

# Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2020 to 2024

Activities to date, December 2024

This is a high-level summary of activities undertaken.

## Goal 1: Ensure Kawartha Lakes maintains a supportive business environment where agri-businesses can thrive.

Strategic Action (objective)	Status	Activity Highlights
1A Enhance the agriculture and food concierge “Pilot” service provided by Kawartha Lakes economic development to:	Complete	Day-to-day Pilot Services were provided by The Economic Development Officer - Agriculture (EDO-Ag).
1A(i) Empower the pilot – Continue to develop CKL pilot project to guide agricultural businesses in development (single point of contact to support expansion, start up and investment)	Complete	Formal Concierge Program was offered through the Economic Development Officer - Business (EDO-Business). The EDO-Ag provided additional support and consultation for agriculture sector businesses.
1A(ii) Communicate funding opportunities	Complete	Funding opportunities were shared on social media and through the Economic Development Newsletter
1A(iii) Help navigate land use policies, regulations and by-laws	Complete	Through speaking opportunities, consultations and inquiry responses agri-businesses are provided guidance and understanding on land use policies, by-laws and applicable regulations.
1A(iv) Support business planning with farmers	Complete	Business planning workshops have been hosted by the EDO-Ag such as Farm Financial Planning, and by the KLSBC, and others and were promoted through email, social media and the Economic Development Newsletter.
1A(v) Succession planning support to ensure long term viability of agricultural production	Complete	Several workshops on succession planning were shared by email, on social media and through the Economic Development Newsletter. Plans are in development by staff for a Kawartha Lakes succession planning workshop to be held in 2025.
1B Together with Leading Livestock Genetics, host international industry groups and support international missions to continue to market Kawartha Lakes as a leader in livestock genetics with the aim to increase export sales.	Complete	Sponsored an educational Symposium, video training and Ontario Summer Shows. Leading Livestock Genetics has completed its work and shut down operations as the need for a collaboration of export breeders has subsided.
1C Partner with the Canada-Ontario Export Forum, and Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to host a bi-annual LEAP (Launch your Export Action Plan) Workshop within the region in partnership with neighbouring economic development offices.	Complete	Export Development workshops held by OMAFRA were promoted to businesses by email

<p>1D Explore the potential for a “Community Investment Fund” to be created by working with multiple investors (e.g. retired farmers, financial institutions, government agencies, business immigrants, etc.) which provides patient debt and equity capital for community economic development in the region, which can focus on value-added agri-food businesses as an investment stream.</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>KLBCDC offered a Value-Added Business Grant program. Invest Kawartha launched a new LEAP funding program to support not-for-profit granting.</p>
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## Goal 2: Enhance opportunities in value-added agriculture.

