

# Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2026 to 2030

## Growing the Agriculture and Food System

Draft Date: April 2026

### Acknowledgements

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## Land Acknowledgement

The City of Kawartha Lakes respectfully acknowledges that we are situated on Mississauga lands and the traditional territory covered by the Williams Treaties. We are grateful for the opportunity to work here, and we thank all the generations of people who have taken care of this land - for thousands of years. We recognize and deeply appreciate their historic connection to this place. We also recognize the contributions of Métis, Inuit, and other Indigenous peoples, both in shaping and strengthening this community and country as a whole. This recognition is connected to our collective commitment to make the promise and the challenge of Truth and Reconciliation real in our community.

## Executive Summary

The agriculture and food system in Kawartha Lakes is a connected value chain that includes primary production, agri-business supply and services, processing, distribution, and local food experiences. In 2024, the sector generated over \$216 million in farm receipts and contributes more than \$426 million of GDP to the provincial economy, supporting thousands of jobs.

The sector is diverse and resilient and while under pressure, has clear opportunities for growth. Kawartha Lakes has a strong and diverse agricultural production base, a well-established network of agri-businesses and services, and a growing interest in value-added production, local food, and agri-tourism. At the same time, the sector is facing real challenges, including farmland loss, labour shortages, limited processing capacity, infrastructure constraints, and complex development processes.

What was heard through engagement was clear. **Producers and businesses are ready to invest, grow, and diversify, but they need the right conditions to do so.** They can benefit from greater clarity and understanding of the approval processes, requirements and timing. Continued improvement of development application timelines, access to three-phase hydro, improved cellular and broadband services, and a well-maintained road infrastructure are aspects that can support sector businesses. Efforts to develop a stronger workforce pipeline, and increase connections between producers and local food through a wholesale value chain can address chronic limiting factors. They also value the interest of the municipality in understand the realities of agriculture and working together to enable growth.

**The Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2026 to 2030** is grounded in input from producers, agri-businesses, organizations, and community partners through surveys, in-person meetings, and targeted small group discussions.

What we heard from the input:

- Resilient and diverse agricultural sector exists
- Importance of sector promotion and community awareness
- Opportunities to grow through diversification, innovation, and local food promotion
- Need to protect farmland from development pressures
- Importance of the agricultural support ecosystem
- Importance of continued agricultural land stewardship and importance of climate mitigation
- Need to strengthen the local agri-food value chain
- Gaps in local processing and value-added capacity
- Challenges navigating regulatory and approval processes
- Workforce shortages and succession concerns
- Infrastructure limitations, including connectivity and servicing
- Long-term risks to sector viability

This Action Plan responds directly to that message. It builds on a strong history of agricultural economic development in Kawartha Lakes and reflects a coordinated, practical, community-based approach to supporting the sector over the next five years. It aligns with provincial policy, the Kawartha Lakes 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, and the 2025-2029 Economic Development Strategy, where agriculture and food are identified as a priority sector.

The Plan focuses effort where it will have the greatest impact. It is designed to improve the business environment, strengthen the agricultural system, and position Kawartha Lakes as a leading centre for agriculture and agri-business in east-central Ontario.

The strategic direction is organized around **five (5) goals**:

1. **Enable agri-business growth and investment**
2. **Support business development and value-added growth**
3. **Build a skilled and sustainable workforce**
4. **Invest in places that support agriculture**
5. **Elevate and support the agriculture and food sector**

These Goals focus on removing barriers, strengthening existing assets, and creating the conditions needed for long-term success. They are practical and achievable, leading to the vision which was developed from survey input and vetted within industry engagement meetings and discussions.

The vision for 2030 is: **Kawartha Lakes is a place where agriculture and food businesses invest and grow with confidence, supported by protected farmland, strong infrastructure, clear rules, and a connected local food system that sustains farms today and supports the next generation.**

The **outcomes** are equally clear:

1. Increased investment and business confidence
2. Stronger and more diversified businesses
3. Reliable and skilled workforce pipeline
4. Protected farmland and strong rural infrastructure
5. Recognized, supported, and coordinated sector

This Plan is also realistic. It recognizes that the municipality cannot act alone. Success will depend on strong partnerships with industry, organizations, and other levels of government. However, it also recognizes that municipal leadership is essential. The way the municipality plans, approves, coordinates, and communicates will directly shape the sector's ability to grow.

This Plan's approval sends a clear signal. It shows that Kawartha Lakes is serious about supporting agriculture and food as a priority sector. It demonstrates a commitment to being open for business in practice, not just in policy. It also provides staff, partners, and the industry with a shared direction and a clear set of actions to move forward.

The cost of inaction is also clear. Without coordinated effort, the municipality risks continued farmland loss, missed investment opportunities, and a gradual weakening of the local agricultural system. With action, Kawartha Lakes can strengthen its competitive position, retain more economic value locally, and support a resilient and sustainable sector for the future.

# Introduction, Purpose and Scope

## Introduction

The agriculture and food sector in the City of Kawartha Lakes is not only a significant economic driver, but also contributes to the overall quality of life in the region. The municipality contains over 277,000 acres of farmland used by 1,146 farms.

Beyond primary production, a variety of agriculture and agri-food related businesses call Kawartha Lakes home. The abundance of agricultural support and service businesses include input suppliers, equipment dealers, feed mills, insurance, legal, food processors, and distributors. Together, they make Kawartha Lakes a regional centre for agriculture and agri-business.

This sector creates jobs, supports local businesses, and cares for the land. It also connects people to local food and rural experiences. Agriculture and food production are foundational to the economy, landscape, and community identity of Kawartha Lakes. As the sector continues to evolve in response to changing markets, technology, labour dynamics, and policy environments, there is a growing opportunity to strengthen collaboration across the agriculture and food system to support long-term resilience and growth.

## Purpose

This Action Plan sets a clear path to support the agriculture and food sector over the next five years. It is based on input from farmers, businesses, organizations, schools, and municipal staff. It reflects what we heard through engagement, research, and industry review. The Plan focuses on a clear set of priorities and actions. It recognizes that success depends on shared effort between the municipality, industry, and partners.

The Plan aims to:

- Support business growth and investment
- Strengthen the workforce
- Improve infrastructure and services
- Increase awareness and value of local agriculture and food

It provides a framework to align efforts, build partnerships, and support a strong and growing sector.

## Scope

This is a community-based plan shaped by local businesses, organizations, and agencies. It aligns with the Kawartha Lakes 2024-2027 Strategic Plan and 2025-2029 Economic Development Strategy. The actions reflect both sector needs and available resources. The Plan focuses on areas where the municipality and its partners can make the greatest impact.

Together, these sections set the direction for the Plan. To understand where we are going, it is important to first understand the scale and strength of the agriculture and food system in Kawartha Lakes.

# Overview of Agriculture and Food in Kawartha Lakes

## Profile

Agriculture has long shaped the land, economy, and identity of Kawartha Lakes. It remains one of the largest and most important sectors in the community.

### Farms

There are 1,146 farms operating across about 277,793 acres of farmland, making it one of the largest agricultural land bases in East-Central Ontario.<sup>1</sup> Farms range in size from small to large, and are primarily family-run businesses, with an average size of about 242 acres. More than 1,600 farm operators work across the municipality, reflecting a strong tradition of multi-generation farming.

The local system is diverse. About 162,662 acres are used for crops such as grains, oilseeds, vegetables, and specialty crops. Another 65,678 acres are pasture, supporting beef, dairy, sheep, and other livestock. This mix helps manage risk and supports a wide range of food production.

Livestock plays a key role. Cattle and calves are among the top commodities, supported by strong pastureland and long-standing expertise. Grain and oilseed production, including corn and soybeans, is also a major source of revenue and supports both livestock feed and export markets.

### Agri-Business Services and Suppliers

Kawartha Lakes also has a strong network of agri-businesses and support services. In 2024, there were about 878 agriculture-related businesses, including crop and animal production, forestry, and support services. These include equipment dealers, feed and fertilizer suppliers, veterinarians, and transportation providers. This local network of businesses helps farms operate efficiently and adopt new practices.

### Economy

Agriculture is also a major economic driver. Farms generate over \$216 million in annual farm cash receipts. Leading commodities include cattle, soybeans, dairy, and corn. These activities support a broader agri-food system that includes agri-business services, processing, transportation, and retail. In total, agriculture in Kawartha Lakes contributes over \$426 million in Gross Domestic Product to Ontario's economy.

### Employment

The sector is an important local employer. About 3,395 residents work directly in agri-food industries in Kawartha Lakes. When broader impacts are included, the local production extends well beyond the farm gate, supporting 6,787 jobs across the Ontario agri-food value chain.

Farm structure in Kawartha Lakes reflects both tradition and change. About 79% of farms report less than \$100,000 in annual revenue. This highlights the importance of part-time farming, multiple income streams, and diversified operations. At the same time, many farms are adopting new approaches such as value-added production, renewable energy, and direct marketing.

### Expanding markets

Direct-to-consumer sales are an important part of the local food system. About 19% of farms sell directly through farm gates, farmers' markets, pick-your-own operations, and community-supported agriculture. These businesses strengthen connections between farms, residents, and visitors.

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<sup>1</sup> Additional statistics, data sources and definitions can be found in **Appendix 1**.  
Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2026 to 2030

### Farmland Loss

The sector also faces pressures. Between 1996 and 2021, the Census of Agriculture reports the total farm area declined by over 100,900 acres (26.6%). This reflects land use pressures and long-term changes in agriculture. Without action, this trend could affect the future of farming in the area.

### Innovation and Added Value

Opportunities exist to strengthen the sector through innovation, improved access to markets, value-added food processing, workforce development, and support for farm succession. Without ready access to tools which support those growth-supporting components, local agricultural businesses will be left at a disadvantage to businesses in other areas.

Together, these elements form a strong and evolving agricultural system that remains central to the economy and identity of Kawartha Lakes. To build on this strong foundation, it is important to understand how the full agriculture and food system works.

## How the Agriculture and Food System Works in Kawartha Lakes

The agriculture and food sector in Kawartha Lakes works as one connected system. It starts with farm production and continues through processing, distribution, retail, and tourism. Each part depends on the others. Together, this system creates jobs, supports local businesses, and supplies food both locally and across Ontario.

### Primary Production

At the centre of the system are farms produce a wide range of products, including cattle, dairy, grains, oilseeds, vegetables, and specialty crops. Primary production forms the base of the Agricultural System.

### Agricultural Services and Supply Businesses

Farms are supported by a strong network of local businesses. These include equipment dealers, feed and fertilizer suppliers, veterinarians, crop advisors, and transportation companies. Kawartha Lakes has hundreds of these businesses. Their presence makes it easier for farms to operate, grow, and adopt new technology. This local support network is one of the sector's key strengths.

### Food Processing and Value-Added Production

Many farm products move into processing and value-added production. This includes meat processing, dairy processing, grain milling, and specialty food production. Processing adds value, creates jobs, and opens access to larger markets. Although much of the food produced here is processed outside of Kawartha Lakes whatever can be processed here keeps economic activity within the community.

### Distribution, Wholesale, and Retail

After processing, products move through distribution networks. These include wholesalers, grocery stores, restaurants, and food service providers. Transportation and logistics businesses play a key role in moving products from rural farms to urban markets. This connects Kawartha Lakes to consumers across Ontario and beyond.

## **Local Food and Direct Marketing**

A growing part of the system is direct-to-consumer sales. About 19% of farms sell directly through on-farm stands, farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture, and pick-your-own operations. These businesses strengthen local food connections and give residents and visitors direct access to fresh, local products.

## **Agri-Tourism and Rural Experiences**

Agriculture also supports tourism. Farms offer agri-experiences such as tours, seasonal events, and local food activities. These experiences help diversify farm income and promote Kawartha Lakes as a destination for agri-tourism and local food.

## **The Importance of the Whole System – the Agricultural System**

When viewed as one system, from farms to food experiences, the agriculture and food sector supports thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in economic activity. The strength of the sector depends on more than farming. It relies on businesses and services, infrastructure and transportation, policies and planning, and market access and connections. For this reason, this Action Plan focuses on strengthening the entire Agricultural System, not just individual parts.

## **A Strong Network of Support**

Kawartha Lakes benefits from a strong network of organizations and partners that support the sector. Within the municipality, planning, economic development, and public works help create conditions for business growth. Provincial and federal governments provide policy, funding, research, and regulatory frameworks.

The sector is also supported by farm organizations, commodity groups, conservation authorities, educational institutions, and workforce agencies. Together, this network provides expertise in business development, workforce training, environmental stewardship, and innovation. It is a key strength of the Agricultural System in Kawartha Lakes. This connected system is supported by a strong local foundation and a wide network of partners. At the same time, it operates within a broader policy and planning framework that shapes how the sector can grow and evolve.

# **Strategic Context**

## **Background**

Kawartha Lakes has a long history of supporting agriculture and food as a key part of the local economy.

Since amalgamation in 2001, the municipality has taken steps to strengthen the sector. This includes maintaining an agricultural advisory committee and creating one of Ontario's first Agriculture Development Officer roles within Economic Development. These actions reflect a long-standing commitment to agriculture in the community.

In 2006, the municipality completed an Agricultural Economic Development Impact Study to better understand the sector, provide a baseline for economic development tracking, and guide future decisions. Since then, three Agriculture and Food Action Plans have been developed and delivered through collaboration with industry and community partners.

