

Inside

FROM THE FIELD

From our field to yours – timely information for MPPs and MPs about Ontario’s agri-food sector, from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Message from the President

Harvest season offers the perfect opportunity to reflect, celebrate and recognize the abundance of fresh, safe and nutritious food products grown and produced right here in Ontario. It’s also a time for hope, and we are hopeful that this year’s crops deliver productive and profitable yields across the province. It’s been a long road for everyone as we adapt to a new reality, but we are proud of the resiliency and perseverance of Ontario’s agriculture and food industry to move forward and continue conducting business in a crisis environment.

Despite the challenges and disruptions that have occurred as a result of COVID-19, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) has remained an active advocate for farm businesses across the province. OFA has been focused on an array of key issues and priorities from the announcement and implementation of regulations for Bill 156,

**Keith Currie, President
Ontario Federation
of Agriculture**



addressing labour gaps in the agri-food sector, launching a local food initiative to sharing input in response to Ontario’s privacy reform and targeting the agri-food sector as the solution to rural economic recovery.

As we begin to navigate our road to recovery, Ontario’s agri-food industry will have a vital role in rebuilding our economy.

We recognize and appreciate the efforts of our provincial and federal policymakers in supporting farmers and the entire food supply chain through this pandemic. We hope that you will take a few moments to read through these pages and learn more about the issues impacting our 38,000 farm family members.

Agri-food is the rural solution to Ontario’s economic recovery

Any major crisis brings about new opportunities to rethink how our systems work and make them more resilient to future challenges. Rural Ontario should be seen as a place of opportunity for regional economic development and growth - during the pandemic, and on the road to economic recovery.

Communities across Ontario have developed regional economic recovery task forces and resiliency committees to identify ways to strengthen their economies and rebound from temporary closures and reduced economic activity. OFA is proud that agricultural representatives have joined local committees and task forces to help identify opportunities such as economic development and growth in rural areas, and how to reduce regulatory burdens to help businesses grow in these challenging times. We ask that you con-

tinue to encourage agricultural representation on committees and task forces in your ridings to be part of this important work going forward.

Economies are reliant on rural communities to provide essential goods and services such as food and energy. During the pandemic and beyond, changes in production and consumer behaviour will continue to impact how and where we work, how we travel, and new opportunities for growth in rural areas.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated ongoing rural and agricultural issues, including the need for affordable energy, broadband internet, abattoir capacity and support for the local food system. However, it has also highlighted new opportunities for direct farm marketing, online sales, collaborative promotional campaigns and unique tourism opportunities.

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OFA shares input on improving Ontario's privacy protection

Farm businesses in Ontario put a high priority on protecting and securing their data and proprietary information. The threat of disclosing that information poses a significant risk to the health, safety and security of farms, families and operations across the province.

In early September, OFA participated in a roundtable discussion with the agriculture industry on improving privacy protection and providing feedback to the Ontario government's proposed privacy reforms. In addition to the consultation, OFA also submitted a formal response to the Ministry of Government and Consumer Service with input and key recommendations on improving privacy protection for the agriculture industry.

OFA fully supports this initiative to address concerns and reassess the priorities for protecting private information. We applaud the Ontario government's intention to address gaps in the legislative privacy framework and to establish comprehensive, up-to-date rules that will protect privacy rights.

We believe the personal information of our 38,000 farm family members should be protected and not released without the consent of the member. It has the potential to cause severe financial loss to farm businesses through possible fraudulent use of the information by the individual collecting it or may be used to facilitate identity theft.

In our written submission, OFA outlined that in the case of many farmers, as with some other business owners, their personal information is the same as their business information. Therefore, any release of business information consequently results in the release of their personal information. In these cases, we believe the business information should be afforded the same protections and privacy considerations as personal information.

OFA strongly recommends that the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)* be amended to include these protections.

OFA fully supports the proposal to increase transparency for individuals by providing them with more detail about how their information is being used by businesses and organizations; having clear consent provisions allowing individuals to revoke consent at any time, and adopting an "opt-in" model for secondary uses of their information; and giving individuals the right to obtain their data in a standard and portable digital format.

OFA looks forward to monitoring the progress of Ontario's privacy reform and working together to protect the privacy and security of our farm operations.