Strategic Action (objective)	Status	Activity Highlights
2A Provide support to develop on-farm markets and experiential agri-tourism, (how to expand/scale agri-tourism activities, funding opportunities, creating and help navigating modern policies and zoning bylaws).	Complete	Hosted agri-tourism workshops (OCTA) and Tourism developed the Knapsack Program. Consultations with on-farm marketers and agri-experience providers. Expanded Agri-Experience exposure in KCFF program. Coached & held webinars on On-Farm Diversification and related to land-use policies.
2B Promote existing commercial kitchen facilities in the City of Kawartha Lakes available to businesses for value-added processing.	Complete	Connected businesses with commercial kitchens in Kawartha Lakes as well as the Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre in Northumberland.
2C Explore further investment in Kawartha Choice FarmFresh and continue to support collaborative networks where producers, processors and distributors can exchange market information and improve local and regional linkages (relates to Action 10E)	In Progress	Expanded KCFF program with new website, formal social media program, greater public awareness through distribution of rack cards and promotional items for recognition of new logo and drive to website. Held Speed Dating Event, and successfully applied for RED funding to hold a 2-year project with local food producers and food buyers to scale-scale up to local food wholesale aggregation and distribution program in partnership with Peterborough and the Kawarthas Economic Development.
2D Develop a plan with goals and timelines to attract food processors and consumer goods processors to the area. Case studies to explore include Fairlife (Peterborough), Nith River Milling (Wellesley), etc.	Complete	Participated in Restaurants Canada Show and SIAL Canada Show in Toronto through the Ontario East Economic Development Commission to attract food processing to Kawartha Lakes, as well as to assist local food processing businesses in expanding their distribution networks.
2E Identify gaps in cold storage, distribution, processing and packaging infrastructure, and develop plan to support more efficient use and access to existing facilities.	In Progress	The aggregation and distribution local food wholesale project was designed to fill the gap in the local food value chain and expand opportunities for local food producers. Infrastructure and facilities will likely be utilized on producers' farms as the project continues.
2F Expand the Community Improvement Plan to other areas to include support for on-farm diversified and food processing businesses. Examples of success include value added agriculture in Norfolk County, Haldimand County, and Elgin County.	Not Yet Undertaken	Awaiting inclusion of provincial policies for On-Farm Diversified Uses to be included in Kawartha Lakes Official Plan and new Comprehensive Rural Zoning By-law to permit OFDU's on an as-of-right basis prior to engaging in discussions to expand CIP to include OFDU's
2G Create a land/property inventory as an up-to-date listing of all the agricultural lands and buildings available for sale or lease.	Not Undertaken	A very robust local agricultural real estate sector provides good connections in real time to available properties.

### Goal 3: Support agriculture and food education for students within Kawartha Lakes.

Strategic Action (objective)	Status	Activity Highlights
3A Conduct career days with agricultural sessions to connect agriculture and food business sector employers to potential employees showcasing the opportunity for career advancement pathways – with a focus on youth and underrepresented groups (i.e. Women, visible minorities, immigrants, etc.)	Complete	In partnership with VCCS, Fleming College, and funded by the Province of Ontario, held skills development training programs over three years to attract and train new agriculture sector workers including visible minority clients moving off of social assistance. Workforce Development Board produced a new Agriculture Career ladder. Women's Entrepreneurship training programs held by the Kawartha Lakes Small Business Centre and Innovation Cluster for agricultural businesses led by women. Supported co-op and job trial placement connections with local farms and agri-businesses for international students, and new agricultural workers from Skill Development Fund program.
3B Collaborate with school boards and local principals/vice-principals to promote the resources and programs available through AgScape and others to educate about agriculture and food workforce opportunities.	Complete	Agri-food education tours held by Lindsay Exhibition and Bobcaygeon Fair utilizing AgScape materials as well as local farmers and agri-businesses to educate about agriculture and workforce opportunities. Participated in hosting Breakfast from the Farm event at Lindsay Fairground to showcase agriculture and educate public of all ages.
3C Conduct farm tours for elementary and high school-age children.	Complete	Promoted Kawartha Farmfest event to schools for family-based farm-tours.
3D Work with local guidance councillors, school boards and principals/vice-principals to develop a more comprehensive Co-operative education or High Skills Major in Agriculture at local high schools and provide an opportunity to actively engage local youth with local agri-businesses.	Complete	Promoted and supported connections for St. Thomas Aquinas and I.E. Weldon Agricultural High Skills Major programs. Participated in Job Fairs and Careers Events at IE Weldon and St. Thomas focusing on agricultural career opportunities.