The review of activities from the most recent plan, covering 2020 to 2024, was presented to Council in April 2025 as staff report ED2025-005. It showed strong progress, with many actions completed and others ongoing.

## **Governing Policy and Guiding Strategies**

The development of this Action Plan is guided<sup>2</sup> by provincial and municipal policies that shape how agriculture and food can grow in Kawartha Lakes.

### [Provincial Planning Statement \(PPS\)](#)

At the provincial level, there are several guiding documents with the most relevant to this Plan being the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS), 2024. It provides direction on land use and development. It requires municipalities to take an Agricultural System approach, which means protecting farmland while also supporting the broader network of businesses and services that make up the agri-food sector. The PPS identifies a need to balance residential development with protecting prime agricultural areas for long-term use and provides guidance on permitted uses, including agriculture-related and on-farm diversified activities. It also outlines tools such as minimum distance separation and agricultural impact assessments to manage land use and support compatibility.

### [Kawartha Lakes Official Plan](#)

At the municipal level, the 2012 Kawartha Lakes Official Plan provides the policy framework for land use and development. It recognizes agriculture as a key part of the community's economy, identity, and heritage. The Official Plan supports the long-term protection of farmland, promotes a strong and adaptable agricultural industry, and encourages new markets, value-added production, and agricultural innovation. It also aims to prevent land use conflicts and protect the right to farm, while supporting education, employment, and long-term food security.

### [Kawartha Lakes Strategic Plan](#)

The Kawartha Lakes Strategic Plan (2024–2027) reinforces the importance of agriculture and food across several priorities. It supports business growth, investment attraction, and entrepreneurship, including within the agricultural sector. It also highlights the need to protect farmland and natural assets, and to strengthen collaboration, communication, and engagement across the community. The corporate Strategic Plan provides guidance to the Economic Development Strategy.

### [Kawartha Lakes Economic Development Strategy](#)

The Economic Development Strategy (2025–2029) identifies agriculture and food as a priority sector for investment and growth. It focuses on improving the business environment, including more efficient approvals processes and stronger business supports. It also emphasizes the importance of workforce development, infrastructure investment, and partnerships. The Economic Development Strategy provides a specific directive to create this Action Plan, as well as furthering the corporate directions of protecting agricultural land and supporting agricultural businesses.

### [Previous Plan](#)

The previous Agriculture and Food Action Plan (2020–2024) also continues to shape this work. Key areas such as value-added production, workforce development, infrastructure, local food promotion,

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<sup>2</sup> See **Appendix 2** for a full review of governing policies and strategies plus ideas for agriculture economic development.

and clear planning processes remain important today. These ongoing priorities are reflected and expanded in this Plan.

### **Review of Comparator Municipal Strategies for Agricultural Development**

A review of other municipalities across Ontario shows similar areas of focus, including business support, workforce development, infrastructure, value-added agriculture, and regulatory improvements.<sup>3</sup> This confirms that Kawartha Lakes is aligned with broader trends while also building on its own local strengths.

Kawartha Lakes is well positioned to move this work forward. With a supportive municipal leadership, dedicated Agriculture Development Officer, an Agricultural Development Advisory Committee, strong partnerships, and an active network of organizations and volunteers, the municipality has the capacity to deliver meaningful agricultural economic development initiatives. Existing programs and partnerships provide a strong base, while also highlighting opportunities to expand efforts in areas such as local food systems, investment attraction, and value chain development.

### **Review of provincial Agriculture Economic Development Guidance Documents**

The Ministry of Rural Affairs provides Agriculture Economic Development: A Resource Guide for Communities which identifies seven areas of focus for Agricultural Economic Development.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Capacity for Agriculture Economic Development**

Capacity to deliver suggested activities ranges from low to high based on the resources available to a community.

Low-capacity municipality:

- Current staff have little familiarity with the agri-food sector.
- Little to no budget is available to support agricultural economic development activities.

Medium capacity municipality:

- 1/2 FTE staff and/or some volunteer support.
- They have moderate experience and expertise in the agri-food sector.
- Moderate budget for carrying out some activities.

High Capacity:

- 1 or more FTE staff and active volunteers to support economic development activities.
- Staff have a wealth of expertise and experience working in the agri-food sector.
- Significant budget is available to support agricultural economic development

As a community with a twenty-five-year history of agricultural economic development, a full-time Economic Development Officer for Agriculture, and volunteers working both directly with the municipality and across many agricultural organizations, Kawartha Lakes can be assessed as High Capacity. The chart below, **Community-Based Programs to Support Agricultural Economic**

<sup>3</sup> See **Appendix 2** for areas of focus and actions derived from other municipal plans.

<sup>4</sup> Find the seven areas of focus and a suggested list of associated activities in **Appendix 2**.

**Development**, shows the general Kawartha Lakes status for items identified in the OMAFRA self-assessment checklist regarding past, current, and potential future actions.

This policy framework and local capacity provide a strong foundation for action. Building on this, the next section summarizes what was heard directly from the community and industry through engagement.

### Community-Based Programs to Support Agricultural Economic Development

<b>Agriculture Sector Support Activities</b>	<b>2026 Kawartha Lakes High Capacity</b>
Investment Attraction	✓»»
Export and Trade Development Services	✓»»
Agriculture / Local Food BR+E	✓»»
Regional Infrastructure (e.g., Food Processing Facilities, Grain Terminals etc.)	✓»»
Agriculture Community Improvement Plan	○
Agricultural System Inventory - Value Chain Gap Analysis	✓»»
Implement Local Food Procurement Policies	○
Agriculture Strategic Action Plan	✓
Implement/Update Agriculture Impact Study	✓
Develop and Promote Agri-Tourism and Local Food Initiatives	✓»»
Promote Local Agri-Business Innovations	✓»»
Regional Collaborations	✓»»
Food Charter	✓
Familiarization / VIP Ag Tours	✓»»
Agricultural Advisory Committee	✓»»
Stakeholder Engagement	✓»»
Agriculture Innovation, Research and Development	✓»»
Agri-Business Workshops: New Crop Opportunities, Value-Added Food etc.	✓»»
Community Leadership and Volunteer Development	✓»»
Agriculture Sector Community Profile	✓

✓ **Activities completed.** »» **Activities ongoing or with next steps** ○ **Opportunities for future work**

Derived from "OMAFRA's Agriculture Economic Development: A Resource Guide for Communities".

# Grow Agriculture and Food Success

## Cross-Cutting Themes from Engagement

A robust Engagement Plan<sup>5</sup> shapes this plan. Engagement included public information sessions with Table Talks to gather early input, a public survey, presentations and discussions. Additional discussions were held to ground-truth initial survey results and dig deeper on the sentiments received.

- 2 public information sessions with Table Talks
- 5 agricultural organization annual general meetings
- 2 board meetings of agricultural organizations
- 2 Wisdom Team Meetings
- 3 Agricultural Development Advisory Committee Meetings
- 4 Small Group Discussions

The following ten consistent themes emerged from the engagement.<sup>6</sup>

### A Resilient and Diverse Agricultural Sector

The agriculture sector in Kawartha Lakes is widely seen as resilient, diverse, and deeply rooted in family farming. Participants described a strong tradition of multi-generation farms and a willingness to adapt to changing markets, weather, and regulations. The mix of livestock, crops, specialty agriculture, and maple syrup production was identified as a key strength, supported by a well-developed network of local suppliers and services.

### Protection of the Agricultural Land Base

Protection of agricultural land emerged as one of the most significant priorities across the survey. Participants expressed concern about the ongoing pressure of residential development on productive farmland and real estate sales to non-farming landowners. Many participants emphasized the need for implementation of clearer, contemporary land-use policies with modernized definitions that clarify agricultural uses and opportunities for growth, minimize fragmentation of farmland, and ensure that agriculture remains a viable land use over the long term.

### Importance of the Agricultural Support Ecosystem

The importance of the agricultural support network was also emphasized. Local businesses such as equipment dealers, feed suppliers, and service providers make it easier for farms to operate and grow. This network is seen as a major advantage for Kawartha Lakes and a key part of the broader Agricultural System

### Need to Strengthen the Local Agri-Food Value Chain

Participants also pointed to gaps in the local agri-food value chain. Limited processing capacity, including a shortage of abattoirs and other food processing facilities, was identified as a barrier to growth. Strengthening local processing and distribution would allow more products to be handled locally and increase economic returns within the community.

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<sup>5</sup> The Engagement Plan is in **Appendix 4**.

<sup>6</sup> See **Appendix 5** For an in-depth look at the input received.

### Regulatory and Municipal Process Challenges

Regulatory and municipal processes were another common concern. Participants described challenges with zoning regulations, permitting processes, and long approval timelines. These issues can limit farm expansion, diversification, and investment. Businesses that invest time in understanding regulatory and land use processes, and the associated legislated timelines, can enable businesses to respond as markets and technologies change.

### Workforce Development and Succession

Workforce development was identified as another important issue. Participants highlighted the need for expanded agricultural education and skills development opportunities. Participants also emphasized the importance of supporting farm succession and attracting the next generation of farmers and agricultural workers to the sector. Access to skilled labour and pathways for new entrants were seen as essential for long-term sector sustainability.

### Agricultural Land Stewardship and Climate Adaptation

Agricultural land stewardship remains a shared priority. Farmers are managing increasing pressures from extreme weather, changing seasons, and environmental expectations. Participants expressed a strong interest in practices that support soil health, water management, and long-term sustainability.

### Opportunities for Innovation, Diversification, and Value-Added Agriculture

At the same time, there is optimism about the future. Many participants see opportunities to grow through innovation, diversification, value-added production, agri-tourism, and new technologies. With the right supports in place, there is strong interest in expanding and evolving farm businesses.

### Importance of Sector Promotion and Community Awareness

Participants also noted that the value of the agriculture sector is not always fully understood by the broader community. There is an opportunity to strengthen awareness, promote local food, and build a stronger regional identity around agriculture.

### Long-Term Risks to Sector Viability

While the outlook is positive, participants also identified risks. These include loss of farmland, rising costs, market uncertainty, labour shortages, regulatory burden, and climate pressures. Together, these factors influence decisions about investing, expanding, and modernizing operations.

### Overall Strategic Implication

The input gathered through engagement confirms that agriculture and food remain a strong and essential part of the Kawartha Lakes economy, supported by a diverse production base and a well-established network of businesses and services.

However, continued success will depend on addressing key pressures. Protecting farmland, strengthening the value chain, improving municipal processes, supporting workforce development, and enabling innovation will all be critical to future growth.

These themes highlight both the strengths to build on and the challenges to address. The next section outlines the key opportunities and priority areas that will guide action.

## Key Challenges and Opportunities

When looking at the input collected during the local engagement process, the following strategic areas of focus, identified in the Economic Development Strategy, presented both challenges and opportunities specific to the Kawartha Lakes agriculture and food sector.

<b>Area of Focus</b>	<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Opportunity</b>
<b>Setting the Stage for Agri-business Development and Attraction</b>	Development processes are perceived as complex, slow, and unclear. Businesses face delays in seeking approvals which may not have been anticipated, and uncertainty about requirements. Local food producers and buyers are also disconnected, limiting market growth.	Make approval processes simple and clear and predictable for businesses and provide training and facilitation services for those unfamiliar with development. Strengthen Kawartha Lakes as a centre for agriculture. Support business expansion, value-added production, and investment attraction. Improve connections across the value chain and advocate for reduced regulatory burden.
<b>Supporting Business Development</b>	Farms and agri-businesses face barriers to diversifying and growing. Smaller operations struggle to access funding and supports. Succession planning remains a concern.	Support on-farm diversification and value-added opportunities while ensuring protection of agricultural lands. Expand access to funding and business supports. Help remove barriers that limit growth and support long-term business continuity.
<b>Workforce</b>	Labour shortages continue. Employers struggle to find workers with the right skills. It is difficult to attract and retain younger workers.	Strengthen connections between employers and training providers. Build clear career pathways. Support youth, new entrants, and underrepresented groups to enter the sector.
<b>Investment in Places</b>	Infrastructure gaps, including limited access to three-phase power and poor cellular service, affect operations. Farmland continues to be lost to non-agricultural uses.	Invest in infrastructure that supports farm and agri-business operations. Improve connectivity and transportation. Protect farmland to support long-term food production and economic stability.
<b>Investment in Support Resources</b>	Capacity to deliver programs and services is stretched.	Strengthen coordination across the municipality. Improve communication and responsiveness. Align resources to better support the agriculture and food sector and deliver this Plan.

These challenges and opportunities highlight where action is needed. The following section, developed through engagement input, sets out a clear vision and goals to guide the future of the agriculture and food sector in Kawartha Lakes.

## Vision for 2030

The vision was developed from input and vetted within industry engagement meetings and discussions.

Kawartha Lakes is a place where agriculture and food businesses can invest, transition, and grow with confidence, supported by protected farmland, modern infrastructure, predictable rules, and strong local value chains that sustain farms today and will enable the next generation tomorrow.

## Goals: Focus for the Future

To achieve this vision, the following goals were taken from the summary of themes from the engagement and guide development of actions:

### 1. **Enable Agri-business Growth and Investment**

Create a business environment where agriculture and food businesses can invest, expand, and diversify with clear, predictable, and efficient processes that support investment, expansion, and diversification.

### 2. **Support Business Development and Value-Added Growth**

Strengthen farm and agri-business viability by supporting diversification, value-added production, and long-term business sustainability. Grow the agricultural system, including production, processing, market access, and diversification opportunities.

