

Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2020 to 2024 Report

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Agriculture and Food Cluster

Council has supported the development of the Agriculture and Food Cluster through:

- an Agricultural Development Advisory Committee,
- the position of an Economic Development Officer – Agriculture, and
- the implementation of the Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2020 to 2024
 - There were 52 actions in the plan
 - Most actions were enacted and completed or ongoing

Vision for Agriculture and Food 2024



The City of Kawartha Lakes agriculture and food cluster is a leader in the use of science and innovation, collaboration, education, and farm to fork excellence. The cluster is continuously improving and contributing to a healthy community, landscape, and environment

Overview of the Five objectives

1. Continue excellence in agriculture and food business development and support services
2. Enhance agriculture and food workforce development activities
3. Ensure that municipal planning, infrastructure, and regulations facilitate agricultural development
4. Continue to build the Kawartha Lakes brand by supporting agriculture and food
5. Ensure that agriculture and food businesses are equipped to adapt to a changing climate

Goals

1. Ensure Kawartha Lakes maintains a supportive business environment where agri-businesses can expand and thrive
2. Enhance opportunities in value-added agriculture
3. Support agriculture and food education for students within Kawartha Lakes
4. Fill the gaps between the agri-food labour force and employer needs in Kawartha Lakes
5. Update Official Plan policies, and develop comprehensive zoning by-laws and other municipal policies to support agricultural development
6. Improve local infrastructure
7. Enact tax policies that support agricultural development
8. Streamline planning and building application processes for agri-businesses in Kawartha Lakes
9. Empower the Kawartha Lakes business community to promote agriculture and food
10. Continue to develop a strong Kawartha Lakes agriculture and food brand.
11. Strengthen the ability for the agricultural sector in Kawartha Lakes to mitigate and adapt to a changing climate

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



1. Enhance the agriculture and food concierge “Pilot” service provided by Kawartha Lakes economic development: Concierge, funding opportunities, business workshops, application processes, etc.
2. 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.
3. Promote the Canada-Ontario Export Forum, and Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs export LEAP for jumping into exporting

Goal 2. Enhance opportunities in value-added agriculture

1. Provide support to develop on-farm markets and experiential agri-tourism,
 1. how to expand/scale agri-tourism activities, funding opportunities, creating and help navigating modern policies and zoning bylaws.
 2. Promote existing commercial kitchen facilities in the City of Kawartha Lakes available to businesses for value-added processing.
 3. 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
 4. Develop a plan with goals and timelines to attract food processors and consumer goods processors to the area.
 5. Identify gaps in cold storage, distribution, processing and packaging infrastructure, and develop plan to support more efficient use and access to existing facilities.
2. Expand the Community Improvement Plan to other areas to include support for on-farm diversified and food processing businesses.
3. Create a land/property inventory as an up-to-date listing of all the agricultural lands and buildings available for sale or lease.

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

1. 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.)
2. 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.
3. Conduct farm tours for elementary and high school-age children.
4. Work with local guidance councilors, 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.

Goal 4. Fill the gaps between the agri-food labour force and employer needs in Kawartha Lakes

1. Find partners to explore an agriculture and food employee skills development program.
2. Provide training and support activities streamlining the hiring and on-boarding process for agriculture and food sector employers.
3. 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.
4. Information sharing between local agri-food employers and secondary/post-secondary institutions on prospective co-op student opportunities (manual labour and skilled labour).
5. Develop a regional agri-food labour force strategy.

Goal 5. Update Official Plan policies, and develop comprehensive zoning by-laws and other municipal policies to support agricultural development

1. 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.
2. Permit on-farm diversified uses provided they are compatible with, and do not hinder, surrounding agricultural operations. Protect agricultural land by supporting edge planning policies.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Continue to co-ordinate annual VIP agricultural tour.
6. Actively seek input from ADAC on municipal policies, regulations, and activities impacting agriculture to ensure sustainable local planning decisions.

Goal 6. Improve local infrastructure

1. Review opportunities to improve understanding and support for tile drainage use by farms.
2. Work with regional partners and governments to promote the importance of increasing access to natural gas, broadband and cellular expansion.
3. Continue to support rural infrastructure projects and apply for municipal infrastructure funding.
4. 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.

Goal 7. Enact tax policies that support agricultural development

1. Maintain a by-law with exemption from development charges for all new on-farm structures.
2. 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.
3. Consider passing a resolution supporting OFA policy on taxation for buildings used for value-added agriculture.

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

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.

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



1. Connect consumers to the Kawartha Lakes agriculture and food system by promoting culinary and agri-tourism experiences.
2. Continue to promote how Kawartha Lakes agriculture and food contributes to the environment, economy, local character, quality of life.
3. 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.
4. 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.)
5. 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.

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

1. Continue to produce direct to consumer marketing business support activities (i.e. social media, online and print marketing-Kawartha Choice FarmFresh)
2. Develop a strategic plan to support and expand the Kawartha Choice FarmFresh program promoting local agriculture and food (includes details found in 2F).
3. Promote farm market opportunities to consumers, as well as events that promote direct to consumer opportunities.
4. Explore capacity for local food market in the winter months.
5. Explore the opportunity to further develop a "Farm Bucks/Market Bucks" – redeemable vouchers for local farm or farmers' market purchases.

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

1. Support the implementation the Healthy Environment Plan to ensure the resiliency of the agriculture sector in Kawartha Lakes in the face of climate change.

Next Steps

The renewal of the Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan for the period 2025 to 2030 is approved in the 2025 Operating Budget and on the Workplan for 2025.