

# FROM THE FIELD

From our field office to yours – timely information for MPPs about Ontario's agri-food sector, from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture



Keith Currie  
President  
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of Agriculture

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

For many of you, this is the first time you have received *From the Field* – a quarterly publication by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA). So let me tell you a bit of the story behind this newsletter.

Ontario's agri-food sector contributes an incredible amount to the entire province providing jobs, revenue and food. While less than 2% of the general population is directly connected to agriculture, our farm businesses are impacted by legislation and activities from multiple ministries in our complex, science-based industry.

As the largest general farm organization in Ontario, OFA represents 38,000 farm families in Ontario. We advocate for their interests so they can continue to operate profitable, sustainable and productive farm businesses.

We produce *From the Field* as one of the ways we communicate directly with provincial policymakers about the opportunities and the challenges facing Ontario farmers, farm businesses and rural communities.

I invite you to spend a few minutes to read through this issue to find out more about OFA and the issues we're working on.

We look forward to getting to know each of you as we bring more news from our fields and farm businesses into your field of view.



## 7 things we want you to know about Ontario agriculture

We know that many of the new MPPs at Queen's Park may be unaware of the breadth of the agri-food powerhouse that is Ontario's agriculture industry. So we've pulled together some key highlights and insights about agriculture and rural Ontario to arm you with compelling information about the importance of our sector. We think it's important to be fully informed as you make decisions that impact Ontario farmers and rural communities.

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### Inside...

**Keeping ag and rural a political priority**

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# Working to keep ag and rural a priority

As candidates knocked on doors earlier this spring and summer for the provincial election, OFA was also campaigning for agriculture and rural communities with our Producing Prosperity in Ontario messages. Now that everyone is settling in at Queen's Park, we are continuing our work to keep the priorities for agriculture and rural communities top of mind with MPPs.

The agri-food sector contributes \$13.7 billion every year to the Ontario economy. We are proud to be the leading economic engine for the province and want to continue to contribute to economic growth and prosperity for all Ontarians. To accomplish that, our farm businesses and rural communities need your attention and investment in these top three priority areas.



## AFFORDABLE NATURAL GAS

Energy is the biggest and most expensive input for Ontario farms and farm businesses. We need expanded access to affordable natural gas across the province so our farms and businesses can be competitive.



## IMPROVED INFRASTRUCTURE

Sound roads, bridges and proper drainage are needed to support the growth and transportation of our goods and services. We need these rural services to be well maintained so we can grow our businesses.



## RELIABLE INTERNET

Just like every urban business, agricultural businesses, rural residents and schools depend on reliable broadband service to stay connected, informed and competitive.

Find out more at [producingprosperity.ca](http://producingprosperity.ca)

## AN OFA PRIMER

We know that most of you may never have heard of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. We are a farmer-led, grassroots organization that understands the issues affecting Ontario farmers. Our key role is to advocate for Ontario agriculture when we bring the ideas, opportunities and challenges of our sector to you – at Queen's Park, in your constituencies and at events around the province.

We are the largest general farm organization in Ontario, and in Canada, in fact. When we bring our ideas and concerns to Queen's Park, we're representing the voices of the majority of farmers in Ontario, who are the backbone of our robust food system.

Ontario farmers grow the more than 200 different commodities. They are family farms that run the gamut of single person operations to multi-generational families. They are innovators, planners, hard workers and they are helping drive the Ontario economy forward.

OFA champions the interests of Ontario's farming community.

- ✓ Since **1936**, OFA has been a leader in results-based advocacy and lobbying
- ✓ We have **38,000** farm members across Ontario
- ✓ **52** county and regional federations provide strong, local leadership and a grassroots connection
- ✓ We have **21** experienced frontline staff – our Member Service Representatives (MSRs) – serving OFA members in every region of the province
- ✓ Our team of **8** farm policy researchers stay on top of key issues, legislative changes and regulations at the municipal, provincial and federal level

Agriculture contributes  
**\$13.7 BILLION**  
to Ontario's annual GDP



Ontario's farm sector generates  
**\$1.4 BILLION**  
in provincial tax revenues



**\$8.1 BILLION**  
in wages and salaries are  
supported by Ontario farms



**158,000 jobs** are generated  
by the farm sector

Source: JRG Consulting Group Study 2013

# What matters to Ontario farmers

To accurately and fairly represent the diverse interests of our 38,000 Ontario farm members, we regularly ask them what's important and what matters most – so we can identify key issues to focus our advocacy efforts on in the political arena.