### 3. **Build a Skilled and Sustainable Workforce**

Develop a strong workforce pipeline by aligning training, education, and career pathways with the needs of the agriculture and food sector. Build stronger connections between education and training providers, and industry businesses.

### 4. **Invest in Places that Support Agriculture**

Protect farmland and invest in supporting infrastructure. Strengthen future farm viability through agricultural land stewardship and supporting adaptation to a changing climate.

### 5. **Elevate and Support the Agriculture and Food Sector**

Increase awareness of the sector's value, strengthen partnerships, and align resources to support growth and success. Improve coordination across the municipality and partners and elevate the profile and value of the agriculture and food sector in the community.

## Outcomes by 2030

With the Goals as a guide, the Objectives and Actions outlined below will lead to these expected outcomes:

### 1. **Increased Investment and Business Confidence**

Agri-businesses experience clear, timely, and predictable processes, leading to increased investment, expansion, and fewer delays.

## 2. **Stronger and More Diverse Agri-businesses**

Farms and agri-businesses are more resilient and diversified, with increased value-added production and improved access to supports and markets.

## 3. **Reliable and Skilled Workforce Pipeline**

Employers have better access to skilled workers, with stronger connections to education and training, and improved attraction and retention of talent.

## 4. **Protected Farmland and Strong Rural Infrastructure**

Agricultural land is protected in policy and in practice, infrastructure supports business needs, and farms are equipped to manage and adapt to environmental pressures.

## 5. **Recognized, Supported, and Well-Coordinated Sector**

The agriculture and food sector is widely valued and promoted, with strong partnerships, better coordination, and clear reporting on progress and success.

These goals and outcomes respond directly to the challenges and opportunities identified through engagement. The following section outlines the specific objectives and actions that will guide implementation.

# Achieving Goals by Actions

## Goals, Objectives and Actions

The following 5 Goals and related Objectives reflect the priorities identified through engagement, research, and alignment with the Economic Development Strategy. This is a shared plan, to be delivered in partnership with industry, organizations, and other levels of government.

Actions for consideration will be reviewed with community partners and municipal teams. Additional actions may be identified or some removed. They will be organized into an Implementation Plan, with timelines, partners identified, and performance measures to track progress and results.

## Goal 1: Enable Agri-business Growth and Investment

### Why is this Important?

Kawartha Lakes has a rich history in agriculture and food and is a powerhouse in east-central Ontario as a centre for agribusiness. The sector is profiled by a diverse mix of farm operations and a strong network of agricultural suppliers and service providers. Supporting new investment in the agricultural system can further strengthen the local industry, help existing businesses access new opportunities, markets, and reduce the need to leave the community to access inputs and services.

Agriculture and food businesses are ready to grow, but complex processes, limited coordination, and unclear supports can slow or stop investment. Creating a business focused environment helps reduce risk, speeds up projects, and attracts new investment while supporting existing operators. Businesses can invest, expand, and diversify with clear, predictable, and efficient processes. This strengthens the local economy, builds resilience in the sector, and positions Kawartha Lakes as a competitive place to do business.

**Objective 1.1:** Improve the business investment environment by making it easier to navigate supports and municipal processes.

Actions to Consider:

- 1.1.1 Develop an investment attraction program for agriculture and food processing to capitalize on the strength of the Agricultural System.
- 1.1.2 Support attraction and development of the Agricultural System by incorporating current provincial land-use planning definitions and policies for agricultural land use, such as Agriculture-Related Uses and On-Farm Diversified Uses, with appropriate balance to other non-agricultural provincial policies, into the new Official Plan and Zoning By-laws, where applicable.
- 1.1.3 Provide clarity on local requirements by developing a Kawartha Lakes Guide to Agricultural Impact Assessments following the newly released provincial Publication 861, Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) Guidance Document; a user-friendly, step-by-step guide to the application process; and a guide to responsible development in agricultural areas.
- 1.1.4 Improve awareness and understanding of conservation area regulations and permitting requirements by providing plain-language guides for common activities undertaken by agricultural landowners in Regulated areas.
- 1.1.5 Improve investment confidence and the customer experience by adopting a continuous improvement approach to mechanisms for application processing.
- 1.1.6 Encourage investment with clear, predictable, and efficient processes, plus priority support services for major agri-business developments with significant economic impact.
- 1.1.7 Simplify access to sector-specific services and supports by promoting a clear first point of contact for agriculture and food businesses seeking guidance, funding, and connections.
- 1.1.8 Improve understanding and compliance by providing plain-language guides, toolkits, and workshops on land-use policies, on-farm diversified uses, and agricultural impact assessments.
- 1.1.9 Improve development project readiness and reduce risk by offering early consultation services, making it easier to navigate municipal processes and supports.

**Objective 1.2: Strengthen financial and innovation supports for agriculture and food businesses and organizations.**

**Actions to Consider:**

- 1.2.1 Encourage innovation and business expansion by exploring updates to funding programs, including potential eligibility for on-farm diversified uses.
- 1.2.2 Support sector organizations and partnerships by promoting access to funding programs that assist with operations and program delivery.
- 1.2.3 Position Kawartha Lakes as an investment-ready community for agri-business entrepreneurship by strengthening and fostering relationships with innovation focused organizations such as Launch Kawartha, Fleming College, Trent University, and Ontario Centre of Innovation, and others.

**Objective 1.3: Strengthen the Kawartha Lakes agriculture sector brand to foster and attract investment.**

**Actions to Consider:**

- 1.3.1 Promote Kawartha Lakes as being recognized for being a centralized hub for agribusiness, having a strong history of farming, and community support for agriculture and local food to attract investment.

1.3.2 Stimulate vibrancy and agricultural community connections by maintaining organizational networking through the Agriculture Network of Kawartha Lakes (ANKL).

## **Goal 2: Support Business Development and Growth**

### **Why is this Important?**

Many local agriculture businesses rely on selling raw products, which can limit income and leave them exposed to market volatility. Expanding value-added production, processing, and market access keeps more value in the community, creates jobs, and improves business stability.

Supporting diversification and stronger supply chains helps build a more resilient, competitive, and locally integrated agriculture system.

**Objective 2.1: Strengthen the agri-food value chain by supporting businesses to do value-added processing, gain market access, and explore business diversification.**

#### **Actions to Consider:**

- 2.1.1 Increase local economic returns and reduce reliance on external markets by supporting the expansion of local food processing capacity, including meat and specialty processing.
- 2.1.2 Improve market access and business connections by facilitating linkages between producers, processors, distributors, retailers, and institutions.
- 2.1.3 Support business diversification and new revenue streams by providing guidance and resources for on-farm diversified uses, including agri-tourism and value-added production.
- 2.1.4 Strengthen local supply chains and reduce gaps by identifying and promoting opportunities in aggregation, storage, and distribution.

**Objective 2.2: Improve access to agricultural advisory services, information, and funding.**

#### **Actions to Consider:**

- 2.2.1 Increase local economic returns and reduce reliance on external markets by supporting the expansion of local food processing capacity, including meat and specialty processing.
- 2.2.2 Improve market access and business connections by facilitating linkages between producers, processors, distributors, retailers, and institutions.
- 2.2.3 Support business diversification and new revenue streams by providing guidance and resources for on-farm diversified uses, including agri-tourism and value-added production.
- 2.2.4 Strengthen local supply chains and reduce gaps by identifying and promoting opportunities in aggregation, storage, and distribution.

**Objective 2.3: Deliver partner-engaged, strategy-led sector and business development programs to support sector growth.**

#### **Actions to Consider:**

- 2.3.1 Strengthen business skills and improve decision-making by delivering training and workshops in areas such as financial management, risk management, market development, business planning, farm transition and succession planning, diversification, and value-added opportunities.

- 2.3.2 Expand wholesale market access and increase revenue opportunities by strengthening programs that connect businesses to buyers, partners, and customers.
- 2.3.3 Increase local sales and sector visibility by continuing and enhancing programs such as Kawartha Choice FarmFresh and Kawartha Farmfest.

Objective 2.4: Collect, review and present data to support evidenced based investment decision making for program development.

Actions to Consider:

Participate in sector data initiatives such as ConnectON Agri-Food Asset Mapping, and the annual Kawartha Lakes Business Count project to quantify the Agricultural System and identify strengths and gaps in the value chain.

- 2.4.1 Participate in sector data initiatives such as ConnectON Agri-Food Asset Mapping, and the annual Kawartha Lakes Business Count project to quantify the Agricultural System and identify strengths and gaps in the value chain.

### **Goal 3: Build a Skilled and Sustainable Workforce**

#### **Why is this Important?**

Labour shortages are one of the most immediate barriers to growth across the agriculture and food sector, affecting productivity, expansion, and long-term viability. Building a stronger workforce pipeline, through training, partnerships, and better alignment between employers and workers, helps businesses find and retain the talent they need. Investing in people also supports innovation, succession, and the long-term sustainability of the sector.

Objective 3.1: Identify workforce needs and respond with targeted strategies.

Actions to Consider:

- 3.1.1. Improve alignment between labour supply and employer needs by developing a regional agriculture and food workforce strategy.
- 3.1.2. Strengthen collaboration and shared solutions by establishing an Agri-Food Workforce Roundtable with industry, education, and workforce partners.

Objective 3.2: Build strong pathways into agriculture and food careers.

Actions to Consider:

- 3.2.1. Increase awareness of agriculture as a career by promoting local opportunities and career pathways starting at the elementary and secondary school levels.
- 3.2.2. Attract more youth into the sector by developing engaging career promotion initiatives that highlight real local examples.
- 3.2.3. Improve job readiness and skills development by supporting short-course training and work-integrated learning opportunities through education partners.
- 3.2.4. Strengthen connections between education and industry by expanding co-op, apprenticeship, and experiential learning placements in agri-food businesses.

### Objective 3.3: Expand the available workforce and attract new entrants.

#### Actions to Consider:

- 3.3.1. Grow the labour pool and support business needs by connecting new residents, underemployed individuals, and semi-retirees to opportunities in the sector.
- 3.3.2. Support workforce attraction and retention by integrating agriculture into local immigration and workforce development initiatives.
- 3.3.3. Leverage the attributes of Kawartha Lakes in skilled workforce attraction campaigns.

## Goal 4: Invest in Places that Support Agriculture

### Why is this Important?

Agriculture depends on access to land, infrastructure, and natural resources, all of which are under increasing demand by multiple interests. Protecting farmland, supporting stewardship, and investing in enabling infrastructure ensures the sector can continue to operate, adapt, and grow over the long term. These investments safeguard food production, support business confidence, and maintain Kawartha Lakes as a strong and viable agricultural region.

### Objective 4.1: Protect agricultural land and support long-term viability.

#### Actions to Consider:

- 4.1.1. Ensure long-term food production and economic stability by protecting farmland from conversion to non-agricultural uses.
- 4.1.2. Support informed decision-making and accountability by tracking and reporting on farmland loss over time.
- 4.1.3. Inform decisions to protect high-quality agricultural land from conversion to non-agricultural uses by considering a strategically planned Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) study as part of the creation of a new Official Plan.
- 4.1.4. Support farm diversification and agribusiness attraction while maintaining land protection by incorporating provincial policies and updating definitions for Agriculture, Agriculture-Related and On-Farm Diversified Uses into land use planning documents.
- 4.1.5. Reduce uncertainty and improve understanding and compliance by providing clear, plain-language guidance on land-use policies and requirements.

### Objective 4.2: Support agricultural land stewardship and climate adaptation.

#### Actions to Consider:

- 4.2.1 Complete a climate action strategy to guide actions for adaptation and mitigation efforts.
- 4.2.2 Improve soil health, water management, and long-term productivity by strengthening collaboration on agricultural stewardship initiatives.
- 4.2.3 Help farms adapt to changing climate conditions by providing access to information, funding programs, and connections to technical support.
- 4.2.4 Encourage adoption of sustainable practices by connecting producers to advisors, funding programs, and best practices in environmental management.

### Objective 4.3: Invest in new and maintain infrastructure that facilitates the sector to move forward.

#### Actions to Consider:

- 4.3.1 Improve access to reliable cellular and broadband services to strengthen the ability to use modern technology and equipment for daily operations and decision making.
- 4.3.2 Review municipal road infrastructure investments, maintenance policies and service level standards with a consideration for the needs of farm and agri-business operations.
- 4.3.3 Utilize the Agricultural Development Advisory Committee as a conduit to industry consultation.

## **Goal 5: Strengthen Leadership, Coordination, and Sector Profile**

### **Why is this Important?**

Strong leadership and coordination are essential to turning this Plan into real, measurable results. Without dedicated capacity and clear alignment across partners, opportunities can be missed and progress slowed. Investing in coordination, resources, and sector promotion ensures consistent support for businesses, strengthens partnerships, and positions Kawartha Lakes as a leader in agriculture and food.

### **Objective 5.1: Improve coordination and awareness across the municipality.**

#### **Actions to Consider:**

- 5.1.1 Use evidence-based decision making and make informed decisions that impact the industry by engaging with them.
- 5.1.2 Improve sector alignment by maintaining the Agricultural Development Advisory Committee (ADAC) and use ADAC more formally as a conduit to collect industry input for Council and Departments.
- 5.1.3 Improve service delivery and reduce barriers by strengthening coordination across municipal departments on agriculture-related matters.
- 5.1.4 Increase understanding of the sector among Council and staff by continuing education initiatives such as the VIP Agricultural Tour.
- 5.1.5 Partner with the agricultural organizations to advocate for provincial and federal programs, regulations, and funding that will help the local sector thrive.

