

Final Report

Cultivating Local

Seizing opportunities to grow Ontario's local agri-products sector



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The Project is funded in part by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness.

OFA worked alongside many collaborative partners to ensure the success of this project. With 30 agricultural and commodity organizations that partnered alongside OFA, organizations such as [Agritourism Ontario](#), [Farmers' Markets Ontario](#), and others ensured that we had expert speakers and resources that supported the diversity of all farmers and prospective farmers looking to sell local products direct to consumers.

Executive Summary

In response to growing demand and interest in local selling opportunities, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) launched the *Cultivating Local: Seizing Opportunities to Grow Ontario's Local Agri-Products Sector* project to help producers explore direct-to-consumer sales. As part of this work, 640 farmers from across Ontario shared their experiences through an online survey, providing valuable insight into what is working, what is holding producers back, and where additional support is needed. These findings helped shape a series of nine interactive online workshops and a publicly accessible online resource hub designed to connect producers with practical tools, expert advice, and business planning resources.

The workshops focused on practical farmer-driven advice, paired with expert speakers and open discussions. Participants appreciated the hands-on tips, real-world examples, and opportunities to connect with peers and industry experts. Topics included market trends and in-demand products, getting started in value-added agriculture, selling at farmers' markets, selling to restaurants and institutions, selling online and using social media, labelling and product attributes, exploring agritourism, selling local in rural and remote Ontario, and opportunities beyond food textiles including ornamental horticulture and more.

An online resource hub was developed to be a long-term, open-access tool for both farmers and service providers looking to sell directly to consumers. The hub includes nine workshop recordings, key contacts, farm decision calculators, regulations, courses, toolkits, marketing materials, website builders, and nine topic-specific checklists with step-by-step business guidance.

This report summarizes the methodology and key takeaways for organizations looking to support farmers on their direct-to-consumer business through workshops. It outlines the Cultivating Local project's approach, including the farmer survey, workshop planning and delivery, post-workshop feedback, and the development of the online resource hub and business planning checklists. Key lessons for successful engagement included creating accessible promotional materials, offering concise sessions, blending expert insights with farmer-led discussions, involving local partners, and ensuring resources were easy to access after the event.

Cultivating Local Checklists

1. Getting Started In Direct-to-Consumer Sales
2. On-Farm Stands and Stores
3. Agritourism
4. Value-added Food and Beverage
5. Direct to Consumer Marketing
6. Social Media
7. Selling your Products Online
8. Selling at Farmers' Markets
9. Selling to Restaurants and Retailers



1.0 Introduction

To strengthen Ontario's local agri-food sector the OFA launched the Cultivating Local project. In response to increasing interest in buying and selling local, Cultivating Local provided resources, insights, and connections to help farmers and aspiring farm entrepreneurs better navigate opportunities to sell directly to consumers.

Between August 2024 and February 2025, Cultivating Local hosted nine interactive workshops, a province-wide survey of farmers, and developed an online resource hub. This report summarizes the methodology and key takeaways for organizations to support farmers on their direct-to-consumer business through workshops.

Why Ontario agriculture matters

Ontario's agriculture and agri-food sector is a powerhouse:

- \$50.7 billion contribution to provincial GDP
- 871,000 Ontarians employed in agri-food
- 200+ products grown or harvested locally
- 1 in 9 Ontarians employed in the sector

With growing consumer interest in food traceability, freshness, and sustainability, demand for local products continues to rise. The Cultivating Local project aimed to help farmers capture this demand by increasing awareness, knowledge, and business skills to sell direct-to-consumer and through new market channels.



2.0 Methods

The project went through four key phases, each designed to build on each other and strengthen our understanding of how to support Ontario's local agri-products sector (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Phases of the Cultivating Local Project.

2.1 Farmer Survey

From August 13 to September 15, 2024, 640 farmers from across Ontario completed an online survey. The survey captured valuable insights on the barriers and opportunities producers face when selling local, including technology use, marketing, and business supports.

Key findings include:

- Farmers see the top benefits of selling directly to consumers being increased income potential (54%) and connecting with consumers (49%).
- The top challenges in selling direct to consumer include effective advertising and marketing (40%) and managing costs and profitability (29%).
- New farmers express the most interest in learning about selling online and leveraging social media platforms (69%).
- Farmers in Northern Ontario show high interest in selling direct to consumers (70%).
- A majority of respondents (61%) indicate they do not have an online presence for their farms.

For more information, the survey results can be found in [Appendix A](#).



2.2 Workshop planning and delivery

Nine free online workshops were hosted between November 2024 and February 2025, each focusing on a different opportunity for selling local agri-products in Ontario. Topics were selected based on input from OFA members, industry trends, and producer needs.

Each session was 2 hours, featuring a mix of farmer stories, expert panels, and Q&A. Session recordings are available online at www.ofa.on.ca/cultivating-local. Find a description and who spoke at each of the workshops in the table below. To learn more, check out the information packages for each workshop in [Appendix B](#).

Table 1. Cultivating local workshops with descriptions and speakers.

| Topic and description | Speakers and subtopics |
|---|--|
| <p>Market trends and in-demand local products in Ontario</p> <p>Farmers explored the basics of selling to Ontarians. An overview of the key findings from the farmer survey was presented. Participants left with a better understanding of how “local” is defined by different customers, and what it takes to build lasting relationships with buyers.</p> | <p>Keynote: All roads begin at the farm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tara Pereira – Executive Director, Vermont Fresh <p>Foodland Ontario: Consumer Insights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carolyn Puterbough – Business & Economic Advisor, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) <p>Panel Session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amy Bowen – Director of Consumer, Sensory and Market Insights, Vineland Research & Innovation Centre Erica Pate - Fruit Crop Specialist, OMAFA Nicole Marenick – Managing Director, MM Marketing |
| <p>Getting started in value-added agriculture, food and beverage</p> <p>While regulations can be complex, the value-added pathway offers farmers a way to connect with consumers in a new way and diversify their farm income. Participants left with a better understanding of how to navigate local to provincial regulations and policies and where to find the supports and resources needed to get started when adding value.</p> | <p>Presentation – Permitted Uses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> John Turvey – Senior Policy Advisor, Land Use Policy & Stewardship, OMAFA <p>What to expect when you’re adding value: Practitioner perspectives on what you need to know to get started</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> John Molenhuis – Business Analyst and Cost Production Specialist, OMAFA William Cottingham – Farm Property Valuation Specialist, Municipal Property Assessment Corporation Stephanie Balaban, Manager – Liquor Eligibility, Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario Kyle Meikle – Supervisor, General Programs (Health Protection), Region of Peel – Health Services <p>Peer Panel: Value-Added Stories from Ontario Farmers</p> |

| Topic and description | Speakers and subtopics |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angela Devitt – Business Owner, Stone Bridge Flour • Tom Heeman – Chief Flavour Officer, Heeman's |
| <p>Selling at farmers' markets</p> <p>Farmers' markets offer a valuable opportunity to connect with customers, the community, and build the farm brand. Panelists emphasized the importance of planning/preparation, proper food safety, risk management (e.g., getting insurance), attractive displays, clear signage, and understanding customer preferences. Participants left with practical tips for improving their presence at farmers' markets and a deeper understanding of what makes this sales channel an attractive option for selling direct.</p> | <p>Food safety, risk management, & insurance: An introduction to the key considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachael McArthur – Senior Public Health Inspector, Regional Municipality of Durham • James Yang – Partner Success Specialist, Duuo by Co-operators • Catherine Clark – Executive Director, Farmers' Markets Ontario <p>Grassroots insights: Farmer experience and lessons learned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jenny Groenheide – Farmer, Tarrymore Farms and Thunder Bay Country Market Board Director • Alex Chesney – Registered Dietitian, Thames River Melons • Erin McLean – Farmer, McLean & Buckhorn Berry Farms <p>The Power of Foodland Ontario</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jeff O'Donnell – Team Lead, Domestic Marketing Unit, OMAFA |
| <p>Selling to restaurants and institutions</p> <p>Selling to local restaurants and institutions can open farmers up to new local food markets by connecting them to chefs, and food service buyers. Building strong relationships was a key takeaway, with tips like bringing product samples and maintaining consistency. Participants left with a better understanding of how to find, build, and maintain these relationships and what local restaurants and institutions might be looking for.</p> | <p>Selling to restaurants: Advice and lessons learned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul Sawtell – Co-Founder and CEO, 100km Foods <p>Rooted in Ontario: Insights from businesses on nurturing local food relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brianna Humphrey – CEO, Radical Gardens • Dr. Genevieve Sartor – Owner, New Grain Kitchen • Jackie Fraser – Owner, Fraberts Fresh Food <p>An introduction to Feast On</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kshitij Ratan – Program Sales Coordinator, Culinary Tourism Alliance <p>Farm-to-Fork: Strengthening partnerships between farmers, distributors, and universities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woody Darling – District Sales Manager, Flanagan Food Service • Tracey Bechtel – Produce Manager, Flanagan Food Service • Mark Kenny – Senior Manager, Procurement, University of Guelph |

