



Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Ontario AgriCentre

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August 31, 2017

Ms. Barb Alves
Senior Policy Adviser
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Policy Division, Economic Development Policy Branch
1 Stone Road West, Floor 2
Guelph Ontario
N1G 4Y2

Dear Ms. Alves,

Re: EBR Registry 013-0672 Strategy Framework for the Northern Ontario Agriculture, Aquaculture and Food Processing Sector Strategy under the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is Canada's largest voluntary general farm organization, representing more than 36,000 family farm businesses across Ontario. These farm businesses form the backbone of our robust food system and rural communities with the potential to drive the Ontario economy forward.

The 2,600 farms in Northern Ontario generate \$192 million in annual farm cash receipts and support approximately 4,000 jobs. For every \$1.00 generated in farm revenue, \$1.30 is generated in additional farm-related sales. For every one of the 4,000 jobs in agriculture, an additional 1.3 to 2.1 are generated in the wider economy.

The proposed revision of the Strategy Framework for the Northern Ontario Agriculture, Aquaculture and Food Processing Sector Strategy under the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario includes positive changes and some revisions of concern to OFA.

The following was provided in the Policy Decision Notice for the Discussion Paper (EBR 012-7458) and OFA's comments are provided below:

Changes to Strategy Framework as a result of comments received:

Goal will remain as "Strengthen the role of agriculture, aquaculture and food processing in the economy of Northern Ontario".

Principles:

- The term "proponent-driven" is preferred to "industry-led" ("industry" is not inclusive enough and "led" denoting leadership is too strong).*
- A principle that addresses regional differences was added.*
- Whole-of-government approach should use the word collaborative and include all levels of government.*

Objectives:

- *Objective 1 to include community considerations.*
- *Objective 2 change to “build resilient” Northern Food Systems.*
- *Objective 3 change to “align with the intent” of the GPNO.*
- *Objective 4 change to “expand opportunities with First Nation and Métis people and communities”.*

Goals and Principles

OFA agrees with the goal remaining as “*Strengthen the role of agriculture, aquaculture and food processing in the economy of Northern Ontario*”.

The proposed revisions to the Principles align with OFA’s position, particularly the importance of addressing regional differences across Northern Ontario. OFA advocates for collaborative approaches within government, and agrees with including all levels of government to align initiatives and reduce conflict.

Objectives

Objective 1: Identify and act upon Sector opportunities balancing growth with environmental and community considerations.

OFA agrees with the revision that ‘community considerations’ should be included in addition to environmental considerations when acting upon sector opportunities.

Objective 2: Diversify regional economies and build resilient Northern food systems.

OFA agrees with incorporating ‘resilient’ into Objective 2, as it speaks to the importance of climate change initiatives and food security considerations.

Objective 3: Align with the intent of the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario.

OFA is concerned about the revised Objective 3, as it is a considerable divergence from the original objective, “*Contribute to meeting the direction of the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario and the Premier’s Agri-Food Growth Challenge*”. There is no explanation or justification for why the Premier’s Agri-Food Growth Challenge is no longer mentioned in this objective.

The Premier’s Challenge is a concerted effort and commitment to the agriculture and agri-food sector by the provincial government to advance programs, policies and strategic directions that are supportive of Ontario’s leading economic sector. The language is considerably weaker in the revised Objective, as the Sector Strategy now only must ‘align’ with the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, and does not ‘contribute to’ these previous commitments by the Ontario government. Justification is needed to explain why the Challenge is now omitted from Objective 3.

Objective 4: Expand opportunities with First Nations and Métis people and communities

The revision of Objective 4 concerns OFA, as the previous version of the Objective stated, “Expand opportunities *with new partners including municipalities* [emphasis added] First Nations and Métis communities”. OFA is a proponent of the agri-food industry collaborating and innovating with new partners, including municipalities, to grow and strengthen a resilient agriculture, aquaculture and food processing industry. OFA supports working with First Nations and Métis people and communities, but also believes that Objective 4 should revert to a broader scope.

Investing in agriculture, agri-food processing and rural infrastructure provides countless benefits to the surrounding rural economy. The regional economies in the North would benefit from the increased diversification of the industry, while achieving social objectives such as increasing food security in some of Ontario’s most vulnerable rural communities, such as First Nations and Métis people and communities.

OFA appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments. We look forward to seeing our recommendations reflected in the revised Strategy Framework for the Northern Ontario Agriculture, Aquaculture and Food Processing Sector Strategy under the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario.

Yours sincerely,

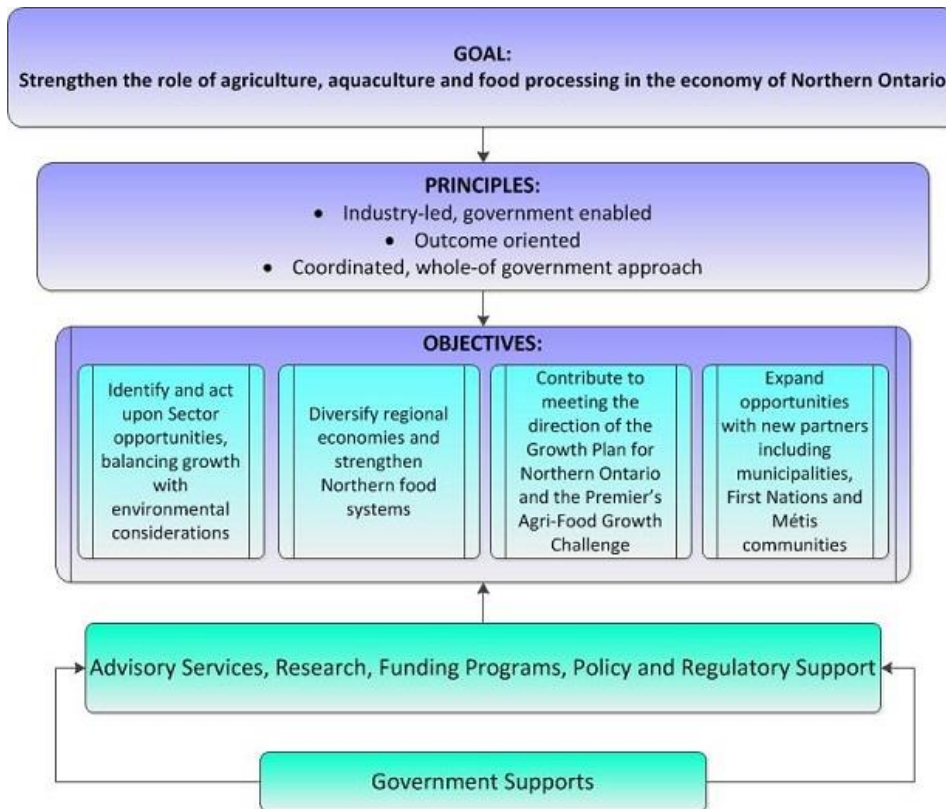


Neil Currie
General Manager

Appendix

Previous Proposed Framework

Figure 3.0 Proposed Framework for the Sector Strategy
EBR 012-7458, Posted May 4, 2016



Revised Proposed Framework

Figure 1.0 Revised AAFP Sector Strategy Framework
EBR 013-0672, Posted August 3, 2017