### **Objective 5.2: Ensure resources and capacity to deliver the Action Plan.**

#### **Actions to Consider:**

- 5.2.1 Ensure dedicated capacity exists to provide knowledgeable agriculture and food business development services, coordinate partnerships, advance priority initiatives, and support agriculture-based economic development by maintaining a sustainable staffing structure to support sector growth and implementation of this Plan.
- 5.2.2 Improve efficiency and outcomes by reviewing workload, capacity, and opportunities for partnership, collaboration or third-party delivery.

### **Objective 5.3: Elevate the profile and visibility of the agriculture and food sector.**

#### **Actions to Consider:**

- 5.3.1 Increase community awareness and support for local agriculture by promoting the sector’s economic, social, and environmental contributions.
- 5.3.2 Strengthen the Kawartha Lakes agriculture and food brand by highlighting local businesses, products, and success stories.

- 5.3.3 Attract investment and talent by positioning Kawartha Lakes as a leading centre for agriculture and agri-business in east-central Ontario.
- 5.3.4 Build transparency and accountability by tracking, measuring, and reporting on progress and outcomes of this Plan.

## Project Approach

The development of this Action Plan followed a four-phase process. This work will be followed by the creation of an Implementation Plan in collaboration with partners, organizations, and municipal departments.

The project was led by the Economic Development Officer – Agriculture. No external consultant was used. This approach builds on long-term knowledge of the sector, experience from previous action plans, and strong relationships with farmers, agri-businesses, organizations, and municipal staff.

A Wisdom Team<sup>7</sup> was formed to provide guidance throughout the project. The team included representatives from across the agricultural system, including industry, organizations, agencies, and government. Their role was to provide input, review findings, and help ensure the Plan reflects the full scope of the sector.

### Phase 1: Background Review and Analysis

The first phase focused on understanding the current state of the agriculture and food sector in Kawartha Lakes.

This included reviewing past work, including the 2020–2024 Action Plan<sup>8</sup> and its outcomes. The review also included a broader scan of the sector, policies, and trends. This work helped identify key strengths, gaps, and opportunities.

### Phase 2: Engagement and Input

The second phase focused on gathering input from the community and industry.<sup>9</sup>

Engagement included public information sessions, a survey, presentations at agricultural organization meetings, and small group discussions. A project page was also created on the municipal Jump In platform to share information and collect feedback.

The survey was open to industry and the public for 47 days. A total of 68 survey responses were received. Input was also gathered from 349 people through 11 large and small group meetings with agricultural organizations, farmers, agribusinesses, processors, workforce agencies, educators, the Agricultural Development Advisory Committee, and municipal staff.<sup>10</sup>

This phase helped identify and confirm key themes, challenges, and opportunities, and ensured the Plan reflects real experiences and priorities from the sector.

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<sup>7</sup> The Wisdom Team Roles and Expectations can be found in **Appendix 3**.

<sup>8</sup> See <https://pub-kawarthalakes.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=fd41faab-913a-4bb8-9bde-cc4fbb9ecbb6&Agenda=Merged&lang=English> to review the staff report reporting on work done on the Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2020 – 2024.

<sup>9</sup> The Engagement Plan can be reviewed in **Appendix 4**.

<sup>10</sup> A summary of input and survey results can be reviewed in **Appendix 5**.

### **Phase 3: Action Planning**

The third phase focused on developing the goals, objectives, and actions.

Findings from engagement were reviewed alongside background research, policy direction, and comparator municipal plans. Draft actions were developed and reviewed with the Wisdom Team to ensure they were practical, relevant, and aligned with local needs.

The draft Action Plan will be presented to Committee of the Whole with a request for adoption. It will be shared with the Agricultural Development Advisory Committee, industry associations, agencies, partners, participants and the public through the Jump In project page.

### **Phase 4: Implementation Planning**

The final phase will focus on putting the Plan into action.

An Implementation Plan will be developed to organize actions into short-, medium-, and long-term priorities. It will also identify roles confirmed by partners and establish key performance indicators to track progress through 2030.

This phase reflects the shared responsibility of the municipality, industry, and partners to deliver on the Plan. The implementation will advance practical actions through shared priorities. The actions aim to improve the sector's competitiveness, support business development, address workforce and infrastructure needs, and enhance the visibility and value of agriculture and food, all contributing to the local economy and the vitality of the community.

## **Conclusion**

Following the completion of work under the guidance of this Action Plan in 2030, a summary report will be provided to Council. It will review activities and goals and objectives compared to anticipated outcomes. Additionally, there will be an assessment of potential next steps or ongoing activities to consider for the next five-year Action Plan.

## Appendix 1 – Statistics, Data Sources and Definitions

In 2024, 1,146 farms in the City of Kawartha Lakes generated \$216.14 million in farm cash receipts with cattle, soybeans, dairy and corn representing the top 4 commodities.

The \$216 million in farm cash receipts generated by Kawartha Lakes farms, supported over \$426 million in GDP and 6,787 employees in the agri-food sector from farm to fork all across Ontario in 2024.

Of the 878 businesses in Agriculture in 2024, only 82 had employees. There were 35 employees in 353 Crop Production businesses, and 36 employees in 455 Animal Production businesses. There were 57 businesses providing Support Activities for agriculture, and only 9 had employees.

Including the 1,146 farms with 1,610 farm operators (1.4 per Farm) actively farming 277,793 acres in total farm area, the average Total Farm Area per Operator is 173 acres.

### Statistics

#### Scale of Agriculture (2021 Census of Agriculture)

- 1,146 farms operating in Kawartha Lakes
- 277,793 acres of farmland in production (a drop of 100,899 acres or 26.6% since 1996)
- 242 acres average farm size
- 24% of Farms are under 70 acres of Total Farm Area
- 9% of Farms are over 560 acres of Total Farm Area

#### Economic Impact - Agri-food Value Chain (Farm, Food, Manufacturing, and retail) (2024)

- \$216 million annual farm cash receipts
- \$426 million GDP supported across the agri-food value chain
- 6,787 jobs supported across the Ontario agri-food system by Kawartha Lakes products

#### Agricultural Land Use (2021)

- 162,662 acres in crop production
- 65,678 acres of pastureland supporting livestock production
- 90,399 acres rented or leased in 2021 (Represents 33% of Farm Area) (same as in 1991)
- 199 acres average land in crops and pasture per farm
- 242 acres average total farm area
- 24% of farms are under 70 acres of total farm area
- 9% of farms are over 560 acres of total farm area
- \$66/acre rental rate
- \$2,423,645,895 market value of land and buildings
- \$8,725/acre value of farmland and buildings

#### Top Commodities by Farm Cash Receipts (2024 Total = \$216.14) (Millions)

- \$53.96 Slaughter Cattle
- \$31.43 Soybeans
- \$30.46 Dairy
- \$17.23 Corn

- \$10.78 Field Vegetables
- \$ 8.55 Wheat
- \$ 6.44 Potatoes
- \$ 6.20 Chickens
- \$ 4.17 Hay and Clover
- \$ 4.13 Sheep and lambs
- \$ 3.24 Nursery
- \$ 3.09 Floriculture
- \$ 2.42 Calves
- \$ 1.16 Hogs
- 32.88 All other crops, livestock and farm products

#### Farm Businesses (2021)

- 1,610 farm operators managing farm businesses
- 1.4 Farm Operators per farm
- 173 acres of Total Farm Area per Operator
- 31.4% of farm operators are female
- 3,395 employees of 20,110 (16.9%) of employees in Kawartha Lakes are employed in the Agri-food sector – Daytime (2021 Census of Population)
- 78.9% of farms generate less than \$100,000 annually
- 19% of farms sell products directly to consumers through farm gate sales, farmers’ markets, or CSA programs

#### Business Count by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) (2024)

- 7,949 businesses in Kawartha Lakes
- 1,090 businesses in Agri-Food
- 878 businesses in Agriculture Production - NAICS 11 (82 with employees)
- 353 businesses in Crop Production – NAICS 111 (35 with employees)
- 455 businesses in Animal Production – NAICS 112 (36 with employees)
- 57 businesses in Support Activities for Agriculture – NAICS 115 (9 with employees)

#### Data Sources:

- County Agri Profile: <https://data.ontario.ca/dataset/ontario-farm-data-by-county/resource/38051f51-7f00-4807-b47c-633579852698>
- Farm Cash Receipts by Crops and County: <https://data.ontario.ca/dataset/ontario-farm-cash-receipts-by-county-and-crop>
- Key Impact Statement: <https://data.ontario.ca/dataset/ontario-business-agri-food-and-farm-data-profiles-economic-impact-summary>
- MPAC Data by County: <https://data.ontario.ca/dataset/ontario-total-farm-area>
- Statistics Canada, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (2021) County Profiles
- Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture (2021, 1995)
- Statistics Canada, Census of Population (2021)
- Statistics Canada, Business Count (2024)

## Definitions

**Agricultural system:** means a system comprised of a group of inter-connected elements that collectively create a viable, thriving agri-food sector. It has two components:

- a. An agricultural land base comprised of **prime agricultural areas**, including **specialty crop areas**. It may also include **rural lands** that help to create a continuous productive land base for agriculture; and
- b. An **agri-food network** which includes agricultural operations, **infrastructure**, services, and assets important to the viability of the agri-food sector. (Provincial Planning Statement (PPS), 2024)

**Agricultural uses:** means the growing of crops, including nursery, biomass, and horticultural crops; raising of livestock; raising of other animals for food, fur or fibre, including poultry and fish; aquaculture; apiaries; agro-forestry; maple syrup production; and associated on-farm buildings and structures, including, but not limited to livestock facilities, manure storages, value-retaining facilities, and housing for farm workers, when the size and nature of the operation requires additional employment. (PPS, 2024)

**Agri-food network:** Within the **agricultural system**, a network that includes elements important to the viability of the agri-food sector such as regional **infrastructure** and transportation networks; agricultural operations including on-farm buildings and primary processing; infrastructure; agricultural services, farm markets, and distributors; and vibrant, agriculture-supportive communities. (PPS, 2024)

**Agri-tourism uses:** means those farm-related tourism uses, including limited accommodation such as a bed and breakfast, that promote the enjoyment, education or activities related to the farm operation. (PPS, 2024)

**Agriculture-related uses:** means those farm-related commercial and farm-related industrial uses that are directly related to farm operations in the area, support agriculture, benefit from being in close proximity to farm operations, and provide direct products and/or services to farm operations as a primary activity. (PPS, 2024)

**Normal farm practices:** means a practice, as defined in the **Farming and Food Production Protection Act, 1998**, that is conducted in a manner consistent with proper and acceptable customs and standards as established and followed by similar agricultural operations under similar circumstances; or makes use of innovative technology in a manner consistent with proper advanced farm management practices. *Normal farm practices* shall be consistent with the **Nutrient Management Act, 2002** and regulations made under that Act. (PPS, 2024)

**On-farm diversified uses:** means uses that are secondary to the principal **agricultural use** of the property, and are limited in area. **On-farm diversified uses** include, but are not limited to, home occupations, home industries, **agri-tourism uses**, uses that produce value-added agricultural products, and electricity generation facilities and transmission systems, and **energy storage systems**. (PPS, 2024)

**Prime Agricultural Area:** means areas where prime agricultural lands predominate. This includes: areas of prime agricultural lands and associated Canada Land Inventory Class 4-7 soils; and additional areas where there is a local concentration of farms which exhibit characteristics of ongoing agriculture. Prime agricultural areas may be identified by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs using evaluation procedures established by the Province as Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2026 to 2030

amended from time to time, or may also be identified through an alternative agricultural land evaluation system approved by the Province. (City of Kawartha Lakes Official Plan, 2012)

**Prime agricultural area:** means areas where **prime agricultural lands** predominate. This includes areas of **prime agricultural lands** and associated Canada Land Inventory Class 4 through 7 lands, and additional areas with a local concentration of farms which exhibit characteristics of ongoing agriculture. **Prime agricultural areas** may be identified by a planning authority based on provincial guidance or informed by mapping obtained from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness and the Ontario Ministry of Rural Affairs or any successor to those ministries. (Provincial Planning Statement (PPS), 2024)

**Prime Agricultural Land:** means land that includes specialty croplands and/or Canada Land Inventory Classes 1, 2 and 3 agricultural soils, in this order of priority for protection. (City of Kawartha Lakes Official Plan, 2012)

**Prime agricultural land:** means **specialty crop areas** and/or Canada Land Inventory Class 1, 2, and 3 lands, as amended from time to time, in this order of priority for protection. (PPS, 2024)

**Rural areas:** means a system of lands within municipalities that may include rural **settlement areas, rural lands, prime agricultural areas, natural heritage features and areas**, and resource areas. (PPS, 2024)

**Rural lands:** means lands which are located outside **settlement areas** and which are outside **prime agricultural areas**. (PPS, 2024)

**Urban agriculture:** means food production in **settlement areas**, whether it is for personal consumption, commercial sale, education, or therapy. Examples include, but are not limited to, vertical agriculture facilities, community gardens, greenhouses, and rooftop gardens. (PPS, 2024)

## Appendix 2 - Detailed Review of Strategic Context and Municipal Benchmarking

### Strategic Context – Detailed Review

The Agriculture and Food Action Plan and the work of agriculture economic development is guided by multiple layers of strategic policy, as overarching documents, becoming more and more specified, from provincial to municipal to departmental in their scope.