| Topic and description | Speakers and subtopics |
|---|--|
| <p>Selling online and leveraging social media platforms</p> <p>Selling online and using social media platforms can be a great tool to expand your farm business and increase exposure, but it can also be a daunting step. This workshop covered tips and tricks from a marketing expert and real life experience from fellow farmers on using social media to grow your business and sell products online.</p> | <p>Presentation – Social media 101</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nicole Marenick – Managing Director, MM Marketing <p>Farmer insights: How to elevate your social media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emily Fitzpatrick – Farmer-Florist, Mapleton Acres Romy Schill – Owner, Revolution Wool Company <p>Growing digital: Farmers’ experiences in online markets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RJ Taylor – Owner, Springhills Fish/Cedar Crest Fish Emma Butler – Owner, J&E Meats |
| <p>Labelling and attributes: organic, free range, gluten-free and more</p> <p>Understanding how clear, strategic labelling is one way that farmers can increase their direct-to-consumer sales and open doors to new markets. From key provincial and federal labelling regulations to participating in industry attribute programs, participants learned the basics of what they need to know. They also heard practical tips from producers and learned about relevant programs to support their next steps.</p> | <p>Labelling compliance 101: Key regulations and considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wenrong Sun – Senior Inspector, Canadian Food Inspection Agency <p>Becoming certified organic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erica Shelley – Executive Director, Organic Council of Ontario <p>Farm to label: Navigating labelling programs for Ontario Farmers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chelsea Martin – Program Manager, Ontario Cattle Feeders’ Association David Beking – Managing Partner, Beking’s Poultry Farm Luc Chabot – Senior Director of Business Stakeholder Relations, Dairy Farmers of Canada |
| <p>Exploring agritourism opportunities</p> <p>Agritourism, growing in popularity, is a great way to build community connection while diversifying the farm business. During this workshop, participants learned about the risks that come along with agritourism, how to mitigate those risks, how to plan your agritourism project, and tips for marketing their experience. Regulations and planning policies farmers should be aware of when considering agritourism were discussed.</p> | <p>The Growing Agritourism Act: What you need to know</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kevin Vallier – Executive Director, Agritourism Ontario <p>From field to visitor: Building an agritourism experience on your farm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jim Muzyka – Owner & General Manager, Terre Bleu & Fennario Meadows Hollis English – Entrepreneurship Coach and Consultant Heather Brophy – Owner, Valleyview Little Animal Farm <p>Navigating the red tape roundabout for agritourism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Krista Hulshof Duynisveld – CEO, VELD Architect |

| Topic and description | Speakers and subtopics |
|--|--|
| <p>Selling local in rural and remote Ontario</p> <p>Selling in rural and remote Ontario can open businesses to loyal, local customers and support farm business diversification; but it also comes with unique challenges. A key takeaway was the importance of building strong community ties, gathering customer feedback, and leveraging outside connections. Participants gained practical advice from experienced farmers who are driving direct sales and agritourism in “far from urban” areas.</p> | <p>Rural Agri-Innovation Network – Building a resilient farm and food sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Thompson – Vice President of Programs, Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre <p>Panel: Growing your direct-to-consumer farm business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jacob Murray – Chief Operating Officer, Topsy Farms Nancy Frey – Owner, Breault Family Farm <p>Building bridges: Direct sales strategies in rural and remote communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Angela Pollak – Partner, Four Corners Algonquin |
| <p>Beyond food: textiles, ornamental horticulture & more</p> <p>Selling non-edible products like textiles, botanicals, and ornamental horticulture is a growing opportunity for Ontario farmers looking to diversify beyond food. A key takeaway was the value of using social media to tell your farm’s story, understanding your market, and being aware of relevant regulations. Whether just starting out or already selling, participants gained insights on connecting with peers and accessing shared resources to grow their business beyond the plate.</p> | <p>Using branding and marketing communications to generate value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Alicia Rihn – Assistant Professor, University of Tennessee Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics <p>Beyond the Barn: Direct-to-consumer strategies from Ontario farmers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Romy Schill – Owner, Revolution Wool Co. Mark MacGowan – Owner, MacGowan’s Christmas Tree Farm Mike Degagne – Owner, Waxwing Commons Janis Harris – Flower Farmer Florist, Harris Flower Farm <p>Supporting Ontario Farmers: Insights from agri-product commodity organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Melanie Kempers – General Manager, Ontario Beekeepers’ Association Matthew Rowe – CEO, Campaign for Wool |

During each workshop, a fluid approach was taken to ensure the needs of attendees were met. The audience was asked a series of questions. For example, the farmers’ market attendees were asked:

- Where are you tuning in from today?
- Where are you at in your journey with selling at farmers’ markets?
- What are some challenges or hurdles you’ve encountered while selling at farmers’ markets?

Asking these questions helped speakers know what level of detail to go in on the subjects and help make sure the workshop addressed the challenges and hurdles participants have been struggling with.

2.3 Post-workshop survey

Each workshop included a short post-session survey. This feedback was used to adjust the delivery of future workshops and make sure participants were happy with the topics and content. For example, an adjustment made to the workshop delivery included sending resources mentioned to participants in the post-workshop email. Feedback confirmed that participants appreciated the practical focus, expert advice (i.e., farmers and industry representatives), and ability to ask questions.

A summary of post-workshop surveys can be found in [Appendix C: Post-Workshop Survey Questions and Results](#).

2.5 Development of online resource hub

The resources shared by workshop speakers and attendees have been synthesized into an online resource hub for Cultivating Local. This hub will serve as a long-term, open-access tool for farmers and service providers alike.

The resource hub includes:

- All nine workshop recordings
- Nine topic-specific checklists based on workshop content
- Resources, including:
 - Key contacts to support your direct-to-consumer farm business
 - Farm decision calculators
 - Important regulations and laws
 - Courses/workshops
 - Toolkits/guides
 - Marketing materials
 - Website builders

Checklists

As part of the resource hub, OFA has developed a series of plain language checklists designed to help guide farmers who are looking to expand their operations and sell locally. These concise, easy-to-use checklists are available online as well as in print.

Each checklist helps producers think through key elements such as identifying their audience, accessing business planning resources, understanding relevant policies or by-laws, exploring provincial supports, and engaging new consumers. They also highlight key planning and regulatory information to help farmers move forward with confidence, regardless of where they are in their business journey.

Checklists:

- 1) Getting Started in Direct-to-Consumer Sales
- 2) On-Farm Stands and Stores
- 3) Agritourism
- 4) Value-Added Food and Beverage
- 5) Direct-to-Consumer Marketing
- 6) Social Media
- 7) Selling Your Products Online
- 8) Selling at Farmers' Markets
- 9) Selling to Restaurants and Retailers

3.0 Key takeaways for cultivating local in your community

The Cultivating Local project provided valuable insight into the evolving needs and interests of Ontario farmers when it comes to selling locally. For example, farmers valued:

- Access to trusted information
- Flexible learning formats
- Connection to local support

The following step-by-step guide outlines the practical process our team used to develop and deliver each workshop and may serve as a useful tool for others looking to replicate a similar approach in their own communities.

Workshop setting

Workshops can be hosted virtually, or in person. Each approach has its benefits and drawbacks, so it is always important to choose the setting that best aligns with the purpose and desired outcomes for your workshops (Table 2 and 3).

