

FARMS AND FOOD FOREVER



Ontario
Federation of
Agriculture

La Fédération
de l'agriculture
de l'Ontario



Reviewed and updated September 2024.

2021 - 2026
**STRATEGIC
PLAN**

Agriculture is a significant driver for the economy of Ontario, contributing \$50.7 billion in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and over 870,000 jobs. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is the largest of three general farm organizations in the province that represent farmer interests to government, stakeholders and the public. On behalf of 38,000 farm business members, we monitor and review upcoming legislative and regulatory issues impacting the agricultural sector, lobby for improvements, enhancements or change to existing legislation, regulation and public policy and focus on developing, delivering, or supporting programs and services that meet the needs of the Ontario agriculture industry.

GOVERNANCE

OFA has championed the interests of farmers across Ontario since 1936. The organization is governed by a strong, dedicated Board of 18 Directors, including 15 elected regionally and three at-large, and an Executive Committee. It is supported by committees including Governance, Budget, Audit, Human Resources, Pension, and the Policy Advisory Council. OFA is operated by a professional and knowledgeable staff team of 45, strategically located across the province dedicated to serving and supporting OFA members and their communities.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture affirms our commitment to respect the sacredness of the land and its cultural significance, and our responsibility to improve relationships between all nations, including improving our own understanding of local Indigenous peoples and their cultures.

As an agricultural organization representing farmers across the province, OFA recognizes the role the agriculture industry played in the colonization of Ontario. We also acknowledge farms across Ontario are situated on treaty lands and traditional territories of many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

As farmers, we share a common interest with the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people across this province who have cared for these lands and waters for generations, and who continue to care for the land and contribute to the strength of this territory now called Ontario. As stewards of the land, we all want to make sure we leave it in an equal or better condition for future generations.

OUR MISSION

We are working for
Farms and Food Forever.

OUR VISION

OFA has established a vision for agriculture that guides its work on behalf of our members and the agriculture industry. Our vision for Ontario agriculture:

- ✓ Farming is a science – sustainably producing food, fibre and fuel.
- ✓ Consumers trust the food system, which offers nutritious food across the province and around the world.
- ✓ Farm viability is supported by an effective and efficient legislative and regulatory framework.
- ✓ Farmers are proud advocates and leaders in adaptation and innovation.





The agri-food industry contributes
\$50.7 billion
in GDP to Ontario's economy



Ontario's agri-food
sector employs more than
870,000
people



Nearly
50,000
farms across the province



Farmers grow and produce
more than 200
different food products



11.7 million
acres of farmland
in Ontario



Ontario exports
\$26.2 billion
in agri-food products
annually

KEY PRIORITIES, STRATEGIC FOCUS AND OUTCOMES

OFA is optimistic for the future of the agriculture industry, despite the many challenges and obstacles stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

As Ontario emerges from the pandemic and navigates the road to economic recovery, OFA will be a leader for the agri-food sector and rural communities across the province advocating to ensure farms and businesses have the tools, resources and support necessary to remain profitable and sustainable. We will continue to work in the best interests of our members to bring forward the diversity of issues and policies affecting the agri-food sector and rural communities.

It will be critical for the organization and our members to maintain momentum with government policymakers to recognize the powerful economic force the agri-food industry can be for the economy in the pandemic recovery and beyond.

The organization will advocate and work closely with the government, grassroots members and industry stakeholders to ensure essential investments and programs are implemented to support and grow the agri-food sector and our rural communities as priorities shift towards rebuilding the economy.

We are working to ensure the agri-food sector and our rural communities are included, consulted and considered in any new and changing legislation that impacts the sustainability of our farm businesses.

OFA's strategic plan for 2021-2026 outlines our government relations priorities and key areas of focus for the organization as we move towards the future of farming and food production in Ontario. It demonstrates our core values and the desired outcomes of our organizational efforts.