#### Provincial Planning Statement 2024

Through the Planning Act, the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) 2024 provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. As a key part of Ontario's policy-led planning system, the Provincial Planning Statement sets the policy foundation for regulating the development and use of land province-wide. Within the agricultural context we find general policies such as the requirement to use an agricultural system approach, based on provincial guidance, to maintain and enhance a geographically continuous agricultural land base and support and foster the long-term economic prosperity and productive capacity of the agri-food network. As part of the agricultural land base, prime agricultural areas shall be designated and protected for long-term use for agriculture, as they have the highest order of priority. The PPS 2024 provides policy guidance for permitted uses, including definitions for Agricultural Uses, Agriculture-Related Uses, and On-Farm Diversified Uses. Other concepts are provided for within provincial policies, including Normal Farm Practices, Minimum Distance Separation, Agricultural Impact Assessments, and more, with criteria for removal of land from Prime Agricultural Areas. In the economic development context, PPS 2024 provides Section 4.3.6. to guide supporting Local Food and the Agri-food Network. Planning authorities, such as Kawartha Lakes, are encouraged to support local food, facilitate near-urban and urban agriculture, and foster a robust agri-food network. This can be accomplished by taking an Agriculture Systems approach.

#### Kawartha Lakes Official Plan 2012

The first Official Plan for the City of Kawartha Lakes Planning Area was adopted by Council and came into effect in June of 2012. As a policy document guiding land-use planning in Kawartha Lakes, it includes policies to support the economy, growth management, the environment and more. Section 6 provides goals for economic development, to promote growth and enhance the industrial base, enhance and promote commercial activities to serve residents and vacationing public, and to enhance and promote tourism opportunities. Specific objectives for Agriculture include:

- a) Recognize and promote the agricultural sector and its sustainability for future generations to continue farming;
- b) Support a healthy and productive agricultural industry as an important element to the City's heritage, identity and its economic base;
- c) Prevent infiltration of conflicting uses that will restrict or hinder its expansion or flexibility on the agricultural community;
- d) Raise awareness of the quality of the agriculture and agri-business sector in the City;

- e) Recognize that sustainable agriculture allows for flexibility of production, strong, financially viable farms that adapt to market fluctuations and other factors that may change over time;
- f) Promote educational programs that provide training for agricultural leadership expertise and innovation;
- g) Promote the provision of skilled jobs and agricultural career opportunities in the industry as opportunities for younger farmers and new agri-business operators;
- h) Identify and explore the development of new markets, crops, agricultural products, value-added processing and value-chain partnerships, locally, regionally and internationally;
- i) Protect the right-to-farm without overly onerous restrictions; and
- j) Protect long-term food security for Canadians with an emphasis on locally produced food.

Within the Land-Use Designations of Prime Agricultural Land and Rural Land, there are also goals, objectives and policies to guide the development of Zoning By-laws with an eye to protection of agricultural lands while supporting growth and development of the agricultural resources.

## **Section 15. Prime Agricultural Designation**

### 15.1. Goals

- a) To promote growth and development of the City’s agricultural resources through a sound economic, social and environmental framework.
- b) Protect land that is primarily class 1-3 agricultural production from fragmentation, development and non-farm related uses.
- c) To protect prime agricultural lands by encouraging the business of agriculture, by providing for innovation and diversification within agriculture, by providing additional economic opportunities through secondary uses.
- d) Preserve and promote the agricultural character of the City and the maintenance of the natural countryside.

### 15.2. Objectives

- a) Protect prime agricultural lands from non-farm activities and ensure that non-agricultural uses and development is encouraged to locate within designated settlement areas.
- b) To protect and strengthen the agricultural community.
- c) Support farming operations as an important component of the economy, a source of employment and a way of life for many rural residents.
- d) Recognize farming as a vital participant in the protection of the environment and encourage sustainable farming practices.
- e) Encourage agriculture-related businesses on farms to strengthen the viability of the agricultural industry sector and minimize severances for non-agricultural activities.
- f) Ensure that there is not a disturbance caused by incompatible uses with agricultural operations or the new agricultural uses on prime agricultural land.
- g) Support the advancement of agricultural production and management.

## **Section 16. Rural Designation**

### 16.1. Goals

- a) To promote growth and development of the City's agricultural and natural resources through a sound economic, social and environmental framework.
- b) Protect agricultural land that is primarily class 4-7 for agricultural production from fragmentation, development and land uses unrelated to agriculture.
- c) Preserve and promote the rural character of the City and the maintenance of the natural countryside.

### 16.2. Objectives

- a) Protect agricultural lands from non-farm activities and ensure that non-agricultural uses and development are encouraged to locate within designated settlement areas.
- b) To protect and strengthen the agricultural community while permitting uses that would support the agricultural community and would not conflict with them.
- c) Support farming operations as an important component of the economy, a source of employment and a way of life for many rural residents.
- d) Recognize farming as a vital participant in the protection of the environment and encourage sustainable farming practices.

Although the protection for Rural agricultural lands does not carry the most stringent protections as seen in the Prime Agricultural Designation, the primary use in the Rural Designation will be agriculture in the form of ranching and forestry. Where farming uses exist, new uses that are compatible with and not hindering the agricultural use will be permitted. These could include uses that produce value-added agricultural products from the farm operation.

### [Kawartha Lakes Strategic Plan 2024-2027](#)

Central guidance for the development of the new Agriculture and Food Action Plan can be found in the Kawartha Lakes Strategic Plan 2024 to 2027, as well as specific direction on protecting and supporting agricultural land and agri-business, and enhancing communications, public education and engagement opportunities:

- A Vibrant and Growing Economy
  - Build economic development initiatives to support and expand existing businesses, attract new businesses and expand local employment opportunities
    - Offer business development programs to support the agricultural sector
    - Explore proactive options to encourage new business, repurpose existing spaces and promote entrepreneurship
    - Build economic development initiatives to support and expand existing businesses
    - Promote Kawartha Lakes as a tourism destination
- A Healthy Environment
  - Protect and preserve natural areas including greenspaces, waterways, parks, trails and farmlands
    - i. Protect and support agricultural land and agri-business
- Good Government

- Build a collaborative, supportive, inclusive and equitable community
  - i. Enhance communications, public education and engagement opportunities
  - ii. Collaborate with other community builders, partners and institutions

### Economic Development Strategy 2025-2029

The Economic Development Strategy 2025–2029 (EcDev Strategy), developed in 2024, includes a program focus to build a resilient and inclusive economy through investment attraction, business support, and community collaboration.

Within Priorities one and two of the EcDev Strategy, the focus is to stimulate investment and business growth and invest to support vibrant new and established businesses. Agricultural stakeholders emphasized the need for clearer processes, reduced red tape, and stronger support for the development of agri-food businesses and value-added agriculture. The EcDev Strategy prioritizes being investment-ready and business-friendly, including improving approvals processes, supporting sector-specific plans such as this one, and strengthening programs that help businesses start, expand, and diversify. This means that agriculture and food remain a priority investment sector; that there is a need for clearer pathways for farm-related development and diversification; and a continued focus on business supports. Suggested starting actions, potentially related to the agriculture and food sector, for vetting and careful consideration to include within this Action Plan could include:

- Improve the development approvals process, policies, and communications to welcome business investment and innovation.
- Support the development of employment lands and infrastructure for future business investment.
- Develop an investment attraction program, defining key sectors to focus efforts.
- Strengthen the Development Concierge Program.
- Continue conducting the annual Kawartha Lakes Business Count.
- Provide timely data online for businesses and cultural organizations, sourced from both municipal and third-party sources.
- Continue and enhance sector and program-specific data collection.
- Develop the Kawartha Lakes brand to attract new business investment.
- Strengthen and foster relationships with external organizations and agencies to position Kawartha Lakes as an investment-ready community.
- Deliver training programs and workshops for business and agricultural organization development
- Update and implement the Agriculture and Food Action Plan
- Support businesses to grow through business advisory services and 'piloting' businesses through the municipal development process.
- Collaborate to expand resources and services available in Kawartha Lakes to support the lifecycle of businesses.
- Partner with innovation-focused organizations to provide specialized resources to Kawartha Lakes businesses.

Priority three speaks to strengthening farm viability and available workforce, with the focus to invest to foster a skilled, sustainable workforce. Stakeholders identified labour shortages, skills

gaps, and challenges attracting young people and workers to agriculture. The EcDev Strategy commits to fostering a skilled and sustainable workforce through partnerships with education and workforce organizations, youth engagement, and talent attraction initiatives. For the agriculture and food sector this means developing stronger partnerships with Educational Institutions (elementary, secondary and post-secondary) and sector organizations; support for seasonal, specialized, and skilled agricultural labour programs and services; and promoting agriculture and food sector options to students as a viable, local, modern career pathway. Actions could include partnerships with the Workforce Development Board, Victoria County Career Services, Fleming College, St. Thomas Aquinas Secondary School, IE Weldon Secondary School and industry associations; promoting agriculture careers to youth and newcomers; and addressing needs for seasonal and specialized labour.

Suggested starting actions, potentially related to the agriculture and food sector, for vetting and careful consideration to include within this Action Plan include:

- Engage with key clusters to identify challenges and seek creative solutions to address opportunities.
- Develop partnerships with local First Nations and Métis Councils to advance economic opportunities for Indigenous people in Kawartha Lakes.
- Support the work of partners such as VCCS and other sector-based organizations to provide innovative solutions to challenges.
- Support businesses to invest in equity, diversity and inclusion including advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.
- Pursue a Local Immigration Partnership program.
- Continue partnering to facilitate connections between youth and businesses to educate about local career opportunities.
- Work with Fleming College and Trent University on youth retention initiatives.
- Identify opportunities to reach new residents.

Priority four speaks to protecting agricultural land and rural infrastructure by investing in places of economic activity. Stakeholders expressed concern about the loss and fragmentation of prime farmland, development pressure, and inadequate rural infrastructure such as broadband, cellular and transportation. The EcDev Strategy explicitly includes actions to protect and support agricultural lands, improve infrastructure, and strengthen rural places of economic activity. For the agriculture and food sector this means continuing and strengthening collaboration between Economic Development and Planning Divisions, securing support for and strengthening long-term protection for lands suitable for agricultural production; continued advocacy for improvements to rural broadband and cellular service coverage and quality; and ensuring the appropriate transportation pathways and logistics are in place to support day-to-day operation of businesses. Actions ultimately lead to a continued and strengthened agricultural community with available land recognized as the centre for agriculture and agribusiness in the East-Central area of southern Ontario.

Suggested starting actions related to the agriculture and food sector for vetting and careful consideration to include within this Action Plan include:

- Work with the Planning Division to update planning and development policies and regulations using an agricultural system approach to enhance a geographically continuous agricultural

land base to support and protect the long-term viability of agricultural lands, local food production, the agri-food network and on-farm diversified uses.

- Explore and engage in activities that support vibrant agricultural lands through agribusiness, primary production and value-added agriculture.
- Partner with organizations to support the protection and improvement of agricultural lands.

Priority five speaks to building stronger programs, partnerships, and leadership by investing in resources to support an exceptional program. Participants called for stronger municipal leadership support, better coordination between supporting entities, and a clearer agricultural voice within City programs. The Strategy emphasizes investing in the resources, data, partnerships, and governance needed to deliver effective economic development programs. For the agriculture and food sector this means a dedicated focus on agriculture within Economic Development; stronger collaboration with industry, agencies, partners, and municipal resources; and better use of data to guide decisions and track outcomes. Actions will go beyond the maintenance of a dedicated agricultural development officer and Council advisory committee, to improved Council and staff agricultural awareness and support of the agriculture and food sector, to better use of data and performance measurement through not only an economic perspective, but also for reasons of food security and overall community development.

Suggested starting actions, potentially related to the agriculture and food sector, for vetting and careful consideration to include within this Action Plan include:

- Improve access to and communication of Economic Development programming and deliver regular reports on activities and outcomes.
- Improve collaboration between staff across municipal teams and community organizations and agencies to enhance economic development efforts strategically in non-obvious ways.
- Invest in technology to support customer service and value-added activities.
- Continue to invest in professional development.
- Review to identify and ensure there are adequate resources across the community to support desired outcomes.

Although not detailed specifically here, the Economic Development Strategy identifies goals and objectives for development work that is undertaken for the primary benefit of other sectors or areas of focus. Although not necessarily the primary focus for this sector, they may have cross-over benefit the agriculture and food sector, or are activities which may be done, in collaboration, to support multiple sectors through the same initiative. The sectors and areas of focus for the Economic Development Team include Tourism, Entrepreneurship, Community, Arts and Culture, Business, Manufacturing, Investment Attraction, Innovation and Agriculture and Food.