Table 2. Benefits and drawbacks to virtual workshops.

| Virtual workshops | |
|---|--|
| Benefits | Drawbacks |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessible for most• Recordings can be saved and shared after the session• Can be more cost effective• Farmers are busy – 2 hours online is not the same as 2 hours in person• Works well when content is relevant to a large region• Can bring in speakers who otherwise may not attend in-person | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not as easy to forge relationships• Attendees may split their attention, which can limit interactivity• Can pose a barrier for people who don't use technology (e.g., Mennonite communities) |
| General tips for hosting virtual workshops | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure there is a clear way for participants to ask questions and receive answers• Enable closed captioning• Make recordings available• Incorporate visuals to keep the audience engaged | |



Table 3. Benefits and drawbacks to in-person workshops.

| In-person Workshops | |
|---|---|
| Benefits | Drawbacks |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enables relationship building:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• tourism staff-to-farmers,• business-to-business,• speakers-to-businesses, and• economic development• Allows for more interactive and engaged conversation• Accessible for people who don't use technology or who have poor internet connectivity | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can be more expensive (venue costs, speaker travel fees/honorariums, etc.)• May need to plan around seasonal availability to ensure farmers can attend• Appropriate venues may be limited depending on your audience size• Generally, require more lead-up time for planning• Need to be mindful of timing for participants with conflicting day jobs |
| General tips for hosting in-person workshops | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give participants time to network and get to know one-another (i.e., if you are hosting in-person, ensure there is a purpose for being together, in the same room)• Hybrid is also an option; but it must be done properly (i.e., try to ensure the in-person experience is like the virtual experience) | |

Workshop format

Multiple, shorter (i.e., 1.5-2 hour) sessions allows farmers to prioritize their time across topics. Focusing on specific topic areas during each workshop enables farmers to attend the topic areas of relevance for their farm business.

To structure the workshops to be educational, allow time for formal presentations and subject matter while also allowing time for less formal and conversational items on your agenda (e.g., Q&A). Ensure you budget enough time for each topic area during your workshop (e.g., some topics may need more time than others).

Bringing in expertise

When it comes to inviting speakers or guests to participate in your workshops, it is important to bring in people with the right expertise. Your speakers may not always have a background in agriculture, and that is okay! It is also important to bring in farmers that have boots on the groups experience that can be practical to the audience.

Drawing on local contacts

Consider whether you have local marketing agencies who would be willing to lend their expertise for a session on marketing and branding

Try to draw in local contacts where possible and encourage business-to-business connections.

Encourage your local staff to participate as an opportunity to get to know farmers in your local business community. Public health, planning, economic development, and tourism staff, for example, could all participate in your workshops. The workshops can also be an opportunity for

your local staff to educate about resources available, including local Community Futures, Small Business Centres, Chambers of Commerce, among others.

Give yourself time to plan and advertise for your workshops. Sharing your agenda and speakers with potential attendees ahead of time will help increase participation. Try to connect with farmers in your community through local organization representatives to advertise your workshops (e.g., the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, National Farmer's Union, Christian Farmer's Federation of Ontario, and commodity associations <https://ofa.on.ca/commodity-organizations/>).

Other tips

- ✓ Providing farmer and agri-food specific resources are helpful
- ✓ If resources are tight, try collaborating with neighbouring communities
- ✓ Advertise the event via social media, newsletters, and networks. Develop a short outreach plan to guide your efforts
- ✓ Prepare discussion questions (and backup ones) that are shared with speakers before the event
- ✓ Don't forget to follow-up with participants after your workshop(s) with any important resources shared during your session



Appendices

Appendix A: OFA Cultivating Local Survey Results



Cultivating Local

Seizing Opportunities to Grow
Ontario's Local Agri-Products Sector

Survey Results

August - September 2024

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Methods

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) conducted the Cultivating Local survey to better understand current and prospective Ontario farmers' interest in direct-to-consumer opportunities, and the associated benefits and challenges. The survey opened August 13, 2024 and closed on September 16, 2024. The survey was open to both OFA members and non-members. OFA promoted the survey through multiple outreach channels (e.g., social media, newsletters, in-person events and more) and received 640 responses. The findings from the survey complement the workshop agenda and resources for the Cultivating Local project.



A1.1 Key Findings

- The top benefits of selling directly to consumers include the increased income potential (54%) and connecting with consumers (49%).
- The top challenges of selling directly to consumers is effective advertising and marketing (40%) and managing costs and profitability (29%).
- New farmers are most interested in learning about selling online and leveraging social media platforms (69%).
- Northern Ontario farmers are the most interested in learning about selling local in rural and remote Ontario (70%).
- Most respondents (61%) do not have an online presence for their farms.
- Top 3 on-farm sales types:
 - Custom order pick-up (53%)
 - Farm gate stand (40%)
 - On-farm retail store (26%)
- Top 3 off-farm sales types:
 - Farmers' markets (47%)
 - Wholesale (37%)
 - Retail or grocery (29%)
- Top agritourism activities:
 - Farm tours (65%)
 - Farm activities (40%)
 - Teaching or educational workshops (36%)
- Top 4 areas of interest for direct-to-consumer sales:
 - Farm gate stand (32%)
 - On-farm retail store (21%)
 - Farm stay or bed and breakfast (20%)
 - Selling at farmers' markets (20%)

A2.1 Summary Data

A2.2 Respondent Demographics

In total, 94% of the 640 survey respondents were OFA members. The respondents varied in their experience with farming/agriculture, with 56% identifying as established and 17% as retiring. Individuals at all stages of the farming journey responded to the survey; 14% of respondents belonged to the next generation of the farm families and 9% were new farmers.

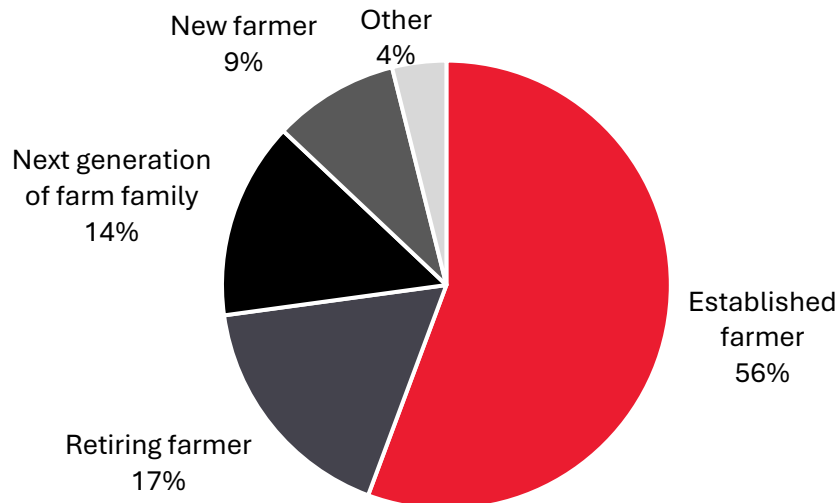


Figure 2. Respondents' experience with farming/agriculture. (n=637)

Most (60%) respondents were 60 years old and above.¹ Farmers aged 35-59 (33%), and farmers under 35 (6%) also participated in the survey.

¹ As of the 2021 Census of Agriculture, the [average age](#) of an Ontario farmer was 56 years old.

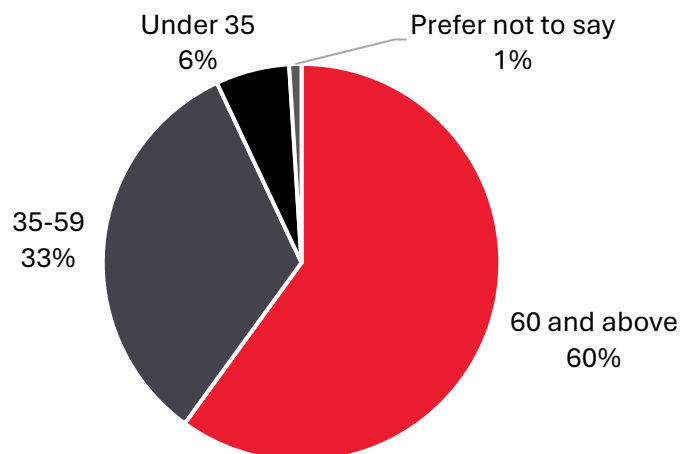


Figure 3. Respondents' age. (n=635)

A2.3 Farm Demographics

Almost all (95%) respondents rent or own farmland.²

Farmers across the province completed the survey, providing a good representation from all geographies.³

