decision-making and accountability for implementing the Agricultural Action Plan.

Support depends, in part, upon raising awareness of agriculture as an industry to be supported and enhanced. Decision makers and other individuals need to understand the needs of the farming industry and community, in order to provide the necessary deliverables and make informed decisions.

Various individuals, groups and stakeholders 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.

5.2 BROAD DIRECTION

5.2.1 Everyone Needs to Take Ownership

Government and the agricultural industry 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.

Implementation:

- Establish a GTA Agricultural Action Committee to provide facilitation and coordination between the different agricultural interests, and all levels of government and promote coordination and focus amongst these groups, in terms of the Action Plan implementation. This Committee would also meet regularly (twice a year) to review the Action Plan and assess progress.
- The GTA AAC would also report back to all stakeholders via a report card.
- Build upon the existing GTA Economic Development Partnership to enhance GTA agricultural economic development initiatives.
- Need to identify exactly 'who' the key government bodies and agricultural industry influencers are to move forward.

5.2.2 Responsibility Matrix

The table included in Appendix 2 provides a responsibility matrix listing all the proposed actions and responsibilities. This matrix will be discussed and refined at the November symposium.



Chapter Six
Next Steps

Town of Richmond Hill ■ York Region

6.1 IMPLEMENTATION

The Proposed 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 Policy to keep the GTA agricultural industry competitive.

The Proposed Action Plan has undergone broad consultation, through the GTA Agricultural Workshop held earlier in the spring, 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 brings together leaders in the various sectors associated with agriculture in the GTA to review the Action Plan, hear from their peers regarding this initiative and achieve a collective support and ownership to the effort.

To reinforce the notion that the GTA remains a major contributor to Ontario agriculture, it is important this GTA Agricultural Action Plan be endorsed by all three levels of government, the Federations of Agriculture, and the various sectors associated with agriculture. This endorsement will represent a clear public and political statement of the collective vision and goals of the GTA municipalities and agricultural industry, which will facilitate the implementation of the proposed actions.

6.2 BEYOND THE SYMPOSIUM - NEXT STEPS

NOVEMBER 22, 2003 - FEBRUARY 1, 2004

- opportunity to review and comment on Proposed Action Plan

FEBRUARY 1, 2004

- comments due on Action Plan

MARCH 1, 2004

- endorsement of Plan -by Federations of Agriculture, and government (Regional, Provincial and Federal) through Council/Board resolutions

MARCH 2004

- GTA Agricultural Action Committee, to coordinate the various actions and implementers

APRIL 2004 - APRIL 2005

- First year of annual monitoring of actions, with progress reporting to large stakeholder group



Chapter Seven

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City of Toronto

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Chapter Eight

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, Region of York 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, Township 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 PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN

	PROPOSED ACTIONS	WHO - AGENCIES / GOVERNMENT / INDUSTRY	HOW - IMPLEMENTATION
	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT		
	Define Economic Development Opportunities		
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	■ Suggested lead: Federations of Agriculture ■ Suggested participants: OMAF/MMA, GTA AAC Federations of Agriculture;	■ Capitalize on the strengths of GTA agriculture to identify priorities
2	Develop the potential for GTA farms to produce pharmaceutical, nutraceutical, bio-fuels and other specialty or non-traditional products	■ Suggested lead: OMAF/MMA; ■ Suggested participants: GTA AAC, educational institutions, private industry	■ Creating public and private partnerships is proposed to link government, academia, industry as well as other related players
	Promote Opportunities		
3	Meaningfully differentiate GTA farm products via Foodland Ontario advertising, and initiate an "Ontario First" priority to increase sales for locally grown products	■ Suggested lead: Foodland Ontario in partnership with provincial and country Federations of Agriculture and various farm fresh organizations	■ Political will is required at a provincial and local level ■ Coordination is required to provide a consistent GTA-wide approach ■ An accreditation body may be required for quality standards i.e. if Farm Fresh was to expand GTA-wide ■ Explore flexibility in local, smaller grocery retailers ■ Raise awareness that successful branding depends on achieving consistent quality and quantity outcomes according to market-driven criteria ■ Look at lessons learnt from other industries that can be used as templates to encourage agriculture to move from a 'volume & commodity' produce and supply mindset, to a 'value-based' market and demand business approach

APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN

	PROPOSED ACTIONS	WHO - AGENCIES / GOVERNMENT / INDUSTRY	HOW - IMPLEMENTATION
	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT		
	<i>Promote Opportunities</i>		
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	■ Suggested lead: Federation of Agriculture ■ Suggested participants: OMAF/MMA, commodity groups, financial institutions, GTA AAC	■ Web-based applications, forums or publications
5	Provide information on value chain management e.g. examples of existing value chains, how to establish them, accessing timely and accurate market information and potential investors	■ Suggested lead: OMAF/MMA; Suggested participants: local and regional economic development offices	■ Audit of international government-sponsored programs focused on stimulating commercial competitiveness ■ Audit of legislation that hampers business development - From that, develop a long term strategy that encourages and challenges industry to take advantage of (and adapt to) market developments ■ Ensure service providers have capabilities required to facilitate initiatives that enable individual commercial organizations to explore and new market-driven business approaches ■ 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 ■ 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 ■ Involve private industry in the development of infrastructure for new technologies

APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN

	PROPOSED ACTIONS	WHO - AGENCIES / GOVERNMENT / INDUSTRY	HOW - IMPLEMENTATION
	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT		
	Promote Opportunities		
6	Facilitate access to private and public sector industry advisors	■ Suggested lead: OMAF/MMA ■ Suggested participants: local and regional economic development offices	■ Audit of international activities related to this field. What can GTA learn from others? ■ Develop initiatives that encourage individual businesses to look "outside the box" and acquire new capabilities ■ Explore development-related funding initiatives looking beyond generic public good 'industry' level initiatives ■ Develop university level courses and research that encourage industry to explore new business models
	Coordination		
7	Create a GTA Agriculture Action Committee (GTA AAC)	■ Suggested lead: Federations of Agriculture ■ Suggested participants: all major implementers of the GTA Agricultural Action Plan including OMAF/MMA, municipalities and industry experts	■ Coordinate sharing of information, raising awareness of issues, liaison with the three levels of governments, and encouraging innovation and diversification within the industry
8	Raise awareness of funding opportunities for GTA agri-businesses to capitalize on the local urban market	■ Suggested lead: GTA AAC ■ Suggested participants: OMAF/MMA, financial institutions, funding agencies such as the Agricultural Adaptation Council	■ Materials/seminars that raise individual managers' ability to develop successful long term strategies and secure funds that can support these endeavours
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	■ Suggested lead: local and regional economic development officers ■ Suggested participants: Chambers of Commerce, GTA AAC	■ Provide individual businesses with the capability to identify, develop, implement, and manage such opportunities

APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN

	PROPOSED ACTIONS	WHO - AGENCIES / GOVERNMENT / INDUSTRY	HOW - IMPLEMENTATION
	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT		
	Taxation		
10	GTA municipalities and the agricultural industry need to collaborate to lobby the Ontario Ministry of Finance for fair farmland and value-added tax assessment. Tax incentives should be considered to reduce or eliminate speculation in urban fringe areas	■ Suggested lead: agricultural industry ■ Suggested participants: Ministry of Finance, local and regional GTA municipalities; Municipal Property Assessment Corporation	■ Long-term approach addressing taxes and related charges for new farm buildings, policies that may limit innovation or diversification on the farm, etc. ■ Consideration of tax incentives to development industry to entice development to urban areas
11	Municipalities should consider taking advantage of the flexibility municipalities have to reduce farmland assessment	■ Suggested lead: Regional and Local Municipalities ■ Suggested participants: Municipal Property Assessment Corporation, GTA AAC	■ Review of farmland assessment procedures and options
	EDUCATION AND MARKETING		
	Education of Decision Makers		
12	Identify and compile key contacts and staff within each level of government and/or agency as key decision makers within their organization	■ Suggested lead: OFA ■ Suggested participants: Province, Regions, financial institutions, processors, retailers	■ Need each agency/organization to appoint appropriate individual(s) with accountability, to participate in Ag Action Plan
13	Develop specific communication strategies to reach each decision maker	■ Suggested lead: GTA AAC ■ Suggested participants: financial institutions, processors, retailers	■ Grassroots programs like 4H & Junior Farmers can help bridge gap through farm tours, etc. to increase awareness in GTA ■ networking opportunities explored
14	Use the GTA Agriculture Profile Update as the basis for communication for the identified decision makers	■ Suggested lead: Provincial and County Federations of Agriculture; ■ Suggested Participants: young farmers, educational institutions	■ Need to advance respect of this important industry while dealing with massive growth pressures (e.g. through smart growth)

APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN

	PROPOSED ACTIONS	WHO - AGENCIES / GOVERNMENT / INDUSTRY	HOW - IMPLEMENTATION
	EDUCATION AND MARKETING		
	Coordination of Education and Marketing Efforts		
15	Develop a comprehensive inventory of marketing efforts, organizations and education curriculum	■ Suggested lead: GTA AAC ■ Suggested participants: commodity groups, local economic development officers, Province	■ Inventory completed
16	Produce a Best Practices document for use throughout the agriculture industry	■ Suggested lead: GTA AAC ■ Suggested participants: commodity groups, Province, young farmers	■ Document produced
17	Create a forum to facilitate strategic alliances among the different sectors in the agriculture industry as well as with outside agencies such as school boards	■ Suggested lead: GTA AAC ■ Suggested participants: Regions/Toronto, local and regional economic development officers, commodity groups, Federation of Agriculture)	■ Hold info sessions hosted by farm organizations like the OFA to build awareness ■ Link producers with grocers (large/small) ■ Identify applicable regulations
	Understand the Changing Diversity of the Greater Toronto Area		
18	Develop a GTA population profile to identify the emerging consumer groups	■ Suggested lead: Regions/Toronto ■ Suggested participants: Provincial government, county and provincial Federations of Agriculture, educational institutions	■ Profile developed & disseminated
19	Using the population profile, develop a suite of new marketing techniques that will capture the different consumer groups e.g. use of different languages and media outlets	■ Suggested lead: GTA AAC ■ Suggested participants: local and regional economic development offices, Regions/Toronto, ethnic media representatives, educational institutions	■ Exploration and inventory of marketing techniques that can be used to appeal to different groups
20	Investigate new market opportunities created by diversity	■ Suggested lead: Federation of Agriculture ■ Suggested participants: Province, local and regional economic development officers, Regions/Toronto, commodity groups, grocer industry representatives, educational institutions	■ Reality of rapid population growth (visible minority) ■ Look at needs/crops for new Canadians

APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN

	PROPOSED ACTIONS	WHO - AGENCIES / GOVERNMENT / INDUSTRY	HOW - IMPLEMENTATION
	EDUCATION AND MARKETING		
	Understand the Changing Diversity of the Greater Toronto Area		
21	Conduct and promote workshops and other educational opportunities to address the 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.	■ Suggested lead: OMAF and local or regional business development offices	■ Business management workshops and other educational opportunities
22	Provide GTA relevant farm succession educational opportunities	■ Suggested lead: OMAF, Centre for Family Farm Succession & Canadian Farm Business Management Council	■ Farm succession workshops and other educational opportunities
	LAND USE POLICY		
	Protect the Agricultural Land Base		
23	Promote urban development policies & programs that encourage compact urban development, give priority to infill and re-development, and retain firm urban boundaries	■ Suggested lead: GTA regional and local municipalities	■ Promote GTA Ag Action Plan to Councillors via staff reports and presentations to Council ■ Workshop for GTA Councillors, Building Officials and other municipal staff to facilitate understanding of importance of GTA agriculture and methods for protecting the land ■ Council resolutions
24	Increase investment in and promotion of public transit and travel demand management to complement urban development policies and enhance urban quality of life	■ Suggested participants: co-ordination and investment at all levels of government and private sector	■ Re-direct federal & provincial gas taxes to provide sustained funding for public transit

APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN

	PROPOSED ACTIONS	WHO - AGENCIES / GOVERNMENT / INDUSTRY	HOW - IMPLEMENTATION
	LAND USE POLICY		
	Protect the Agricultural Land Base		
25	Continue protecting a critical mass of high priority agricultural land through a strengthened PPS, together with municipal agricultural designation; prevent fragmentation of land by restricting or prohibiting rural severance policies in Official Plans	■ Suggested lead: OMAF-educational activities; GTA regional and local municipalities-consider removing rural severance provisions; Ministry of Municipal Affairs-consider PPS reform	■ Monitoring to track loss and fragmentation of agricultural land
26	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.	■ Suggested lead: OMAF has held workshops/training session in the past addressing these areas and it is recommended that these be restored; Suggested participants: federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency, local and regional municipalities)	■ Promote GTA Ag Action Plan to Councillors via staff reports and presentations to Council; ■ Workshop for GTA Councillors, Building Officials and other municipal staff to facilitate understanding of importance of GTA agriculture and methods for protecting the land ■ Council resolutions
27	Guidelines should be developed through the Provincial Policy Statement review to strengthen the tests for taking land out of agriculture. Current approaches are too discretionary.	■ Suggested lead: GTA AAC to co-ordinate a joint submission from agricultural organizations and GTA municipalities; submission to be considered by province, led by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs	■ Joint Submission/s to Ministry of Municipal Affairs
28	Investigate and evaluate different approaches to protecting GTA agricultural land e.g. agricultural preserves, building on Markham, Pickering, Niagara & U.S. experiences	■ Suggested Lead: OMAF ■ Suggested Participants: GTA regional and local municipalities and agricultural organizations	■ OMAF report
29	Facilitate farmer adoption of mandatory and voluntary Best Management Practices (BMPs) e.g. 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	■ Suggested participants: collaboration between groups currently promoting Best Management Practices e.g. Federation of Agriculture, conservation authorities, OMAF, Stewardship Councils, Soil & Crop Improvement Association	■ Co-ordination between farm groups and provincial ministries ■ Jointly sponsored workshops for farmers

APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN

	PROPOSED ACTIONS	WHO - AGENCIES / GOVERNMENT / INDUSTRY	HOW - IMPLEMENTATION
	LAND USE POLICY		
	Protect the Agricultural Land Base		
30	To protect farmland, assist the Ontario Farmland Trust in becoming established, developing programs, and being supported by the province, municipal Councils and agricultural organizations	■ Suggested lead: Ontario Farmland Trust (OLT) ■ Suggested participants supporting the OLT: provincial and county Federations of Agriculture, local and regional municipalities and OMAF	■ Promote GTA Ag Action Plan to Councillors via staff reports and presentations to Council; ■ Workshop for GTA Councillors, Building Officials and other municipal staff to facilitate understanding of importance of GTA agriculture and methods for protecting the land ■ Council resolutions
31	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 ¹¹ for example. Promote the use of tax benefits to reduce the cost to farmers of retaining natural areas.	■ Suggested participants: co-ordination between the Federation of Agriculture, conservation authorities, OMAF, Stewardship Councils, Soil & Crop Improvement Association and other farm groups	■ Stewardship program across the GTA ■ Promote GTA Ag Action Plan to Councillors via staff reports and presentations to Council; ■ Workshop for GTA Councillors, Building Officials and other municipal staff to facilitate understanding of importance of Agriculture and methods for protecting the land ■ Council resolutions
	Complementary Initiatives to Keep Farmers on GTA Farms (see Economic Development Section for measures to improve farm economics)		
32	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 based on local circumstances.	■ Suggested lead: GTA local municipalities, supported by regional policies	■ Secondary use policies and zoning considered across the GTA ■ Promote GTA Ag Action Plan to Councillors via staff reports and presentations to Council; ■ Workshop for GTA Councillors, Building Officials and other municipal staff to facilitate understanding of importance of Agriculture and methods for protecting the land ■ Council resolutions

¹¹ 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 PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN

	PROPOSED ACTIONS	WHO - AGENCIES / GOVERNMENT / INDUSTRY	HOW - IMPLEMENTATION
	LAND USE POLICY		
	Complementary Initiatives to Keep Farmers on GTA Farms (see Economic Development Section for measures to improve farm economics)		
33	Adopt policies to permit value-added and agri-tainment operations on the farm as these uses can increase farm income and provide an excellent opportunity to improve public appreciation of and support for GTA agriculture.	■ Suggested lead: GTA local municipalities, supported by Regional policies	■ Value-added & agri-tainment policies and zoning across the GTA ■ Promote GTA Ag Action Plan to Councillors via staff reports and presentations to Council; ■ Workshop for GTA Councillors, Building Officials and other municipal staff to facilitate understanding of importance of GTA agriculture and methods for protecting the land ■ Council resolutions
34	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).	■ Suggested Lead: GTA regional municipalities	■ GTA-wide transportation policies and programs to ensure safe movement of farm vehicles ■ Promote GTA Ag Action Plan to Councillors via staff reports and presentations to Council ■ Workshop for GTA Councillors, Building Officials and other municipal staff to facilitate understanding of importance of GTA agriculture and methods for protecting the land ■ Council resolutions (See Action # 24 for actions related to public transit)