#### [Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2020-2024](#)

The most recent plan which guided sector development was the Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2020 to 2024. The work on that plan wrapped up in April 2025 with staff report and presentation to Council of the work accomplished within that Action Plan. A review of the 10 goals, 44 strategic objectives and countless activities undertaken, many of which addressed multiple goals and objects, revealed this potential set of ongoing or follow-on items for consideration for carry-forward to this next plan:

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

- a. Enhance the agriculture and food concierge “Pilot” service provided by Kawartha Lakes economic development to:
  - i. Empower the pilot – Continue to develop CKL pilot project to guide agricultural businesses in development as a single point of contact to support expansion, start up and investment
  - ii. Communicate funding opportunities through Economic Development Newsletter
  - iii. Help navigate land use policies, regulations and by-laws.
  - iv. Support business planning with farmers
  - v. Succession planning awareness and links to workshops and succession planning advisory supports to ensure long term viability of agricultural production
- 2. Enhance opportunities in value-added agriculture.
- Provide support to develop on-farm markets and experiential agri-tourism (how to expand/scale agri-tourism activities, funding opportunities, access to local and regional facilities, creating and help navigating modern policies and zoning bylaws).
  - a. 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 and participate in collective wholesale aggregation and distribution activities.
  - b. Attract food processors to the area and support small, home-based food processors to scale-up to expand production.
  - c. Identify gaps in cold storage, distribution, processing and packaging infrastructure, and identify opportunities for collaboration to develop more efficient use and access to existing facilities and attract development of additional facilities.
  - d. Expand the Community Improvement Plan to include support for on-farm diversified and food processing businesses located outside of the downtowns. Examples of success include value added agriculture in Norfolk County, Haldimand County, and Elgin County.
- 3. Identify the agriculture and local food sector as a career opportunity for students within Kawartha Lakes.
- Collaborate with school boards to promote the resources and programs available through AgScape and others to educate about agriculture and food workforce opportunities.
  - a. Promote High Skills Major programs in Agriculture at local high schools and support requests for engagement with local businesses for on-farm experiences to provide an opportunity to actively engage local youth with local agri-businesses.
  - b. Promote agricultural careers and highlight connections to industry needs, and local opportunities to engage new sector entrants.
- Fill the gaps between the agriculture and food labour force and employers’ needs in Kawartha Lakes.

- c. Find partners to explore an agriculture and food employee skills development program.
  - d. Provide training and support activities streamlining the hiring and on-boarding process for agriculture and food sector employers.
- Promote community-based agriculture and food jobs board and available labour pool to address needs of agricultural businesses to fill agricultural jobs.
  - e. Support connections and information sharing between local agri-food employers and secondary/post-secondary institutions on prospective co-op student opportunities (manual labour and skilled labour).
  - f. Implement regional agri-food labour force development strategies to support and strengthen agri-food employment.
- 4. Support agricultural sector development and long-term sustainability with strong local land-use planning tools.
  - a. Update clear definitions, regulations and policies following Provincial Planning Statement 2024 and the Permitted Uses on Prime Agricultural Land, Publication 851, for Agriculture uses, Agriculture-Related uses and On-Farm Diversified uses, value-added agriculture, and agri-tourism to align with the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) or updated Official Plan, and coinciding updates to related regulations in the Rural Zoning By-law to fully implement the OP policies in regulations without further delay.
  - b. Permit Agriculture Related Uses and On-Farm Diversified Uses as-of-right provided they are compatible with, and do not hinder, surrounding agricultural operations as provided with the PPS 2024.
  - c. Support the sustainability and development of the Agriculture System as per the 2024 PPS, by scrutinizing any losses to land which is suitable for agriculture, now or in the future, to allow for farm marketing opportunities and activities that strengthen community food security and local agricultural economic development.
  - d. 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 2014-2024 Provincial Policy Statement definitions of agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses).
- 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, and ensure the two can co-exist.
  - e. Continue to co-ordinate annual VIP agricultural tour for City of Kawartha Lakes staff and agency partners involved with agriculture and food businesses.
  - f. Actively seek input from ADAC on municipal policies, regulations, and activities impacting agriculture to ensure sustainable local planning decisions.
- 5. Improve local infrastructure

- a. Work with regional partners and governments to promote the importance of increasing access to natural gas, broadband and cellular expansion.
  - b. Continue to support rural infrastructure projects and apply for municipal infrastructure funding.
  - c. 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.
6. Provide clear understanding of planning and building application processes for agri-businesses in Kawartha Lakes
- a. Ensure Official Plan Policies, Zoning By-laws, Building Permits, Site Plan, and the related municipal processes, forms, and public information provide clear guidance and language to assist in understanding and navigation of use and streamlined development for lands and businesses within the agricultural system.
  - b. Review other municipal by-laws, policies, directives, procedures and permits accessed by agricultural businesses, for modernization, clarity, ease of use and increased efforts, to build awareness and understanding of approvals and permits required. This may include drainage outlets, roadside maintenance, site alteration, entrances, signage, etc.
  - c. 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.
7. Support locally grown food production and marketing to drive increased economic returns
- Connect consumers to Kawartha Lakes agriculture and food system businesses by promoting sources of locally produced food and agri-products, and culinary and agri-tourism experiences.
    - a. Continue to develop partnership with Peterborough County and City of Peterborough to support and expand the Kawartha Choice FarmFresh program promoting local agriculture and food.
    - b. Continue to promote how Kawartha Lakes agriculture and food contributes to the environment, economy, local character, quality of life.
    - c. 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.)
    - d. 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.
8. Continue to develop a strong Kawartha Lakes agriculture and food brand.

- a. Highlight agriculture and food ambassadors within the Welcome Home program to improve visibility of the agriculture and food sector in the community.
- Continue with business support activities to produce direct to consumer marketing (i.e., social media, online and print marketing, Kawartha Choice FarmFresh)
  - b. Promote wholesale and farm market opportunities to consumers, as well as events that promote wholesale collaborations for producers and buyers, as well as direct to consumer opportunities.
  - c. Expand capacity for local food markets in the winter months.
- 9. Strengthen the ability for the agricultural sector in Kawartha Lakes to mitigate and adapt to a changing climate
- 10. Support the implementation the Healthy Environment Plan to ensure the resiliency of the agriculture sector in Kawartha Lakes in the face of climate change.

Many of these goals and strategic objectives, where it is appropriate to carry them forward to address a new strategic objective, will fit together within the new plan. They may be listed only with their main objective and may be shown grouped together as higher level actions, to be detailed as currently appropriate during the implementation planning stage. Some may not fit within the new plan for reasons of focus or scope.

## **Review of Comparator Municipal Strategies for Agricultural Development**

The following is a consolidation of objectives and high-level actions grouped by areas of focus from several comparator municipalities engaged in an agricultural development program. The review included the Regions of Durham and York, and Counties of Brant, Norfolk, Bruce, and Chatham-Kent and Town of Essex. Detailed lists of actions grouped by area of focus follow.

### **Business Support and Investment Readiness**

- Establish policies and programs to direct highest use of employment areas
- Create compelling value propositions for employment areas based on key growth sectors
- Establish formalized Customer Service Program for Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
- Establish streamlined multi-departmental permitting and review processes
- Develop enhanced Business Retention and Expansion Program with Business Visitation Program
- Implement Local Food Business Retention and Expansion Action Plan annually
- Provide business services and strategic sector support
- Develop informational tools and resources for business start-ups
- Support investment attraction and readiness initiatives
- Develop marketing materials for agri-food sector
- Support business growth, development, retention and expansion
- Anticipate supply chain opportunities
- Support entrepreneurial growth and development
- Reward diversification of businesses

### **Workforce Development and Labour**

- Provide better information to students about opportunities in agri-business
- Identify current employer labour needs and local education/skills gaps
- Educate youth about diverse career opportunities in agriculture
- Develop pilot projects for internship, co-op and micro-credential opportunities
- Collaborate with universities and educational institutions for skills development
- Leverage industry expertise to help employers engage newcomer and immigrant talent
- Support succession planning initiatives and host workshops
- Evaluate feasibility of regional leadership/mentorship program for young farmers
- Bridge skills and education gaps
- Address sector-specific skills gaps
- Support positive employer culture
- Foster partnerships with educational institutions

#### Transportation and Infrastructure

- Improve transportation options for employees to access agri-business employment
- Research and demonstrate underserved needs for employee transportation
- Explore partnership opportunities for shared public transportation
- Establish partnership for employer-specific transit pilot project
- Advocate for infrastructure support including broadband expansion
- Encourage acceleration of Employment Lands Servicing Project
- Support infrastructure investments and servicing needs
- Ensure agriculture and rural communities are key consideration for broadband expansion

#### On-Farm Diversification and Agri-Tourism

- Develop agri-tourism market and create destinations through local food trails
- Celebrate agriculture by linking products to culinary assets
- Assist with promotion of on-farm diversified use policies
- Enable agriculture-related, on-farm diversified, and agri-tourism uses
- Write policy paper on economic advantages of on-farm diversification
- Provide information sessions on diversification opportunities
- Support agri-tourism, agriculture-related uses, and culinary tourism
- Share resources to link farmers with agri-tourism contacts
- Support agriculture and sustainable tourism initiatives
- Disperse tourists across regions during all seasons

#### Local Food Systems and Value Chains

- Strengthen local food infrastructure
- Support 'buy local' campaigns (Durham Farm Fresh, York Farm Fresh initiatives)
- Support and promote locally grown food and agriculture products
- Facilitate networking opportunities between production, processing and market channels
- Host "buyers and sellers" or "match-making" events
- Support Regional Food Council activities and Food Charter development

- Develop comprehensive list of food processing businesses
- Maintain inventory of vacant food-grade buildings

#### Food Processing and Manufacturing

- Increase agri-food processing capacity
- Undertake Agri-Food Processing Business Retention and Expansion
- Investigate co-packing opportunities
- Support existing primary processors (abattoirs, meat processors)
- Attract additional processing facilities
- Reimagine employment lands as centres of excellence for advanced manufacturing
- Develop business case for agri-food logistics hub and innovation center

#### Regulations and Approvals

- Address regulatory concerns (federal labeling rules, food safety standards)
- Streamline regulations and approval process
- Hold regular check-in meetings between Economic Development and Planning staff
- Leverage community involvement in policy reviews
- Plan and host Agriculture Planning Summit/Workshop
- Share agricultural planning resources with municipal staff
- Implement expedited approvals process and concierge service model
- Review existing policies and share best practices

#### Innovation and Technology

- Encourage adoption of innovation and technology for precision agriculture
- Strengthen agriculture and agri-food innovation network
- Facilitate adoption of agri-tech and food-tech solutions
- Support pilots for business challenges (climate change, food insecurity, labour)
- Explore opportunities to enable urban agriculture and vertical farming
- Promote and support agri-food entrepreneurship and innovation programs
- Build capacity for agri-innovation with post-secondary partners
- Host agri-innovation field days or competitions
- Support clean energy industry and partners
- Enable culture of innovation in agriculture

#### Climate Change and Sustainability

- Help businesses prepare for future through sustainable development
- Coordinate training on business interruption preparedness
- Promote advantages of sustainable technology investment
- Explore partnerships for climate change mitigation
- Support Community Improvement Plans for climate change mitigation and brownfield remediation
- Share success stories of sustainability initiatives
- Address circular economy by removing barriers for green technology

- Conduct research to identify climate change impacts on sector
- Generate awareness about impacts and programs
- Showcase circular agri-food start-ups and climate smart initiatives

#### Education and Outreach

- Continue to upgrade educational programs that support the sector
- Support education of business community during rapid growth
- Partner to deliver and expand agricultural literacy
- Provide Council with agricultural events updates
- Have active role in educating non-farm communities
- Develop agri-food focused economic factsheets
- Raise profile for local agriculture and agri-food sector
- Develop and execute agri-food communications plan
- Communicate impact and importance of sector and land base
- Develop business success stories, spotlights and case studies
- Incorporate agriculture career pathways into stories
- Promote and assist with events (Gates Open, Farm Tours, Open Houses, food festivals)
- Collaborate with community health partners on food skills and literacy activities

#### Equity and Inclusion

- Support welcoming communities
- Foster supportive environment for equity-deserving and Indigenous communities
- Explore opportunities to engage and build relationships with Indigenous communities
- Conduct research study on barriers and opportunities for equity-deserving entrepreneurs
- Enable equity-deserving agri-food entrepreneurs to access support services

#### Urban Agriculture

- Conduct policy and best practices scan for urban agriculture
- Identify urban agriculture assets and stakeholders
- Provide support to innovation centers focused on urban agriculture
- Explore opportunities to enable urban agriculture
- Organize roundtable on vertical farming
- Develop list of potential sites for vertical farms

#### Sector-Specific Support

- Support horse racing industry sustainability
- Support tourism business development
- Support downtown development
- Support community amenities enhancement
- Enhance active transportation opportunities
- Support innovative ways to attract residential development

#### Communication and Collaboration

- Enhance collaboration with workforce development partners
- Work with regional partners for economic development opportunities
- Review and evaluate existing working relationships/partnerships
- Communicate and promote funding opportunities to agri-food businesses
- Coordinate and collaborate on programming across region and municipalities
- Lead regional food collaboratives
- Support and administer Agriculture and Agri-Food Advisory Committees
- Host bus tours to showcase local agri-food businesses
- Host education and capacity-building workshops for agri-food businesses
- Collaborate with local, regional and provincial organizations on projects and events

#### Research and Analysis

- Understand the business community through enhanced engagement
- Undertake ongoing agriculture and agri-food sector analysis
- Identify sub-sectors of relevance
- Develop comprehensive list of agriculture and agri-food sector businesses
- Address emerging challenges (AI, food waste reduction)
- Organize conversations with ports and grain merchandisers

#### **Review of provincial Agriculture Economic Development Guidance Documents**

The Ministry of Rural Affairs provides Agriculture Economic Development: A Resource Guide for Communities which identifies the following potential Actions for Agricultural Economic Development within seven areas of focus.