## Goal 4: Fill the gaps between the agriculture and food labour force and employers needs in Kawartha Lakes.

Strategic Action (objective)	Status	Activity Highlights
4A Find partners to explore an agriculture and food employee skills development program.	Complete	In partnership with VCCS, Fleming College, and funded by Ministry of Labour, held skills development training programs over three years to attract and train new agriculture sector workers including visible minority clients moving off of social assistance. Accessed funding to develop an Agricultural Equipment Operator training program at Fleming College, including the purchase of Agricultural Equipment Simulators to be used in the training for new operators. Accessed funding for the development of micro-credential courses in horticultural food production. Provided input as a community advisor to the Sustainable Agriculture program at Fleming College.
4B Provide training and support activities streamlining the hiring and on-boarding process for agriculture and food sector employers.	Complete	In partnership with VCCS worked with agricultural employers to develop job descriptions and shared on-boarding and training resources within the SkillsAdvance Ontario project and on an ongoing basis through Job Developers.
4C Partner with Victoria County Career Services (VCCS) to create an agriculture and food part-time jobs board and available labour pool to target recent retirees and other previously skilled professionals looking for part time work.	Complete	VCCS has an agriculture sector client services representative to directly support the recruitment needs for agriculture sector businesses and post available agriculture and food full-time, part-time and seasonal jobs. Career fairs at VCCS are promoted and supported through the Economic Development newsletter and direct email notifications including specifically agricultural and skilled trades roles.
4D Information sharing between local agri-food employers and secondary/post-secondary institutions on prospective co-op student opportunities (manual labour and skilled labour).	Complete	Connections by the EDO - Agriculture with program leaders and educators at St. Thomas Aquinas and I.E. Weldon regarding career days and sector opportunities directly with Agricultural High Skills Major participants and other students.
4E Develop a regional agri-food labour force strategy.	Complete	Workforce Development Board developed an agri-food labour force strategy for the Kawartha Region with input from local businesses and the Canadian Agriculture Human Resource Council strategy documents.

## Goal 5: Update Official Plan, comprehensive zoning bylaws and municipal policies to support agricultural development.

Strategic Action (objective)	Status	Activity Highlights
5A Update a clear definition, regulations and policies for on-farm diversification, value-added agriculture, and agri-tourism in municipal policies in advance of the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) so as not to delay implementation of updated bylaws within the new Comprehensive Rural Zoning By-law.	Complete	Participated as a member of the Technical Committee within the project led by Planning Division to develop a new Comprehensive Rural Zoning By-law (RZBL), combining former township by-laws and modernizing terminology. An Agricultural Development Advisory Committee member participated on Rural Zoning By-law Task Force. Limited provincial policies were included due to delays in initiating a Municipal Comprehensive Review. Some inclusions were permitted for farm production-related on-farm diversified uses (OFDU) supporting value-added agriculture and agritourism based on a fit with the current Kawartha Lakes Official Plan (KLOP). Additional inclusions may be possible with an upcoming update of the KLOP, along with updated policies within the Provincial Planning Statement 2024 (PPS 2024) and the updated Growth Plan.
5B Permit on-farm diversified uses provided they are compatible with, and do not hinder, surrounding agricultural operations.	Complete	Partial inclusions of on-farm diversified uses were added in the draft RZBL, however were limited due to the lack of current Provincial policies in the KLOP surrounding ODFUs and Agriculture Related policies. An update of the KLOP will be a future project led by Planning.
5C Ensure local by-laws do not restrict the development of local food systems including zoning to allow for farm marketing opportunities and activities that strengthen community food security and local economic development.	Complete	Through the development of the draft RZBL comments were provided by the EDO-Ag and ADAC to support the local agriculture and food systems and related zoning regulations to allow for farm marketing opportunities and strengthen community food security and local agricultural economic development. An ADAC member participated on the Rural Zoning By-law Task Force. The Kawartha Lakes Food Coalition continued Food Security Working Group activities including reporting efforts regularly to Council.
5D Clearly identify permitted agricultural and agriculture-related uses, as well as on-farm diversified uses in agricultural zones in municipal policies and the comprehensive rural zoning by-law (use 2014 Provincial Policy Statement definitions of agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses).	In Progress	Limited inclusions for On-farm Diversified Uses were added to the new draft RZBL due to limited provisions in the original KLOP. Updates to KLOP to address the full inclusion of modern PPS definitions and policies for Agriculture Related Uses and On-Farm Diversified Uses and the resulting Zoning By-law provisions have not been undertaken by the Planning Division to date but are planned as future projects.
5E Protect agricultural land by supporting edge planning policies. Where high quality farmland is close to areas of concentrated growth use Edge Planning and Agricultural Impact Assessments to achieve compatibility between these two uses, edge planning and ensure the two can co-exist.	Complete	Active commenting is provided by the EDO-Ag for all planning applications on agricultural land to protect and preserve for agricultural uses, restricting non-agricultural uses where they impact agricultural uses or remove prime agricultural and rural lands from agricultural production. Where development is permitted, edge planning principals are recommended to mitigate impact and reduce potential for conflicts between opposing uses.

