

September 9, 2020

The Honourable Lisa MacLeod  
Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries  
438 University Avenue, 6th Floor  
Toronto, ON  
M5G 2K8

Dear Minister MacLeod,

**Re: Opening of Agri-tainment Farms in Ontario**

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is Canada's largest voluntary general farm organization, representing more than 38,000 farm family businesses across Ontario. These farm businesses form the backbone of a robust food system and rural communities with the potential to drive the Ontario economy forward.

On-farm markets, pick-your-own operations and agri-tainment businesses are an important part of our local agri-food system; connecting people with farmers and the food on our plates. A 2015 study estimated that the direct farm marketing industry contributed approximately \$1.26 billion to Ontario's provincial economy. Agri-tainment farms are significant employers in rural Ontario and have welcomed millions of people onto their farms to share their experiences and knowledge of Ontario agriculture.

With growing demand for high-quality Ontario food and beverage products and outdoor entertainment, the agri-tainment sector provides an opportunity to increase food sales and create jobs, support diversification and scaling of farm and food businesses, and to meet the needs of local and regional demand.

OFA supports the Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association (OFFMA)'s request that agri-tainment farms be listed on the provincial Reopening Ontario in Stages website, under Attractions and Heritage Institutions. This will allow farms with ample acreage and outdoor 'low impact' activities to be included on this site.

Agri-tainment farms should be required to adhere to the guidelines that have been developed by OFFMA in consultation with agri-tainment experts from Ontario and around the world. Protocols such as operating at or below 20% capacity, timed ticketing, improved signage, effective cleaning and sanitization, limiting the operation to farm activities that allow social distancing or mask-wearing, enhanced staff training, PPE, and screening.

Public health departments have given agri-tainment farms across Ontario varying classifications, and clarification is needed for farms and the general public. The OFFMA guidelines should be

standardized across the industry and are more appropriate than the current gathering guidelines with a limit of 100 guests per farm.

We respectfully request your urgent attention to this matter, as these businesses are primed to open, and a large percentage of their business happens during the fall season.

Agri-tainment farms provide Ontario families and farm businesses with a unique opportunity to experience local food production, connect with agriculture, and support local businesses. By addressing OFFMA's request, we can ensure that agri-tainment farm businesses are able to continue to operate and drive our economy forward during these difficult times.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Keith Currie  
President

cc: The Honourable Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs  
Erin McLean, President, Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association (OFFMA)  
OFA Board of Directors