- Stakeholder engagement
  - Agricultural Advisory Committee
  - Agribusiness Networking Events
  - Regular Communication with Agricultural Organizations
- Communications and marketing
  - Agricultural Familiarization Tours
  - Agri-Tourism Initiatives
  - Community/Regional Branding
- Business development
  - Agribusiness Recognition Programs
  - Export and Trade Development
  - Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E)
  - Local Food Procurement
  - Agribusiness Incubator
- Workforce and leadership development
  - Workforce Development
  - Youth in Agriculture
  - Promote mentorship and co-operative education programs
  - Future Needs for the Labour Force
  - Agribusiness Recruitment Initiatives
  - Workshops/Resources for Succession Planning
  - Leadership Development Training

- Resources for Agribusiness Entrepreneurs
- Access to Farmland
- Business Counselling
- Investment Attraction
  - Investment Attraction
  - Resources for Investment Attraction
  - Land Inventory Database
  - Inquiries Office for Investors and Agribusiness
- Agriculture Infrastructure and Land-Use Planning
  - Infrastructure
  - Open for Business Approaches
  - Official Plans and Zoning By-laws that Support Agri-food and related activities e.g., value-added
  - Identify gaps and Support Expansion of Regional Infrastructure
  - Develop agriculture/rural focussed Community Improvement Plan
  - Agricultural Impact Assessments and Edge Planning
  - Food Systems Planning
- Research and innovation
  - Agri-food Asset Mapping
  - Agricultural Value Chain Analyses
  - Celebrate Local Agribusiness Innovations
  - Share Best Management Practices
  - Agribusiness Research and Development

## Appendix 3 - Wisdom Team Roles and Expectations

The City of Kawartha Lakes is undertaking a project to develop the next action plan to support the continued development and growth of the agriculture and food sector in Kawartha Lakes. To support this project, a “Wisdom Team” will be incorporated into the project execution to provide strategic guidance to ensure the plan development has regard for the full agricultural system and engages not only sector-based businesses, but also the organizations, agencies and government departments that work to support those businesses.

The **Wisdom Team** for the project to develop the Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2026 to 2030 will have an advisory role, to provide input, feedback, and will have broad representation from across the sector as well as organizations, agencies and government departments which serve and support the agriculture system.

Invited Wisdom Team members will at least one of the following attributes, including: first-hand experience as a farm or agri-business owner and/or staff role in Kawartha Lakes; a participant and/or board member in a local agricultural organization(s); a representative of an agency or organization which supports or works to support the agriculture and food sector; or a staff person of the provincial or Kawartha Lakes municipal government in a division or department which engages with or has impact upon agriculture and food sector businesses. Ideal Wisdom Team members are strategic thinkers with an eye to continuous improvement benefiting the businesses across the agricultural system and the growth of the sector as a whole to ultimately improve the economy of the community.

The Action Plan development project will be developed in-house, without the services of an external consultant, and will be led by Kelly Maloney, Economic Development Officer – Agriculture, and will include three main components:

1. Background review and analysis;
2. Consultations and Input
  - a. a public-facing survey through the Jump In Platform (December - January)
  - b. two in-person public information sessions with workshop-style input sought (December 17, morning and evening)
  - c. presentations and engagement with agricultural organizations at their annual general or director meetings (January)
  - d. small group meetings with clusters of departments and agencies which support or engage with businesses in agricultural system (January)
3. Action Plan Development and Review (February)
4. Presentation to Committee of the Whole, Council Adoption (March - April)

The Wisdom Team will be called upon to provide guidance at three key points of the development which are expected to include:

1. Two in-person Wisdom Team meetings, approximately 2 hours in length:
  - Kick-off: December 11, 2025 to review and provide feedback to the Background Review and Analysis document, the Engagement Plan, the draft online survey questions, and the in-person public information meeting approach and workshop questions.

- Plan Review: February 19, 2026 to review and provide feedback to the first draft Action Plan prior to circulation for final feedback through the Jump In project page, and directly with organizations, agencies and government departments which participated in the development and/or may have involvement in the implementation.
- In early January, through an email circulation, review and feedback on a summary document collecting the initial key findings from the public survey and in-person workshops. The document will be used during presentations in January to agricultural organization annual meetings and in small group meetings with clusters of departments and agencies which support the agricultural system.

Wisdom Team members are invited to also participate in any public consultations if they wish, and may also be part of the consulted groups during the small group meetings with agencies and government departments, or be attendees consulted at agricultural organization annual or director meetings. It will be beneficial for Wisdom Team members to be able to carry forward in a representative manner the input garnered during those meetings, when sitting as the Wisdom Team. These cross linkages will strength the final plan with awareness, support and buy-in from across the agricultural system and supporting organizations and departments during the Implementation phase.

The Wisdom Team having representation from business, organization and government will benefit from functioning together as one collective group to be able to address items as a group and foster collaborative guidance to the Plan.

## Appendix 4 - Engagement Plan

### Objective

The objective of this engagement plan is to outline and facilitate the participation of agriculture and food sector stakeholders, related organizations and agencies and key municipal staff as well as members of the public in providing input to the development of the Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2026 to 2030.

### Accessibility

Accessibility will be considered with all aspects of the Engagement Plan, including selection of sites, dates and times for in-person meetings, use of accessible on-line formats, and options to request large-format print or hardcopy versions

### Engagement Phases

1. **Notification of commencement**, launch of Jump In project page and general invitation to participate – develop an engagement strategy; identify stakeholders; notify stakeholders and Wisdom Team of commencement of project; Will include press release, social media, newsletter and email plus JumpIn platform notifications. This phase will build general awareness with the agriculture and food sector businesses, agricultural organizations, related agencies, and government staff of the project launch and build anticipation to participate in the consultations to follow.
2. **Technical support team** (internal and external): Build a team of individuals prior to commencement to provide strategic guidance, feedback, and core input to the process of development of the Action Plan. This team will be known as the Wisdom Team Identify attributes, roles and attributes of the Wisdom Team. Finalize a list of potential members and send invitations to participate along with a copy of the Wisdom Team Roles and Expectations document. Track responses and expand the invitations to build a broad representation of farm operators across commodities and farming areas of Kawartha Lakes, representation from the agri-business service and support businesses, agricultural organizations, agencies serving and impacting agriculture and government staff from departments serving and impacting agricultural system businesses. The Wisdom Team will be engaged through two in-person meetings and an email-based review of documents during the Consultation and Input, and Action Plan Drafting Phases of the project to ensure the plan development has regard for the full agricultural system and engages not only sector-based businesses, but also the organizations, agencies and government organizations that work to support those businesses. Additional details can be found in the Wisdom Team Roles and Expectations document.
3. An **online survey** of agriculture and food sector businesses, organizations, agencies, government departments and the general public will be prepared and published using the City's Jump In platform to collect public input to issues and desired outcomes and activities to inform follow-up focused discussions toward the development of the Plan. Anticipate a minimum 30-day live duration during December and early January to allow for input.

4. Two **in-person information meetings** with roundtable-style workshop activities will be planned mirroring input sought through the online survey, and held as in-person options for engagement sessions for the stakeholders identified above. Prepare and host two in-person engagement sessions, in Bobcaygeon and Oakwood. At the sessions there will be presentation of the Background Review and Analysis, including action ideas pulled comparator plans and highlighting potential next-steps from the previous Action Plans. Feedback on sector priorities will be collected through a roundtable-style workshop. Anticipate 2 in-person sessions on the same-day, morning and evening, on December 17, 2 hours each. Marketing materials and workshop agenda to be developed and circulated to build awareness and attendance from across the stakeholder group.
5. The Economic Development Officer – Agriculture will attend **local agricultural organization annual meetings and director meetings** in January to present the Key Themes garnered from the online survey and in-person workshop sessions to share mid-project areas of focus and gather additional feedback on those directions. At minimum these will include Beef Farmers', Soil & Crop Improvement, Grain Farmers, Sheep Farmers, Federation of Agriculture, National Farmers Union and Christian Farmers' Federation. This may also include a targeted meeting involving agriculture support and service agri-businesses, pending engagement at in-person workshop.
6. The Economic Development Officer – Agriculture will plan and host three to five **internal department and connected agency small group engagement meetings** to review Key Themes. Clusters will be identified for the small group meetings where there is alignment on subject matter, with the departments including OMRA, OMAFA, Planning, Municipal Law Enforcement, Public Works, Engineering, Communications, Strategy Management, Conservation Authorities, Workforce Development, VCCS, Fleming College, and others.
7. The **second Wisdom Team meeting** will be held on February 19 to present the Draft Action Plan for review and feedback by the Wisdom Team.
8. Following incorporation of feedback from the Wisdom Team the updated draft will be posted to JumpIn project page to gather feedback from the public and project participants, including direct circulation to organizations, agencies and government departments which participated in the development and/or may have had direct involvement in the implementation.
9. Final engagement will be sought from members of Council and the general public through presentation of the final draft to **Committee of the Whole**. Letters of support and/or deputations from participating organizations intending to participate in aspects of the implementation or general support for the adoption of the plan will be invited to align with the presentation. This will provide Council with understanding of the broad collaboration and involvement from across the agriculture system and supporting organizations, agencies and government departments, and will aid in the decision to adopt the Plan and support implementation.

## Appendix 5 - Engagement Results and Discussion Findings

### 2024 Agricultural Consultation within Economic Development Strategy Development

In preparation for developing this plan, we looked to the recent consultation conducted in June 2024 as part of the Development of the Economic Development Strategy 2025 to 2029. Farmers and agri-business stakeholders identified key challenges and opportunities related to land use, infrastructure, labour, regulation, and long-term farm viability. These priorities are directly reflected in the City's Economic Development Strategy.

#### Why agriculture matters in Kawartha Lakes

- Cornerstone of the local economy
- Supports employment, tourism, and food security
- Central to rural character and community identity

#### What Makes Kawartha Lakes Different

- Diverse mix of small towns, farms, cottages, and industry
- Proximity to major urban centres (45–60 minutes to Toronto)
- Extensive waterways including the Trent–Severn
- North–south diversity in soil quality and agricultural capacity
- Highly fertile agricultural land concentrated in the south

#### Challenges

- Limited understanding of agriculture's importance to the broader economy
- Road congestion and inadequate transportation routes for farm traffic
- Poor broadband and inconsistent cellular service in rural areas
- Land fragmentation due to severances and estate development
- High land values limiting new or expanding farm operations
- Conflicts between farming and non-farming neighbours
- Labour shortages and skills gaps in the agricultural workforce

#### Land Use and Farming Issues

- Agricultural land increasingly converted to severances and estate lots
- Provincial severance policy changes have created uncertainty
- Pressure on land prices makes traditional crop farming less viable
- Farming viability often depends on off-farm income
- Limited opportunities for year-round direct-to-consumer sales

#### Opportunities

- Value-added agriculture and agri-food processing
- Technology adoption (GPS, precision agriculture, digital marketing)
- Strong local ag-support sector (equipment, veterinarians)
- Agri-tourism, farm education, and experiential offerings
- Carbon farming and environmental stewardship initiatives

#### Key Risks

- Land-use pressure

- Infrastructure challenges
- Workforce shortages

#### What the Municipality Can Do

- Protect agricultural lands
- Streamline regulations
- Invest in infrastructure
- Strong municipal leadership to support a competitive and sustainable agriculture and food sector

Participants envision a resilient sector that supports economic growth and community well-being. The input from the consultation informed the strategy development and future policy and investment decisions. The consultation recommended actions for the agriculture and food sector that strengthen farm viability, value-added production, and land protection, but most importantly, reinforce agriculture as a core economic sector.

#### **In-Person Public Information Sessions**

As a public kick-off to the engagement portion of the project two public information sessions were held on December 17, 2025. A dozen participants attended the Bobcaygeon and Oakwood locations. They heard the project workplan, overview of the agriculture and food sector, municipal benchmarking, and the strategic context by which the Plan development would be guided. Open discussion guided by Table Talk questions solicited early input key to the plan development. The following are the notes and results of those discussions:

#### General comments/questions by attendees during presentation

- Request for the agriculture contribution to the local GDP, and what portion of land is agriculture in Kawartha Lakes
- Circulate PDF version of infographic of farm breakdown
- Residential development fragmenting land and making farms less viable. You need farming neighbours to be successful. Planning needs to recognize the relationships between farming neighbours and how physical fragmentation can affect broader relationships.
- How are you getting to those not at this meeting?
- We don't have adequate processing facilities for livestock
- Prospective employees often have no incentive to work
- Issue with the rural zoning bylaw amalgamation
- Belief that there is an us vs them between farmers and planning
- Lack of taking care of the weed act
- Need understanding of what agribusinesses are allowed to do
- City is supposed to take care of it, city says no, farmers take care of it

#### Table Talk Questions

Q1. Which challenges most impact your farm or limits agri-business growth locally?

- Generational transition and land loss/taken out of agriculture
- Lack of abattoirs due to differences between provincial & federal rules
- High land value restricting expansion and entry to farming

- Protections preserving farmland as ag land are not strong enough
- Lack of local education for agriculture especially a diploma program
- Barriers to accessing widespread ag data (connection will no longer be free)
- Land prices
- Skilled workers - Especially regarding work ethic and working a full day
- Availability of capital for improvements or growth may be lacking
- Lack of Succession planning
  - Keeping the next generation engaged and ready to continue the business operations
  - Creating a legacy with a pro-business continuity exit strategy is more important than succession planning right now
- Key-person or key-partner protection insurance is needed and may be missing in many businesses
- Ability to roll equity over to the next generation when they are not direct descendants
  - Can create a tax load for non-direct descendants when involved in a succession plan
- Insurance costs, or lack of standard requirements between insurance businesses, everything has to be insured
  - Seeing requirement for semi-annual inventories
  - Valuation updates are needed to ensure they are current and assets are appropriately covered
  - Lack of education regarding insurance requirements for agri-businesses.
  - “Insuring your farm or agri-business” is a training opportunity or information meeting topic
- Timeframe too long for permitting for new buildings
  - And it’s too complicated
  - Conservation authority regulations slow things down
  - Need for planner to be hired for applications
  - Approval by the insurance company may be required, ahead of building permit acquisition, on new building developments in the future
  - There is a need for a separate application and support stream for small independent builds as they tend to have different needs than the large developments where many professionals are already involved.