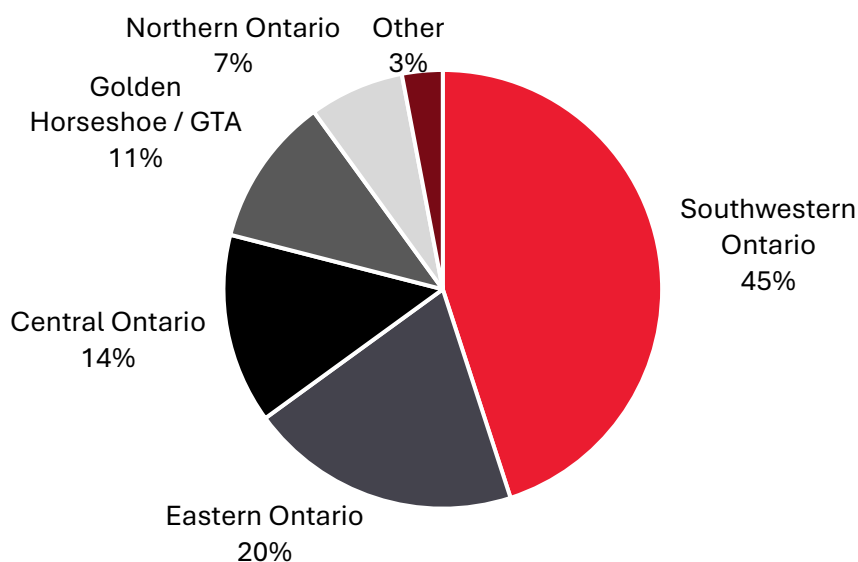


Figure 4. Location of respondents' farms across the province. (n=575)

² Of the respondents who do not rent or own farmland, 62% were established or retiring farmers, 22% were new or next generation of family farmers, and 16% were already retired or provide supports for agriculture.

³ All farms in Ontario are distributed as follows: 69% in southwestern Ontario, 14% Eastern, 13% Golden Horseshoe/GTA, and 4% Northern. (Statistics Canada, 2021)

Most respondents (72%) were from farms that have operated for over 20 years. There was also a good representation of newer farms, with 9% of all respondents' farms being established in the last five years. In Eastern Ontario, the representation of newer farms was even higher (18%).

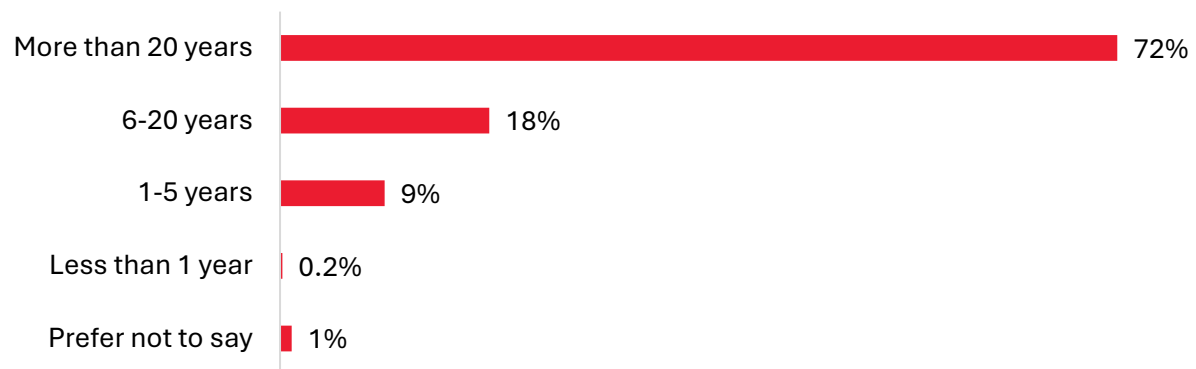


Figure 5. Number of years respondents' farms have been in operation. (n=578)

The most common commodity produced was grains and oilseeds (63%).

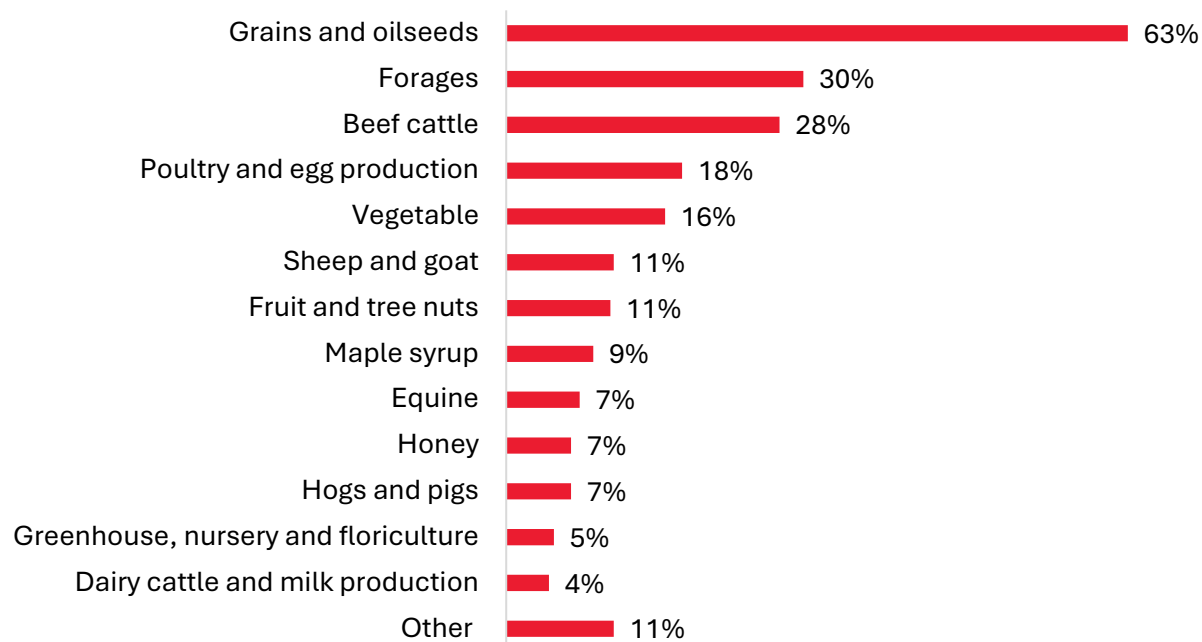


Figure 6. Commodities on respondents' farms.⁴ (n=578)

When asked about whether respondents have farm certifications, 12% said yes. The most common answers were organic, CanadaGAP, Environmental Farm Plan, and several commodity-specific verification programs for quality assurance.

Other than being a member of OFA, respondents belonged to the following farm associations and organizations:

- Commodity organizations (21%)
- Farm Fresh Ontario (6%)
- Farmers' Markets Ontario (5%)
- Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario (3%)
- Organic Council of Ontario (2%)



Figure 7. Types of certifications that respondents' farms have. (n=68)

⁴ Respondents could select multiple answers.

Some respondents selected other and listed farm organizations such as the local soil and crop improvement association, local Farm Fresh groups, Farm & Food Care, local farmers' market, Regeneration Canada, and FeastON.

A2.4 Farmer demographic direct-to-consumer experience

Just under half (49%) of respondents indicated that they already sell direct-to-consumers. Of these respondents, the majority (88%) already sell directly to consumers with 70% doing so for over six years. Almost a third (29%) of respondents who already sell direct-to-consumer are interested in offering agritourism activities.

Respondents that were most likely to already be selling direct-to-consumer based on the commodities they produced included: greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture (93%), maple syrup (90%), and honey (89%).

Almost half of the respondents who already create value-added products, value-added foods, and agritourism are new to it with under five years of experience (45%, 41%, and 41% respectively).

Table 4. Respondents experience and interest with selling direct-to-consumer activities.⁵

| Selling direct-to-consumer activities | Already participate | Interested in participating | Years involved |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Selling agriculture/food products directly to the consumer | 88% | 3% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 70% have been doing this for 6 years or more |
| Creating value-added foods (e.g. jam, pies, hamburgers) | 32% | 27% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 41% have been doing this for under 5 years |
| Creating value-added beverages (e.g. wine, beer, kombucha) | 8% | 20% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 65% have been doing this for 6 years or more |
| Creating other value-added products (e.g. wool, beauty products) | 19% | 24% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 45% have been doing this for under 5 years (16% for less than 1 year) |
| Offering agritourism activities (e.g. corn maze, farm tour) | 26% | 29% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 41% have been doing this for under 5 years |

⁵ For more information, see Figure 14 and 15 in Appendix A.