<p>5F Continue to co-ordinate annual VIP agricultural tour for City of Kawartha Lakes staff and agency partners involved with agriculture and food businesses.</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>The ADAC and Kawartha Lakes Haliburton Federation of Agriculture partner in delivering the annual VIP Agricultural Tour for members of Council, staff and local agencies to educate on agricultural businesses in the community and provide a forum to discuss issues.</p>
<p>5G Actively seek input from ADAC on municipal policies, regulations, and activities impacting agriculture to ensure sustainable local planning decisions.</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>ADAC provided comment to Council and staff regarding Cannabis Zoning By-law, Backyard Chickens, Aerial Spraying, Wild Parsnip, Wild Pigs, Rural Comprehensive Zoning By-Law drafts, Deadstock Disposal, Ministerial Zoning Orders, Drainage and Ditching, Avian Influenza, Provincial Policy Statement proposed changes, Roadside Cropping, draft Tree Preservation By-laws, road infrastructure for modern farm equipment, draft corporate strategic plans and a call for changes to the Cannabis Act.</p>

## Goal 6: Improve local infrastructure

Strategic Action (objective)	Status	Activity Highlights
6A Review opportunities to improve understanding and support for tile drainage use by farms.	Complete	Included a stop on the VIP Agricultural Tour in 2023 to review an active drainage clean-out project, as well as several drive-by reviews over the years to see agricultural drains in various parts of Kawartha Lakes. Invited KL Drainage Superintendent to participate at the East Central Farm Show to expand access to local farmers, and increase understanding of support for drainage systems.
6B Work with regional partners and governments to promote the importance of increasing access to natural gas, broadband and cellular expansion.	Complete	Council support for natural gas projects in Fenelon Falls, Bobcaygeon and Omemee with some projects complete and some still in-progress, and participation in Eastern Ontario Regional Network as well as local project implementation for expansion of broadband and cellular coverage and addition of infrastructure such as fibre and reception towers.
6C Continue to support rural infrastructure projects and apply for municipal infrastructure funding.	Complete	Bridge reconstruction projects on River Road, St. Mary's Road, downtown redevelopment for Bobcaygeon, Coboconk, Fenelon Falls, and Omemee, intersection redevelopment at Duke Street in Bobcaygeon, and Hwy 7 from Omemee to Lindsay, are some of the infrastructure projects undertaken or in-progress. Robust efforts to create five-year (and longer) plans for redevelopment of road infrastructure undertaken by Engineering and Assets Department.
6D Strengthen the formal engagement policy for City staff to use when planning roads and other infrastructure development (i.e. bridges and municipal drains) to ensure agri-business needs are understood and accommodated by including a referral to ADAC.	In Progress	ADAC members have had discussions with Engineering staff regarding expanded communications on reconstruction projects impacting movement of farm equipment on roads, and my lead to possible guidelines to include in future road infrastructure projects.