Q2. What support, training or workforce programs would benefit your business?

- Apprenticeship program for agriculture for practical skills
- Farms at Work land access program
- Junior Agriculture Program or something similar from province
- Need other recruiting programs to attract young workers
- Co-op placement programs through high schools that work for the needs of the business, specifically regarding time at the business being long enough to be effective. Need to improve upon previous efforts
- Educate in high schools about careers available in agriculture here
- Green Industries with greenhouses in high school are underfunded

- Inmate work program
- Overreach in terms of regulations
  - example given that certain inspectors of a certification program were trying to force safety certification of agriculture equipment even though no such certification process existed
- Basic skills training is needed for math and language/communication skills
- Agriculture-based workplace first aid program would be helpful.

Q3. What would most improve your ability to continue farming in this region?

- Support with marketing (training and personnel) especially for direct to consumer
- Cap land taxes in relation to service needs and services rendered to a property
  - unless services rendered according to the tax burden
- Road maintenance
  - Minimum maintenance standards are in place and that is what the target of service is aimed at - why not aim at maximum standards?
- Availability of meat and other food processing for farm products
  - Let's not lose any we still have in place – what do they need to stay in business and ensure we don't lose them
- As municipal governments have changed over the years, access to portions of property by way of unassumed roads has become more difficult. Minor maintenance of unopened road allowances by municipal staff has ceased, to the point that vegetation is impeding access. If a farmer needs to access a portion of their property by way of an unopened road because of municipal drains not having appropriate bridges or other crossings, what is to be done? This is an example of 2 municipal programs not working together – Maintenance of municipal drains and in-property crossings of those drains, and maintenance and access through unopened road allowances. Clarity is needed on who needs to do the maintenance and how it can get done.

Q4. What should be the top 3 priorities for the Agriculture and Food Action Plan?

- Support next gen of farmers (financial and education)
- Keep farmland in farming
- Support land access (connecting landowners with those looking for land)
- Strengthen connection with Farms at Work
- Support direct to consumer enterprises
- Cost effective road and roadside maintenance
  - This ties to the logistics of moving agricultural products and equipment
- Attract more agricultural processing facilities especially for beef
  - Align regulations between federal and provincial plants by allowing for a range for compliance that includes both the federal and provincial requirements so that provincial plants don't necessarily need to do a complete re-build to comply for federal inspection.

- Need more local abattoirs and they need to be able to operate profitably without overburden of regulatory requirements.
- Education is needed to attract more local people to get into work in the agriculture industry
- Promote the use of ethanol since raw materials are grown here.
  - promote the use of bio-products to drive demand for more input supplies of corn grown here.
- The development of a new lake port in Picton should be supported for grain shipping which will save significant time trucking on roads from this area and avoids having to truck product through the GTA into the Hamilton port.

Q5. Are there gaps in local processing, storage, or logistics capacity?

- Issues with inspection inconsistencies at provincial abattoirs
- Continued support for expanding and supporting aggregation/distribution space
- Improve roads to improve logistics

Q6. What would increase investment confidence in this region?

- Support for long-term leases
- Increasing awareness within the growing population of local ag products
- Long term confidence is up in the air
- Improve people resources for farms and agribusiness
  - Increasing age of farmers is a risk factor for the ag sector
  - Need to bring in younger operators and ensure succession plans are in place
- Government politics at the political level are directing policy development and spending which is not necessarily in the best interest of the agriculture sector. Need clear and vocal support at the municipal and provincial level to support the largest sector – agri-food
- Reduced regulation on farms and agribusiness is needed - less oversight, hence more freedom to operate the business
- Red tape reduction - specifics would be helpful when answering the upcoming survey
- The Port of Oshawa currently has challenges impeding support of the region
  - No grain driers in Oshawa port and not sufficient storage
- Fear of the impending impact of the development of a high-speed rail system across the eastern region has created some worry as to just how much the area could be split by the rail line, and end up with long drive-arounds, leading to fragmentation and change in access to services and suppliers.

Q7. What role should the municipality play in supporting agriculture sector businesses?

- year-round market is needed
- Is the city prepared to implement long term plans? Not just 5-year plans?
  - Processing, you're not going to put any processing plant in in 5 years
  - Put plans in place to take early steps laying ground work for the series of actions to get to a long-term end goal.

- i. Example for attracting food processing would be to ensure there is available land zoned for manufacturing, and roads, logistics, broadband/cellular, utilities, water and wastewater, access to supply and storage services are in place; developers are engaged to build or design build; and finally, an active promotional package is prepared and used to proactively attract food processor.

## **Jump In Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan Survey**

A public survey was hosted on the [JumpInKawarthaLakes.ca](http://JumpInKawarthaLakes.ca) online engagement platform from December 24, 2025 to February 9, 2026. A total of 69 responses were received from farmers, agri-business operators, sector organizations, and community members, the majority of whom operate within Kawartha Lakes.

### **Jump In Survey – Result Highlights**

#### Future Expectations - by respondents

- Expand - 50%
- Remain the same – 25%
- Downsize – 9%
- Exit the sector – 0%
- Unsure – 15%

#### Top Challenges - most selected in survey

- Rising input costs – 84%
- Climate/weather impacts - 70%
- Regulatory burden – 57%
- Labour availability and skills – 56%
- Infrastructure (roads, cellular, utilities) – 54%
- Succession planning – 40%

#### Identified Supports for Business Growth and Expansion

- Reduced Regulatory Burden
- Streamlined Application Approvals Processes
- Processing Capacity and support for the full agricultural value chain
- Improved Infrastructure - roads, broadband, cellular, utilities)
- Workforce Development – labour availability and skills training
- Access to Capital/financing
- Access to Land
- Improved Market Access
- Locally available education and workshop offerings
- Succession Planning
- Agriculture and food sector municipal support

#### Adoption of new technologies or innovative processes

- Highly or moderately engaged – 62%

- Limited engagement – 38%
- Not engaged – 0%

Noted: soil health improvements, energy efficiency, climate resilient practices and precision agriculture, with barriers being cost, risk or uncertainty, necessary infrastructure and knowledge or skills and regulatory issues.

#### Requests for municipal support and action

- Streamlined approvals and permitting – 78%
- Land-use planning policy and by-laws that protect ag land and enables on-farm diversification and agriculture-related businesses – 54%
- Maintaining agriculture business support personnel and programs – 48%
- Maintaining a sector-based council advisory board – 43%
- Advocacy to other levels of government – 40%
- Marketing and promotion of the local agricultural sector – 38%
- Infrastructure investment – 35%

#### Top three priorities of the Plan - identified by respondents

- Land Use, Infrastructure and Resources – 68%
- Policy, Regulation and Municipal Support – 62%
- Economic Development and Business Growth – 59%
- Collaboration, Partnerships and Promotion – 50%
- Innovation, Technology and Sustainability – 36%
- Workforce and Skill Development – 29%

### Jump In Survey - Summary of Key Findings

The survey confirms that agriculture remains a stable and important economic sector in Kawartha Lakes, supported by a diverse mix of livestock, crop, and specialty operations. Most respondents represent primary agricultural producers, with livestock and field crop farms being the most common, and over half of respondents reporting more than 20 years of experience in the sector. The majority of respondents operate within Kawartha Lakes, reflecting strong local participation and engagement in shaping the future of the sector.

Overall, respondents describe the sector as stable to strong, with more than 60% rating the sector's health positively and only a small minority identifying it as weak. Many contributors emphasized the strength of the local agricultural community, highlighting the resilience of farm families, the diversity of production, and the strong network of agri-business suppliers and service providers that support farm operations across the region.

Despite these strengths, respondents identified several significant challenges. Rising input costs (84%), climate and weather impacts (66%), regulatory burden (63%), labour availability (53%), and infrastructure limitations (47%) were among the most frequently cited concerns affecting farm and agri-business operations. Access to land, succession planning, and access to capital were also identified as ongoing pressures for farm viability and expansion.

Workforce availability is an ongoing issue for many farms and agri-businesses. While labour challenges vary by operation, the most significant concerns relate to shortages of skilled agricultural

labour, seasonal labour availability, and training opportunities. Respondents also highlighted the importance of strengthening agricultural education and skills development to support the next generation of farm workers and producers.

Infrastructure capacity presents mixed results. Transportation networks, broadband, cellular service, and electrical supply were generally rated as adequate by many respondents; however, processing facilities, refrigerated and frozen storage, and elements of the local agri-food value chain were frequently identified as inadequate or underdeveloped. Participants also noted the loss of small-scale processing capacity, including abattoirs, as a significant gap in the regional food system.

Looking ahead, the outlook for the sector remains generally positive. Approximately 41% of respondents expect their operations to expand over the next five to 10 years, while all others expect to remain stable. Respondents emphasized that future growth will depend on protecting farmland, improving infrastructure and market access, supporting farm diversification, and strengthening the broader agri-food value chain within the region.

Innovation and sustainability are also emerging priorities. Many respondents report adopting practices such as soil health improvements, energy efficiency, and climate-resilient farming approaches. However, the cost of new technologies, uncertainty about return on investment, and infrastructure limitations were identified as key barriers to wider adoption of innovation in the sector.

Survey participants also highlighted opportunities for stronger municipal support. The most frequently requested municipal actions included streamlined approvals and permitting processes, stronger land-use planning policies to protect agricultural lands, and policies that support on-farm diversification and agriculture-related businesses. Many respondents also emphasized the value of maintaining municipal agriculture support staff and strengthening collaboration between the sector and the municipality.

When asked about priorities for the Agriculture and Food Action Plan, respondents most frequently identified land use, infrastructure and resources; policy, regulation and municipal support; and economic development and business growth as the areas requiring the greatest attention. Respondents also emphasized the importance of collaboration across the sector, including stronger producer-to-processor partnerships and connections with education and research institutions.

Looking to the future, respondents envision a sector that remains economically viable, diverse, and innovative, supported by protected farmland, modern infrastructure, strong local processing capacity, and policies that enable farms and agri-businesses to invest and grow. However, they also identified risks that could threaten the sector if not addressed, including farmland loss, increasing regulatory complexity, rising costs, and climate impacts.

## Appendix 6 - Table Talk and Survey Questions

### Table Talk Questions

1. Which challenges most impact your farm or limits agri-business growth locally?
2. What support, training or workforce programs would benefit your business?
3. What would most improve your ability to continue farming in this region?
4. What should be the top 3 priorities for the Agriculture and Food Action Plan?
5. Are there gaps in local processing, storage, or logistics capacity?
6. What would increase investment confidence in this region?
7. What role should the municipality play in supporting agriculture sector businesses?

### Jump In Public Survey – Agriculture and Food Action Plan

1. Which category(ies) describe your role in the agriculture and food sector? (Select all that apply)
2. How long has your business been operating in or supporting the agriculture or agri-business sector?
3. Where is your primary operation located?
4. How would you rate the overall health of the local agriculture and agri-business sector in Kawartha Lakes?
5. What are the greatest strengths of the local agriculture and agri-business sector?
6. What are the most significant challenges currently facing your farm operation or agri-business grow locally? (Select up to 5)
7. Over the next 5–10 years, do you expect your operation to:
8. What would most support farm and agri-business growth or expansion in this region? (Rank minimum of top 5)
9. 8.b For your top 3 selections in question 8a, please explain what difference this would make to farm and agri-business growth or expansion in this region.
10. What types of new agri-businesses or services are currently missing or underdeveloped in the region?
11. How adequate is existing infrastructure to support agriculture and agri-business?
12. What land-use planning or zoning issues most affect your operation?
13. Are there barriers to accessing or retaining agricultural land in this region?
  - How significant are labour challenges for your operation?
14. If workforce issues are a challenge, which are most pressing? (Select up to 3)
15. What types of training or workforce development programs would be most beneficial?
16. To what extent are you adopting new technologies or innovative practices?
17. Which practices are you currently using or considering? (Select all that apply)
  - What barriers limit adoption of innovation or technology?
18. What sustainability or environmental issues are most important to your operation? (e.g., soil health, water management, climate resilience)

19. How would you rate the municipality's understanding of agricultural and agri-business needs?
20. Which municipal actions would most support the sector?
21. Based on your answer to question 21, please identify the specific policies, regulations, programs or processes that should be reviewed or improved. Please provide suggestions for improvement or alternate approaches.
22. How strong is collaboration within the local agriculture and agri-business community?
23. What types of partnerships/collaborations would add the most value?
24. How could the region better promote and brand its agriculture and agri-business sector?
25. In your view, what should be the top 3 priorities in the Agriculture and Food Action Plan?
26. Looking 10–20 years ahead, what does a successful agriculture and agri-business sector look like in this region?
27. What risks could most threaten the future viability of the sector if not addressed?
28. Is there anything else the municipality should consider when developing the Agriculture and Food Action Plan? This is a place to also add any explanations or suggestions around any of the previous questions above.