The majority (74%) of Northern Ontario respondents sell directly to consumers, offer agritourism, and/or create value-added products. In contrast, only 38% of Southwestern respondents participate in these activities.⁶

Most (65%) new farmer respondents sell directly to consumers, offer agritourism, or create value-added products. Other respondents are also involved, including next generation farm family members (53%), established farmers (47%), and retiring farmers (41%).⁷

Most (61%) of all respondents do not have online presences for their farms. Of those that do, most use social media (80%) or have a website (65%). Other platforms include email or other online resources such as Amazon or Kijiji.

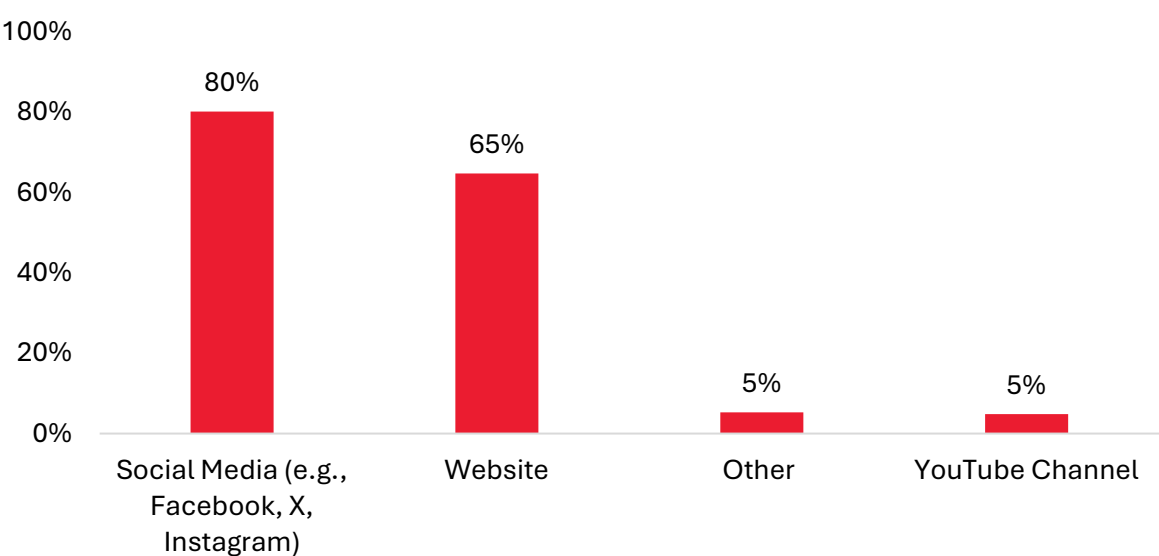


Figure 8. Respondent's method for having an online presence for their farm. (n=227) Please note, respondents could select multiple answers.

The majority (75%) of respondents indicated that their gross annual direct consumer sales is less than \$49,999. Pen and paper is still the most common method (56%) for managing direct to consumer sales. Other methods include Microsoft Word/Excel (36%) and POS Systems (e.g., Square) (31%).

⁶ For more information, see Figure 16 in Appendix A.

⁷ For more information, see Figure 17 in Appendix A.

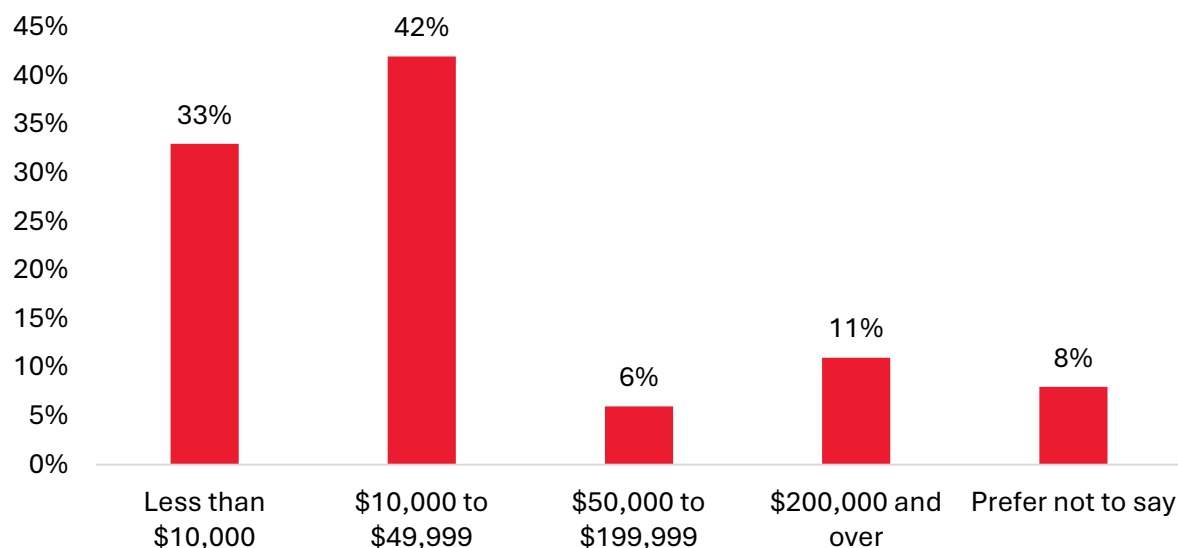


Figure 9. Respondents' gross annual direct-to-consumer sales. (n=219)

Over half (53%) of the respondents who participate in on-farm sales do custom order pick-up. The next highest on-farm activity is farm gate stands (40%) and on-farm retail stores (26%).

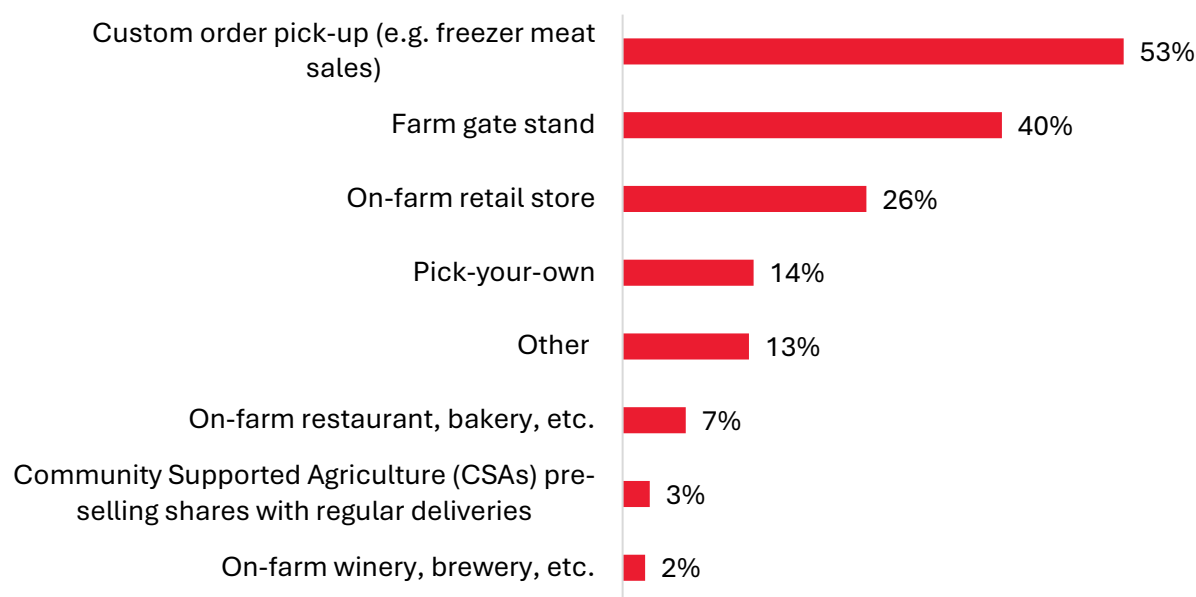


Figure 10. Types of on-farm sales respondents participate in. (n=210)⁸

Almost half (47%) of the respondents who participate in off-farm market channel activities participate in farmers' markets. This is followed by wholesale (37%), retail/grocery (29%), and direct to restaurants (25%).

⁸ Respondents could select multiple answers.