## Goal 7: Enact tax policies that support agricultural development

Strategic Action (objective)	Status	Activity Highlights
7A Maintain a by-law with exemption from development charges for all new on-farm structures.	Not Yet Undertaken	Maintained existing exemptions.
7B Continue to monitor provincial trends and the local needs of agriculture to discover best practices related to the farm tax ratio of the residential tax rate.	Complete	KLHFA provided delegations and communications to council in support of reducing the Farm Tax Ratio. No actions were taken by Council.
7C Consider passing a resolution supporting OFA policy on taxation for buildings used for value-added agriculture.	Not Yet Undertaken	Not yet undertaken due to delays in implementation of updated KLOP and RZBL with regard to related PPS provisions.

## Goal 8: Streamline planning and building application processes for agri-businesses in Kawartha Lakes

Strategic Action (objective)	Status	Activity Highlights
<p>8A Within the development of the Comprehensive Rural Zoning Bylaw, ensure that clear language is used to define what non-agricultural activities are permitted as-of-right on agricultural lands within the agricultural system and which uses will require a public application/comment process to remove ambiguity which can cause unnecessary delays.</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>Comments provided by Ag EDO and ADAC on drafts of RZBL to clarify as-of-right provisions, modernized definitions, however full implementation of PPS provisions and definitions cannot be included until updates to KLOP are undertaken. Updates to Provincial land-use application rules for municipalities have strengthened requirements for prompt processing of applications. Continued use of a Preconsultation process assists in providing clear feedback to development proponents on requirements, costs and timelines for their planned projects. Commenting by Ag EDO provides guidance on development project related to agri-business or on agricultural lands. ADAC member participated on Rural Zoning By-law Task Force.</p>
<p>8B Consult with ADAC and local agriculture businesses to determine ways to streamline processes relating to regulations on building permits, development applications, fill permits, etc. and drainage ditch maintenance.</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>ADAC member participated on Planning Approval Task Force to provide input from an agri-business perspective. Numerous process updates were developed and implemented by the Planning, Building, and Engineering Divisions. EDO-Business developed a Concierge Program to fast-track new large developments through the development process. The sector Pilot program continues to direct inquires to sector leads for prompt sector-specific assistance. A Site Alteration By-law was developed by EDO-EDO, By-Law, Planning and Engineering staff, which provides clarity on agricultural exemptions, definitions and permit requirements for all types of site alterations. The Drainage Superintendent position is maintained and oversees new drainage and drain clean-out projects as petitions come forward, as well as being available for consultations with farmland owners on drainage matters. The Drainage Board is maintained and meets as needed on drainage applications with strong representation from the agricultural sector as Board Members.</p>
<p>8C Adopt a 'continuous improvement' approach to implementing future bylaw, planning and permitting processes to ensure a streamlined process. For example, when new by-laws and/or policies are put in place, a review of how agriculture and food businesses will interact with it will be conducted to ensure streamlined processes.</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>Active participation by EDO-Ag and ADAC in developing, reviewing and commenting on new by-laws and processes related to agriculture ensures relevance and encourages ease of processes for farms and agribusinesses. As an example, municipal 911 signage for secondary field entrances will have a provision for farmers to do their own installation, reducing costs and possible timeline for installation services.</p>