Here are some of the insights from OFA members, as part of our March 2018 membership survey.



**MOST IMPORTANT**  
OFA activities according to members

- 1** LOBBY GOVERNMENT
- 2** DEVELOP FARM POLICIES AND PROGRAMS
- 3** BUILD PUBLIC AWARENESS/ ADVOCATE FOR ISSUES

**TOP 3 ISSUES**  
members want OFA to lobby on

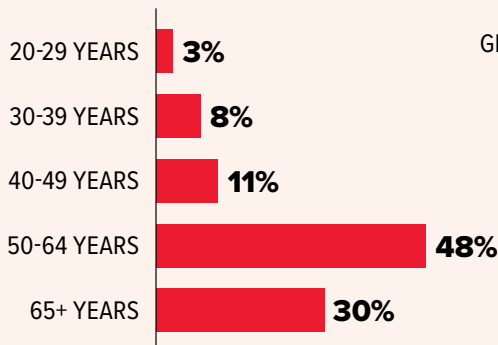
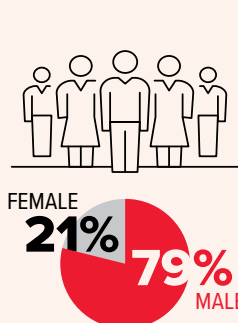
- ENERGY
- RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE
- REGULATIONS

**#1 TOPIC** FOR RESEARCH & LOBBYING IS  
**farm property taxes**

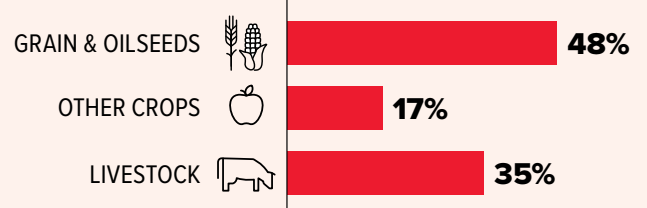
What members are most concerned about (≥ 50% response)

Lobbying government for RMP support	Regulations that impose costs to my business	<b>COST OF ELECTRICITY AND FUEL</b>
<b>Increasing tax rates</b>	<b>ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES</b>	Municipal zoning and farmland preservation

## MEMBERSHIP



## MAIN FARM TYPE



Survey conducted by Kynetec Canada Inc.

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## 7 things OFA wants you to know about the agriculture and food sector in Ontario

- 1 We drive the economy.
- 2 We are citizens.
- 3 We are diverse.
- 4 We are environmentalists.
- 5 We rely on affordable energy.
- 6 We are innovators.
- 7 We are essential.

## Take a drive into the heart of Ontario agriculture

Fall might be the season when more people think about agriculture than other times throughout the year. You don't have to drive too far outside the city limits to see crops ripening to harvest gold. Grocery stores are stacked with Ontario-grown goodness. Farmers' markets are busting at the seams with fruit, vegetables and flowers. Food festivals and local fall fairs celebrate the harvest and draw communities together.

Take a look around your community, or head out on a country road and experience the harvest this fall. Celebrate the incredible bounty and richness produced by our agriculture industry.



## COMING EVENTS

Learn more about Ontario's agri-food industry at these fall events

**Ontario Agriculture Week**  
October 1-7, 2018

**Royal Agricultural Winter Fair**  
November 2-11, 2018 – Toronto

**OFA annual meeting and convention**  
November 19 & 20, 2018 – Hamilton

**Do you have questions about Ontario's agri-food sector or want to learn more about issues impacting our industry? Contact OFA for insight and information.**

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