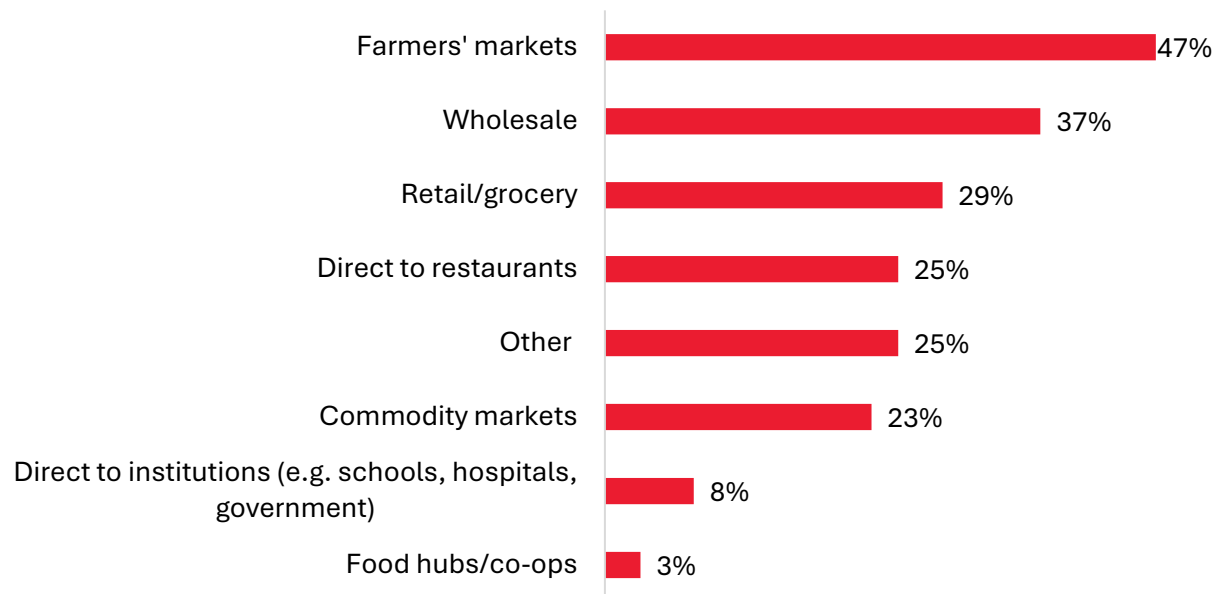


Figure 11. Types of off-farm market sales respondents participate in. (n=132)⁹

Most respondents (65%) who participate in agritourism activities host farm tours. This is followed by farm activities (e.g., maze, hay rides) (40%) and teaching/educational workshops (36%).

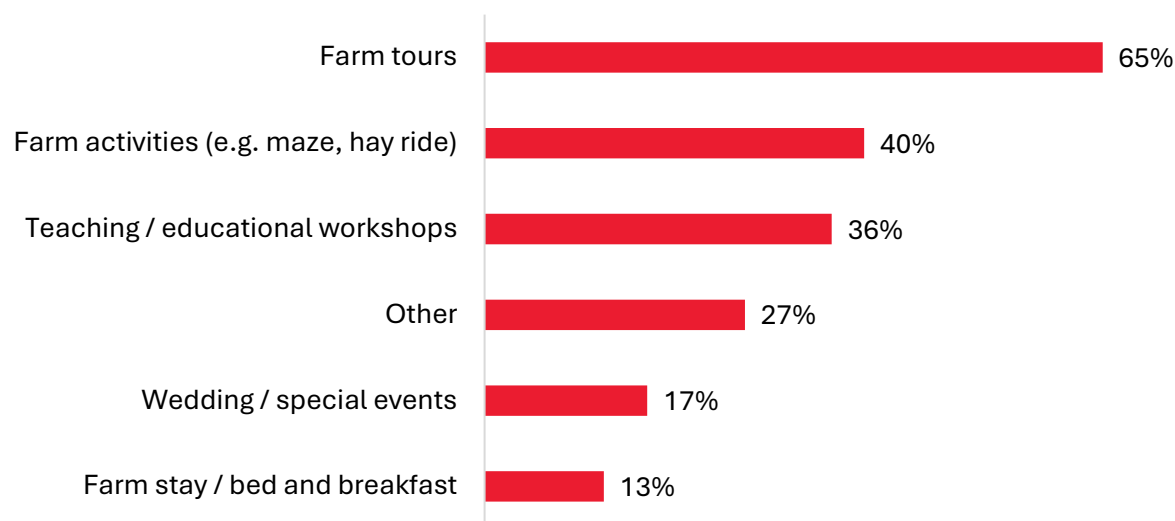


Figure 12. Types of agritourism activities respondents participate in.¹⁰ (n=88)¹¹

⁹ Respondents could select multiple answers.

¹⁰ Respondents could select multiple answers.

¹¹ Respondents that selected “other” participate in photography sessions, farm to table opportunities (e.g., picnic or dinner), and [WWOOF](#).

A2.5 Benefits and challenges of selling directly to consumers, offering agritourism, and/or creating value-added products

Selling directly to consumers includes activities such as selling agricultural products directly to consumers, producing/selling value-added products, and offering agritourism. Common benefits experienced across these activities include connecting with consumers, increased income potential, and educational opportunities. Common challenges across these activities include advertising and marketing, labour availability, time constraints, and regulatory hurdles. Each type of activity also brings unique benefits and challenges, as detailed below.

Benefits

Many common benefits were expressed across the different avenues of selling directly to consumers (Table 2). The top benefits mentioned are detailed below.

Table 5. Benefits of selling directly to consumers, agritourism, and/or creating value-added products.

| Benefit | Selling direct to consumers | Producing/selling value-added products | Offering agritourism |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Increased income potential | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Connecting with consumers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Flexibility, creativity, and personal satisfaction | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Creating a product to be proud of | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Educational opportunities | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Brand development | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Greater autonomy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Reduced waste | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Increased income potential (54%)¹²

Respondents highlighted better control over pricing, higher profit margins, and improved cash flow. These types of sales can help to diversify revenue streams and stabilize income, which is especially valuable during times of fluctuating commodity prices. Current farmers are saying:

- It “can retain a larger part of the profit without having to share profits with retailer.”
- “It improves margins, especially when you can value add multiple steps. For example, grow grains, mill into feed, feed chickens and sell direct.”
- There is a “higher price point—premium pricing gives us the full value for our products.”

Connecting with consumers (49%)

Selling directly to consumers offers producers the chance to build personal relationships, gain customer loyalty, and increase repeat business. By building consumer trust and awareness of their products, respondents have created long-term connections that benefit both producers and consumers. Current farmers are saying:

- "Once they vet you and know your products, they trust you and keep returning—good customer base."
- "Meeting new customers and showing them what and how we grow produce on the farm."
- "Consumers who participate get a much better appreciation of what we do and why we do it."



¹² Percentages in the following list are based on the number of responses about selling directly to consumer, offering agritourism, and producing/selling value-added products.

Educational opportunities (13%)

Producers selling directly to consumers can share knowledge about agriculture and food production. These interactions foster a deeper appreciation of local farming practices and help build lasting connections between producers and their communities. Current farmers are saying:

- "The educational opportunity—people only know what they know, and this is our opportunity to educate others about farming practices."
- "The benefits to the public are enormous, and by extension, to the whole farm community in making others aware of the value of farms."
- "People love to know where their products come from. We make our own oil outside in the still for people to watch, and they go and buy it in the store!"

Flexibility, creativity, and personal satisfaction (12%)

Producers enjoy the flexibility, creativity, and personal satisfaction from selling directly to consumers. This approach allows for family involvement, working from home, and a stronger connection to both the products and consumers, creating a rewarding experience. Current farmers are saying:

- "Satisfaction knowing your hard work is being enjoyed."
- "Being creative with what I'm producing."

Creating a product to be proud of (12%)

Selling directly to consumers brings producers a deep sense of fulfillment and connection to the community. This pride comes from producing high-quality, unique products that are locally grown, fresh, and often not available in traditional markets. Farmers have more control over production, too. Current farmers are saying:

- "Pride in the product that we put out and seeing people enjoy what our farm has to offer."
- "We know and care immensely about what we are selling!"
- "Customers seek out product that isn't carried by all other markets."

Reduced waste

Respondents appreciated the reduced waste benefits of value-added production by using imperfect produce and whole animals and creating new products and revenue streams from items that would have otherwise been discarded.

"Minimizes loss from imperfect vegetables we may not have been able to sell "

Challenges

Many common challenges were expressed across the different avenues of selling directly to consumers (Table 3). The top 5 challenges mentioned are detailed below.