OFA thanks elected officials for continuing the conversation throughout COVID-19

OFA would like to extend our appreciation to MPPs and MPs across the province for continuing to support Ontario farm families and the entire agri-food sector throughout the COVID-19 crisis. We recognize the support our farming and rural communities have received through your willingness to meet virtually and engage in valuable discussions on key issues and priorities impacting the agriculture industry. We acknowledge your ongoing support of our industry throughout these unprecedented times and look forward to working together to unlock opportunities for growth in Ontario's agri-food sector and rural communities as we continue to navigate our road to economic recovery. Together, we can ensure Ontarians have access to a safe, strong and reliable food value chain across the province.

From farm-to-table: Bill 156 and protecting the food supply

Maintaining a steady and reliable food supply and protecting the safety of those who feed us is of critical importance. Protecting farmers, agri-food workers, animals and the entire food value chain, while respecting the right to lawful protest is balanced in Bill 156, the *Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020*. Animals rights activists' tactics have devastating impacts on the health and safety of our food supply. OFA believes Bill 156 effectively protects farm families, agri-food employees and animals from harassment while maintaining the right to peaceful, public protest.

In response to on-going and escalating interferences between activists, livestock transporters, and livestock in transit, the Ontario government proclaimed four sections of the Bill on September 2, 2020. These sections make it an offence to stop, obstruct, hinder or otherwise interfere with a motor vehicle transporting farm animals, and ensure the safety of the public, transport drivers, and animals from the risks posed by obstructing or interfering with livestock transport vehicles on our roads. The right for people to participate in lawful protests on public property remains.

OFA appreciates the support from the provincial government for demonstrating to trespassers, activists, law enforcement and the justice system in Ontario that the protection of farms, families, animals, agri-food employees and the food system is of the highest priority. Thanks to exceptional efforts from the Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs and Hon. Minister Ernie Hardeman, farmers and agriculture organizations have been consulted in virtual sessions throughout the entire process. Local federation leaders have been invited and involved in these conversations and have witnessed

the Ministry's deep commitment to see this Bill through. Particularly where policing is involved, we extend our sincere appreciation to Hon. Minister Ernie Hardeman and Hon. Minister Sylvia Jones for ensuring that the Chief of Halton Regional Police, as well as police chiefs across the province, and the Ontario Police College are all well aware and well-informed about Bill 156 in order to ensure the regulations are interpreted consistently.

The Ministry released a discussion paper which outlines proposed approaches for regulations and defines a broad range of terms related to biosecurity, food safety, human harm and animal protection zones. The paper also indicates that farmers and food processing facility owners may have the ability to define their own animal protection zone, which may be the perimeter around each building. In addition, provisions regarding false pretenses, whistleblowers and exemptions for journalists are also included. OFA continues to facilitate on-going discussions with industry partners and provincial policymakers to seek clarification and ascertain whether the proposed definitions and approaches for regulations adequately ensure the safety and security of farmers, their families and the provincial food supply.

To help address misinformation being circulated, a new website – **AboutBill156** – was developed and launched in consultation with Ontario farmers, livestock transport drivers and industry stakeholders. The website contains accurate and important information about the impact of activism on the agri-food sector and our food supply, including testimonials, biosecurity protocols, animal care guidelines and relevant provincial legislation.

Visit
[AboutBill156.com](https://www.aboutbill156.com)
to learn more.

Feeding Your Future project helps farmers and food businesses fill labour gaps



The Ontario agri-food sector relies on a skilled labour force to bring our diverse range of products to market. Ontario's agri-food industry generates more than 860,000 jobs – including agriculture, processing, food service and retail.

To keep Ontario's food supply chain strong, employers along the agri-food value chain need support to recruit and train workers for in-demand jobs across the sector.

In an effort to address the workforce challenges and opportunities in the agri-food sector, OFA launched the Feeding Your Future initiative. Through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership funding, Feeding Your Future aims to help agri-food employers connect with job seekers during COVID-19 and beyond. Alongside many partners, Feeding Your Future has coordinated a job matching concierge service, nine virtual career fairs and an informative series of ten webinars for agriculture and food businesses.

The nine Virtual Career Fairs had over 1,200 participants and over 170 employers

across the province posting hundreds of positions available from June to September 2020. The webinars are aimed at job seekers and employers on various topics such as finding the right candidate, mental health and wellbeing, health and safety training, adapting during COVID-19 and encouraging job seekers to explore career opportunities in agri-food.