Government relations priorities on the agenda for 2021 and beyond include – maintaining the security of our food value chain, advocating for responsible land use planning and environmental sustainability, pushing for improved rural infrastructure and affordable energy, labour and workforce development and improving access to mental health training and resources.

In order to achieve positive outcomes for these priorities, OFA intends to concentrate on five key areas of focus – advocating on behalf of our membership to all levels of government, building effective stakeholder partnerships, improving organizational effectiveness, communications and public relations and demonstrating desirable attributes as an organization.

OFA's Board of Directors and staff will continue to expand our network and collaborate with local federations, commodity organizations, industry partners, key stakeholders and elected officials at all three levels of government, identifying new ways to support and grow the agri-food industry, and achieve our priorities. OFA recognizes the significant importance of collaboration to amplify our industry's voices and work together for a better, safer, more equitable and prosperous future for all.

The strategic plan will serve as a road map for the organization as we adapt to life after COVID-19. The objective is to guide the organization as we embark on advocacy efforts, organizational growth and effectiveness, partnership development, stakeholder relations, leadership recruitment, research and innovation and communication initiatives.



OFA's strategic priorities and focus will guide the organization over the next five years as we remain committed to improving the organization and the business of farming for all farm businesses across the province.

OFA will utilize our internal and external communications tools to share relevant and timely messaging on issues and priorities outlined in the strategic plan to our target audiences. These actions will help to support and achieve the desired outcomes related to our key areas of focus.

Primary Audience

OFA members – including county and regional federations

Government policymakers – including municipal, provincial and federal

Agriculture industry stakeholders

Secondary Audience

Media

General public

Areas of Focus

Advocacy on behalf of OFA members to all levels of Government

Build Effective Stakeholder Partnerships

Improving Organizational Effectiveness

Communications and Public Relations

Demonstrate Desirable Attributes

Government Relations Priorities

Land Use Planning and Environmental Sustainability

Food Value Chain Security

Labour and Workforce Development

Rural Infrastructure and Affordable Energy

Mental Health and Wellness

ADVOCACY ON BEHALF OF MEMBERS TO ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

FOCUS

STRATEGY

- ✓ Conduct research and data collection and management regarding key issues facing the Ontario agriculture industry to support strategic decision making at the organizational level.
- ✓ Work to create strong proactive liaison with government to ensure OFA is positioned to provide input early in policy development process.
- ✓ Communicate economic opportunity by building awareness of Ontario agriculture as an economic driver.
- ✓ Advocate for provincially mandated and responsible land use planning that specifically recognizes and protects farmland.
- ✓ Encourage county and regional federations to engage in local and provincial advocacy by arming them with the necessary information to host meetings with local representatives at the municipal, provincial and federal levels.
- ✓ Facilitate regular surveys to gauge member input and feedback on key issues and priorities impacting Ontario farm businesses.
- ✓ Continue to advocate on behalf of members based on resolutions endorsed by OFA membership each year at the Annual General Meeting and throughout the year.
- ✓ Identification of strong allies and advocacy partners.



OUTCOMES

- ✓ Identified as the trusted voice for Ontario agriculture.
- ✓ Increased membership and engagement in advocacy at grassroots level.
- ✓ Effective use of technology, including tracking tools such as the government relations tracker and resolutions database to keep board, staff and members informed.
- ✓ Media, communications and advocacy training for members to better utilize our grassroots members as local spokespeople.

STRATEGY

- ✓ Foster and develop collaborative working relationships with commodity and member-organizations with shared objectives, and values to further the goals and objectives of the OFA membership.
- ✓ Proactive identification of strategic advocacy partners on member priorities.
- ✓ Enhance role of board and staff liaison positions with member organizations to encourage sharing of issues, opportunities and resources.
- ✓ Utilize and leverage existing relationships with organizations, committees and boards that OFA board and staff participate in to effectively serve the OFA membership.
- ✓ Identify opportunities to partner, sponsor or participate in events, conferences, farm shows, trade shows etc. to expand knowledge, information, partnerships and advocacy opportunities on behalf of OFA members.