Table 6. Challenges of selling directly to consumers, agritourism, and/or creating value-added products.

| Challenge | Selling direct to consumers | Producing/selling value-added products | Offering agritourism |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Advertising and marketing | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Managing costs and profitability challenges | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Time constraints and heavy workloads | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Public relationships and education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Regulatory hurdles | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Labour challenges | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Production, processing and transportation constraints | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Access/building infrastructure and available space | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Balancing supply and demand | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Competition with other retailers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Start up assistance or the ability to scale up | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Lack of funding opportunities | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |

| Challenge | Selling direct to consumers | Producing/selling value-added products | Offering agritourism |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Insurance and liability | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Weather | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Biosecurity concerns | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Advertising and marketing (40%)¹³

The cost and ability to reach customers, draw them to farm locations, and effectively promote the products or activities is difficult for producers. Respondents also mentioned that maintaining visibility and reaching new audiences creates additional challenges as they try to build their clientele and sustain their businesses. Current farmers are saying:

- “Drawing people into the store or farm [is a challenge]. They may not know we're here, and we struggle with paying marketing professionals.”
- "Marketing takes an enormous amount of time and money away from resources [that should be] dedicated to the farm."
- "Our geographical location [poses a challenge. There's a] long drive between producers [and potential] consumers."

Managing costs and profitability challenges (29%)

Due to high input costs, expensive insurance, and slim margins, producers find that managing costs and maintaining profitability is challenging. Setting fair prices while competing with larger stores is difficult. Respondents struggle with initial investments, inconsistent sales, and pricing strategies. Current farmers are saying:

- “The cost of production and getting that money back from the consumer.”
- “Trying to set a fair price without losing customers.”
- “Cost of insurance to host people and activities on our property” is a challenge.

¹³ Percentages in the following list are based on the number of responses about selling directly to consumers, offering agritourism, and producing/selling value-added products.

Time constraints and heavy workloads (26%)

Balancing production, sales, and customer service is a challenge. Many respondents struggle to maintain regular hours or find time for marketing and customer engagement, especially when also managing farm operations. Current farmers are saying:

- Finding “time for marketing often requires attending venues and events and I work full time off of the farm.”
- “Getting to that point, road mapping, forecasting, and project managing the property development required to make agritourism possible while also trying to just do the agri[culture] part of agritourism is very hard to conceptualize.”
- Finding the “time to get information posted for online sales and keeping the website up-to-date” is difficult to balance.

Specific agritourism challenges

Agritourism presents unique challenges, especially in managing biosecurity risks, ensuring visitor safety, and covering the rising costs of insurance and liability. Farmers must carefully balance allowing public access while mitigating the risks of contamination, disease transfer, and potential legal issues.

It is difficult to “make the farm safe for visitors/from visitors (e.g., biosecurity, theft, damage to property).”

Public relationships and education (22%)

Many producers noted difficulties in managing consumer expectations and emphasized the importance of educating people about the realities of farming. Educating farm visitors about privacy, biosecurity, and property protection is essential for running a successful agritourism operation. Current farmers are saying:

- Managing “people's expectations as they want an 'Instagram farm'... not a farm with noises, mud, and smells.”
- It can be difficult “to educate clients on the cuts and benefits of aged beef.”
- Educating and setting boundaries so “people [stop] stopping in at random times and not understanding biosecurity.”

Specific value-added product challenges

Respondents noted difficulties in accessing financing for start-up costs and to scale up their operations. This often makes it difficult to expand the operations efficiently.

It is difficult to “find a patient lender or government grant to [cover] finance capital, [and] equipment expenses.”

Regulatory hurdles (21%)

From navigating government red tape to adhering to food safety and health regulations, producers expressed difficulty with the complex system of selling directly to consumers, producing value-added products, and running agritourism operations. Many respondents found it hard to expand their business due to these regulatory hurdles. Current farmers are saying:

- Working with “permitting and health inspection can be quite new and confusing” for farmers.

- “Limitations for signage that conforms to Municipal & County bylaws.”
- “Government oversight at municipal levels makes it difficult and expensive to set up the farm. It has taken years to navigate their requirements and a prohibitive amount of money.”

Ideas for helpful resources and supports

Respondents are interested in resources and supports to help them address these challenges. For example, one respondent said they would like to learn “how to get your local government to support agritourism in meaningful ways.” Another is interested in “how to price your products” as well as more learning related to “bookkeeping, accounting, and digital invoicing and payments.”



A2.5 Farmer interest in selling direct to consumer

Of those respondents who weren't currently offering direct to consumer sales, 75 were interested in learning more. Of these respondents, most were interested in farm gate stands (32%), on-farm retail stores (21%), farm stays/bed and breakfasts (20%), and selling at farmers' markets (20%).

The highest interest in farm gate stands was seen in Central Ontario (18%), Northern Ontario (10%), and Eastern Ontario (9%). The next generation of farm families and new farmers were the most interested in learning more about selling direct to consumer (48% and 42%, respectively).

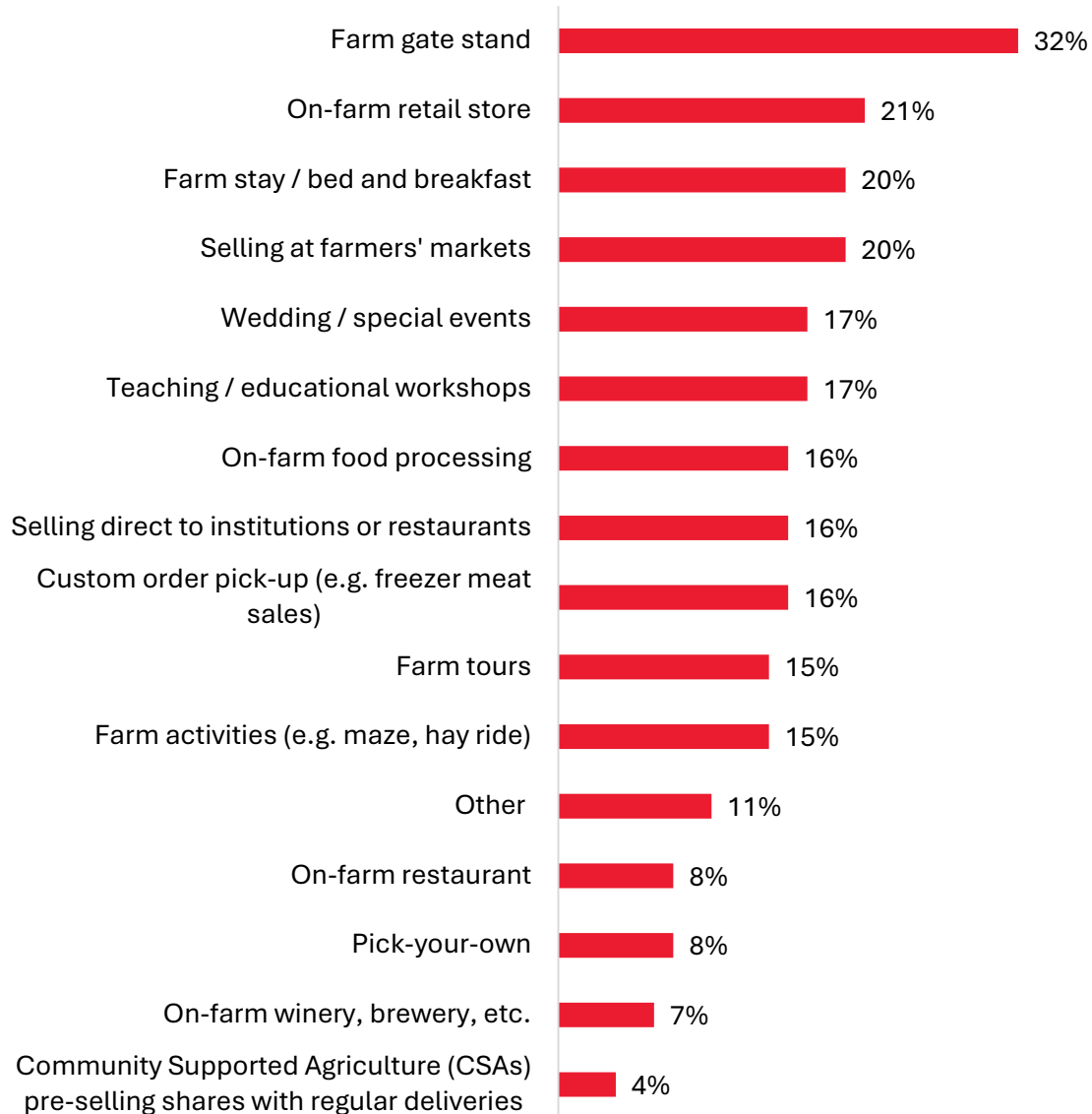


Figure 13. Sales channels and activities that respondents would like to learn more about. (n=75)¹⁴

¹⁴ Respondents could select multiple answers. In total, 216 respondents said they were not interested in learning about any of the above farm activities.