The job matching concierge service is free for employers in the agriculture and food sector to assist them in finding qualified candidates on AgCareers.com and CareersInFood.com platforms. By emailing feedyourfuture@agcareers.com, employers are immediately in touch with a representative that will support them from start to finish in finding their next great hire.

Visit feedyourfuture.ca to learn more about the Feeding Your Future initiative or follow us on Twitter [@feedyourfuture](https://twitter.com/feedyourfuture).

This project was funded by the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a five-year federal-provincial-territorial initiative.



Ontario's agri-food industry generates more than 860,000 jobs

9 Virtual Career Fairs
1,200 participants
over 170 employers

10 Webinars



Continued from cover... Urban dwellers are seeking out rural areas with less population density to provide a safer quality of life for their families. If they are able to access broadband internet and work from home, rural areas are highly attractive, as was witnessed through a surge in real estate inquiries since the pandemic began.

Consumers have shifted their buying habits to favour local products and local tourism in rural areas. To avoid large crowds and urban centres, citizens are flocking to rural, outdoor areas for experiences and deeper connections to local

food and agri-businesses. OFA is proud of our farm families who have pivoted to new sales channels during these challenging times, and we know they will take these solutions into the future to continue to grow the agri-food sector and drive our economy.

It is imperative to explore long-term solutions for supporting growing industries such as agri-food and capitalizing on new economic development opportunities. Growing Ontario's agri-food sector will create jobs, improve food security, and help our economy not only rebound and recover, but grow and prosper.

OFA's Always in Season project promotes local food and farming

OFA's Always in Season project aims to increase local food sales, provide new opportunities for local producers for value-added agriculture, enhance agri-tourism and culinary tourism opportunities, and elevate the brand of local agricultural products.

Through Canadian Agricultural Partnership funding, OFA, collaborative partners, and Wilton Consulting Group have developed the Always in Season toolkit to guide communities through ideas for activities, key performance metrics, funding opportunities, and ways to collaborate to support the agri-food sector.

The Always in Season Toolkit can be used nationwide. It includes many tips, templates, and innovative ideas for communities, particularly during events such as Local Food Week, Ontario Agriculture Week, Canadian Agricultural Literacy Month, Canada's Ag Day, and Food Day Canada. Through interviews with stakeholders across the province, OFA learned of many innovative approaches to supporting the agri-food sector, and ways communities are helping their producers sell more local products and encourage agri-tourism.

During Ontario Agriculture Week October 5-11, the I ♥ Local Social Media Planning Kit was developed to assist communities with celebrating local food and agriculture. It was a great opportunity to promote the industry and share their support for farmers.

Visit ofa.on.ca/AlwaysinSeason to learn more and check out their resources. This project was funded by the Canadian Agriculture Partnership, a five-year federal-provincial-territorial initiative.



OFA announces partnership with Enterprise Canada

OFA is happy to announce its new partnership with government relations firm, Enterprise Canada. Enterprise is a national strategic communications firm with professionals in Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa and Alberta.

We are excited to be working with Enterprise on future projects and look forward to gaining new insight into their multiple areas of expertise.

This partnership will help us continue to grow as one of the leading economic engines in the

province and we look forward to the opportunities this will open for OFA in improving our advocacy campaigns and lobbying efforts. We intend to work together to support our 38,000 farm family members by advocating for Ontario's dynamic agriculture and food industry.

We are excited to be working with the team at Enterprise and would like to take this opportunity to welcome them to the OFA.

Upcoming Event...

NAVIGATING our road to RECOVERY

2020 Virtual Annual General Meeting

Join us for OFA's
2020 Virtual Annual
General Meeting on
Monday,
November 23, 2020
from
8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Navigating our Road to Recovery highlights Ontario agriculture's road to recovery through COVID-19. It incorporates economic recovery related to rural communities and the regional economic task forces that have been assembled across the province. Agriculture has a voice on those committees to help identify opportunities such as economic development and growth in rural areas, and how to reduce regulatory burdens to help businesses grow in these challenging times. It also ties into the importance of mental health and wellness and our ability to recover from this pandemic.

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

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