## Goal 9: Empower the Kawartha Lakes business community to promote agriculture and food

Strategic Action (objective)	Status	Activity Highlights
9A Connect consumers to the Kawartha Lakes agriculture and food system by promoting culinary and agri-tourism experiences.	Complete	Enhanced Kawartha Choice FarmFresh program, branding, website, social media, print, and promotional materials within the updated Marketing Plan more readily attract consumers and wholesale food buyers to find sources of local food in the community at local businesses and farms. Connections to the Tourism website for Farmers' Markets, Eating Local, and Agri-Experience activities gives broader exposure. Switched to using the ExploreKawarthaLakes.com website and social channels for primary promotion of Kawartha Farmfest to tie to tourism and culinary attraction. Workshops and Knapsack program developed and delivered through the Tourism development program included agriculture, agri-culinary and agri-tourism businesses.
9B Continue to promote how Kawartha Lakes agriculture and food contributes to the environment, economy, local character, quality of life.	Complete	Annual activity summaries and census fast facts and infographics produced for inclusion in the Economic Development Newsletter and on the EcDev website, as well as sharing on the VIP Agriculture Tour, and at the East Central Farm Show.
9C Support the development of a Kawartha Lakes agriculture and food ambassador program to help local businesses champion the image/brand to ultimately help local businesses prosper.	Complete	Agri-businesses were represented in the Welcome Home and Ambassador programs developed by the EDO-Business.
9D Permit seasonal or 'open-now' road-side signage and other safety signage within the sign by-law. (i.e. A-frame signs, "Active Farming Area" signage, horse and buggy caution signs on high traffic routes, etc.)	Complete	Active Farming Area Signage were installed across Kawartha Lakes on arterial roads carrying high percentages of traffic external to the area to bring attention and caution for those unfamiliar with sharing the roadway with large modern and slow farm equipment. Additional signage installations were funded by the KLH Federation of Agriculture in subsequent years.
9E Support the development of local food procurement policies by CKL institutions to support farmers and farm businesses. Supporting local food production, consumption and procurement helps the local economy and keeps local dollars in the community.	In Progress	Municipal food procurement policies will be addressed following the establishment of the pilot wholesale aggregation and distribution so as not to create unsupportable demand prior to development of infrastructure and supply being available to meet institutional needs.

## Goal 10: Continue to develop a strong Kawartha Lakes agriculture and food brand.

Strategic Action (objective)	Status	Activity Highlights
10A Continue to produce direct to consumer marketing business support activities (i.e. social media, online and print marketing-Kawartha Choice FarmFresh)	Complete	Enhanced Kawartha Choice FarmFresh program, branding, website, social media, print, and promotional materials within the updated Marketing Plan more readily attract consumers and wholesale food buyers to find sources of local food in the community at local businesses and farms. Connections to the Tourism website for farmers' markets, eating local, and agri-experience activities gives broader exposure.
10B Develop a strategic plan to support and expand the Kawartha Choice FarmFresh program promoting local agriculture and food (includes details found in 2F).	Complete	Strategic Plan for Kawartha Choice FarmFresh Program in partnership with PKED developed along with details for Minimum Standard Operating Procedures and Marketing Plan. New website developed, social media program put in place with external contractor support, and expanded distribution of promotional marketing and advertising to increase exposure to local agriculture and food.
10C Promote farm market opportunities to consumers, as well as events that promote direct to consumer opportunities.	Complete	Farmers' Markets promoted through KCFF website and social media posts as well as market-specific signage. On-farm markets provided direct support with enhancing profile pages on KCFF website, as well as liking and sharing social media posts of member businesses by the KCFF social channels. Signage and promotional materials provided to drive additional customers to their businesses through the KCFF program and tourism website.
10D Explore capacity for local food market in the winter months.	Complete	Expanded fall, winter and spring promotion of local food available from members in the off-season as well as year-round, as applicable. Supporting business attraction, expansion and start-up for vertical farming operations through promotion of a workshop series produced by Durham and York for regional participation to enhance availability of fresh vegetables grown indoors.
10E Explore the opportunity to further develop a “Farm Bucks/Market Bucks” – redeemable vouchers for local farm or farmers’ market purchases.	Complete	Market dollars program available at Lindsay Farmers' Market.

## Goal 11: Strengthen the ability for the agricultural sector in Kawartha Lakes to mitigate and adapt to a changing climate

Strategic Action (objective)	Status	Activity Highlights
11A Support the implementation the Healthy Environment Plan to ensure the resiliency of the agriculture sector in Kawartha Lakes in the face of climate change.	In Progress	Monitored and shared reporting on greenhouse gas reduction activities from across Ontario in various agriculture sectors, as well as mitigation and resiliency activities available for water conservation and drought/flooding abatement, soil fertility and biomass, and other agricultural stewardship activities. The Planning Division hired a new staff position to focus directly on implementation of the Healthy Environment Plan.