



Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Ontario AgriCentre

100 Stone Road West, Suite 206, Guelph, Ontario N1G 5L3
Tel: (519) 821-8883 • Fax: (519) 821-8810 • www.ofa.on.ca

January 19, 2018

Susanne Jakobsen, Project Manager
Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change
Climate Change and Environmental Policy Division
Strategic Policy Branch
77 Wellesley Street West
Floor 11, Ferguson Block
Toronto ON
M7A 2T5

Dear Ms. Jakobsen,

RE: EBR Registry Number 013-1520 – Climate Change Adaptation

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is pleased to provide comments to the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) regarding Ontario's Approach to Climate Change Adaptation. The OFA is Canada's largest voluntary general farm organization, representing over 37,000 farm families across the province. These farm businesses form the backbone of a robust food system; helping to drive the Ontario economy forward.

OFA is pleased to see a renewed focus by government on the need for adaptation to the potential impacts of climate change. The agricultural sector has a long history of learning and adapting to the variability of Canadian weather and climate. Global Warming and Climate Change, however, present a much more formidable challenge to agricultural production with an observable increase in the frequency of extreme weather events, and changes to regional water cycles. The uncertainty and variability resulting from climate change presents significant increased risk to food production and rural livelihoods. We know Ontario farmers are concerned about the potential impacts of climate change and the OFA looks forward to working together to develop solutions that build resilience within agricultural production systems and enable farmers to cope with these changes and impacts.

A new climate change organization

A one-window approach that synthesises data and information into a useable format is worthwhile and needed. With over 200 commodities currently being produced in Ontario, there is a strong need for flexible climate change adaptation solutions that can be tailored to respond to the diverse and complex agricultural landscape.

The degree to which the OFA can support to the creation of this new organization is ultimately dependant on the degree to which it represents the needs of the agricultural sector. The new organization must recognise the unique needs of agriculture, and that climate change presents a significant risk to the long-term food security of Ontario. It is vital that the agricultural sector is given a high priority in the new climate change adaptation organization. The impacts of climate

change on food production are more complex and unique than other sectors of the Ontario economy, and the solutions will require a thorough understanding of production systems to enable effective decision-making and action.

The OFA believes the new climate change organization would benefit significantly from agricultural representation on the organization Board of Directors. Furthermore, given the agricultural sector is specifically named as potential clients/users, we request that significant resources at this organization be dedicated to supporting the resilience of agricultural production and continued food security in this province.

We understand that the new climate change organization will be a not-for-profit and independent of the MOECC. We recommend the terms of reference explicitly state the independence of this organization to ensure the science of climate impact projections and practical issues around decision-making reflect the best interest of the clients and environment and are free from political influence.

Provincial Climate Change Risk Assessment

The OFA supports efforts to carry out a province-wide climate change risk assessment. While many of the potential impacts of climate change are known, assessing the extent and magnitude of both short- and long-term impacts to agricultural production will be valuable. However, we caution that province-wide, generalized risk assessments will be of little use to an industry exposed to the regional variability of Ontario's climate and growing conditions. Given the complexity of agricultural production, and importance of food security to the people of Ontario, we recommend that climate change risk assessments be carried out with a specific focus on the agricultural sector, with attention to the variability of potential impacts to the different sub-sectors

Raising Public Awareness

Creating a common understanding of the impacts of climate change is incredibly important to facilitating the adaptation process. Ontario farmers are the largest group of private landowners in the province. Accessing this diverse and disperse group can present a challenge to communication efforts. As such, OFA recommends that the new climate change adaptation organization and the MOECC regularly engage with Ontario's farm and commodity organizations to better translate and transfer climate change information to assist in building awareness and acceptance of adaptation priorities and opportunities.

We look forward to working with the new climate change organization to research, develop, and promote the best, science-based solutions to adapt to climate change.

Sincerely,



Keith Currie
President

cc: OFA Board of Directors