OUTCOMES

- ✓ Collaboration on key issues and priorities impacting Ontario agriculture, including, but not limited to, mental health, land use planning, labour, environmental sustainability, rural infrastructure, energy and food security.
- ✓ Consistent, collaborative and professional messaging across industry, furthering the values, goals and objectives of our membership.
- ✓ Increased membership and engagement.

STRATEGY

- ✓ Review of existing membership model and Federation structure as well as Policy Advisory Council to ensure strong effective grassroots leadership and contribution at all levels of the organization.
- ✓ Continued focus on developing resources and facilitating information exchange with and between Federations to support governance, human resources and financial best practices.
- ✓ Build leadership capacity by developing and implementing a board and staff leadership and succession plan as well as promoting and supporting each other in their own leadership training plan.
- ✓ Strive to improve strategic skill sets and capacity of our member base by providing information, educational and professional development opportunities in areas such as mental health, 4R, health and safety, succession planning, workforce planning and human resources management.
- ✓ Develop and support the adoption of modern technology for board, staff and the Federation network to improve effectiveness and efficiency for the organization.

OUTCOMES

- ✓ Maintain accreditation status as a general farm organization.
- ✓ Influence and recruit the next generation of farm leaders to serve on the board of directors.
- ✓ Attract and retain qualified, knowledgeable staff that choose OFA as a high-performance and respected workplace.
- ✓ Strong Federations across the province, with access to resources and support in advocacy, community engagement, policy, procedure, and governance.
- ✓ Efficient and effective information sharing, reporting on meetings and distributing key messages to our target audiences.
- ✓ Continuous monitoring, review and implementation of new or updated equipment, systems, software, technology and best management practices.



STRATEGY

- ✓ Build and execute a targeted communications plan including a range of channels including television, radio, print, social media.
- ✓ Identify and support organizations dedicated to building public trust for farm practices and environmental practices.
- ✓ Promote existing Best Management Practices (BMP) & development of new BMP to ensure greater awareness and implementation on farm and positive impact to environment.
- ✓ Ensure Ontario has a strong and viable agri-food industry by continuing to address workforce challenges through programs and industry partnerships.

OUTCOMES

- ✓ OFA will continue to be seen as a strong and unified voice for agriculture in Ontario.
- ✓ Position statements will be widely shared through a variety of channels to ensure the position of OFA is well known and regularly communicated to members, government and industry organizations and demonstrates transparency.
- ✓ Engage and collaborate with a broad cross section of industry partners and stakeholders such on projects and initiatives that address industry needs.
- ✓ Continue to utilize the Proud to Lead program to deliver workshops and training seminars of specific interest to members across Ontario.
- ✓ Participate in television and radio campaigns as appropriate to enhance the message and reputation of Ontario agriculture, building upon a strong and credible OFA brand.



DEMONSTRATE DESIRABLE ATTRIBUTES

FOCUS

STRATEGY

- ✓ Ensure effective and efficient management of the OFA and human and financial resources.
- ✓ Commitment to reflect the diversity of our membership in our board, management and staff ensuring diverse skills, experience, backgrounds and perspective.
- ✓ Extend invitations to future farm leaders to participate in OFA advocacy initiatives focused on mentorship and succession planning.

OUTCOMES

- ✓ Development and ongoing review of OFA board and staff policies to ensure they support a professional organization including development of Diversity, Inclusion and Equity statement.
- ✓ Support the development of future agricultural leaders within local Federations, gain experience through involvement with OFA at advocacy events, with an eye towards development of future provincial directors, Policy Advisory Council members and agricultural leaders.
- ✓ OFA remains the preferred option for the Ontario agricultural community in the Farm Business Registration process and attracts new and beginning farmers.