The top three workshops of interest were:

- 1. market trends and in-demand local products in Ontario (54%)
- 2. Selling online and leveraging social media platforms (37%)
- 3. Selling local in rural and remote Ontario (36%)

New farmers were the most interested in the workshop about selling online and leveraging social media platforms (69%). Northern Ontario farmers were the most interested in selling local in rural and remote Ontario (70%).



Figure 14. Respondents' interest in the nine free online workshops OFA is hosting between November 2024 to February 2025. (n=352)¹⁵

¹⁵ Respondents could select multiple answers.

A3.1 Survey Results - Appendix A

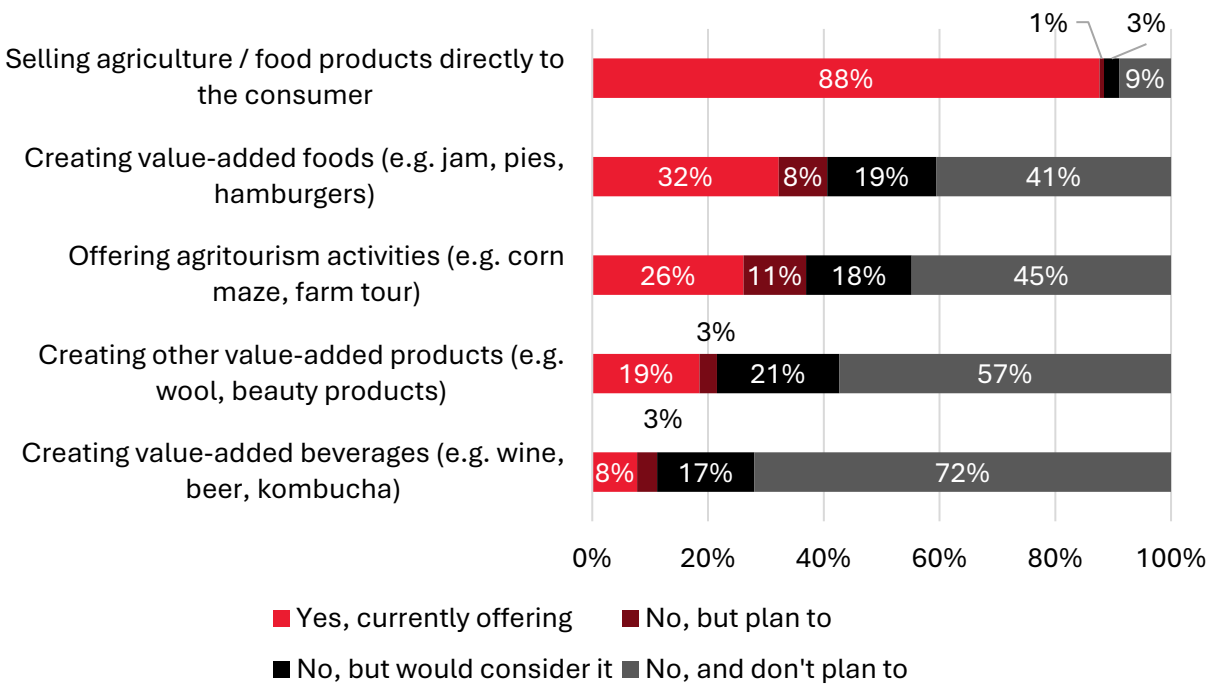


Figure 15. Respondents' experience with selling direct-to-consumer activities. (n=262)¹⁶

¹⁶ This graph only includes respondents who indicated they sell directly to consumers.

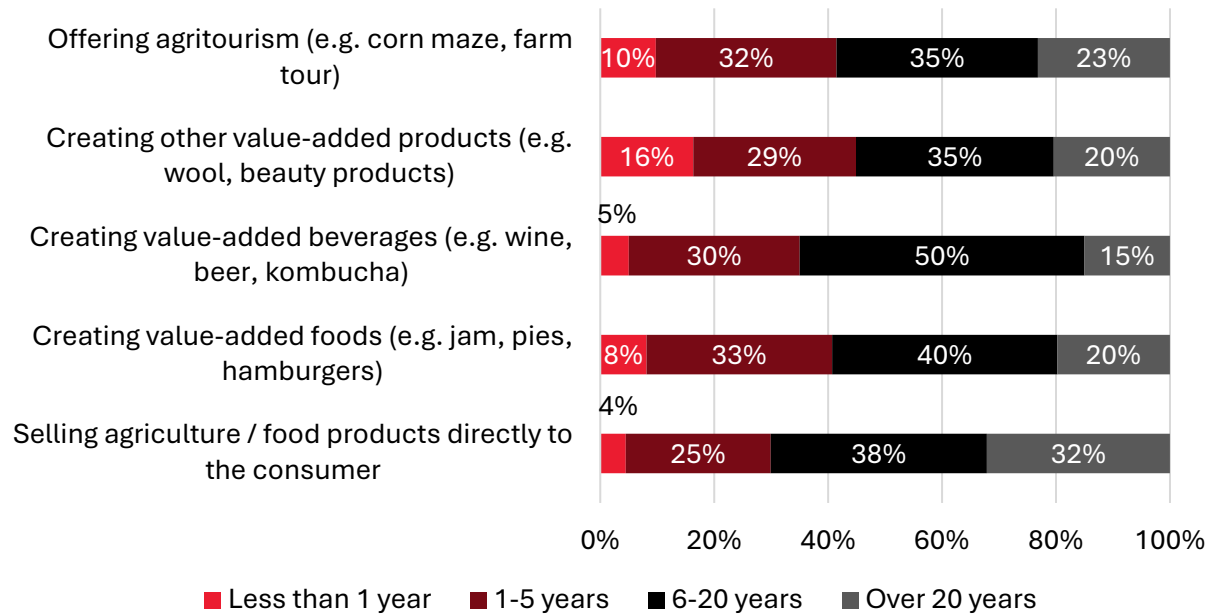


Figure 16. The number of years respondents have participated in each of the activities. (n=249)¹⁷

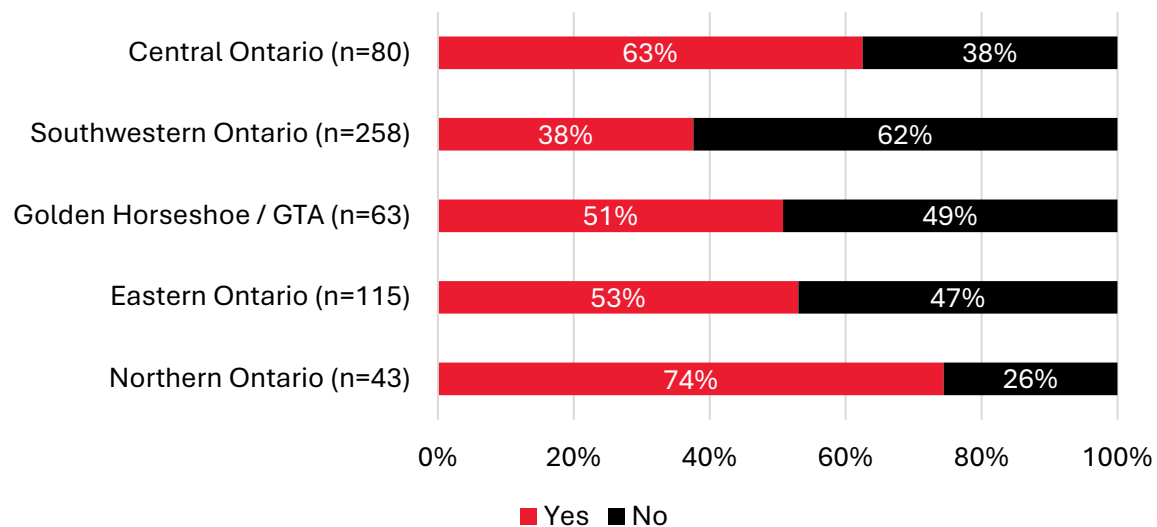


Figure 17. Location of respondents answering whether they sell directly to consumers, offer agritourism, or create value-added agriculture products. (n=559)

¹⁷ The graph does not include respondents who do not offer the activity.

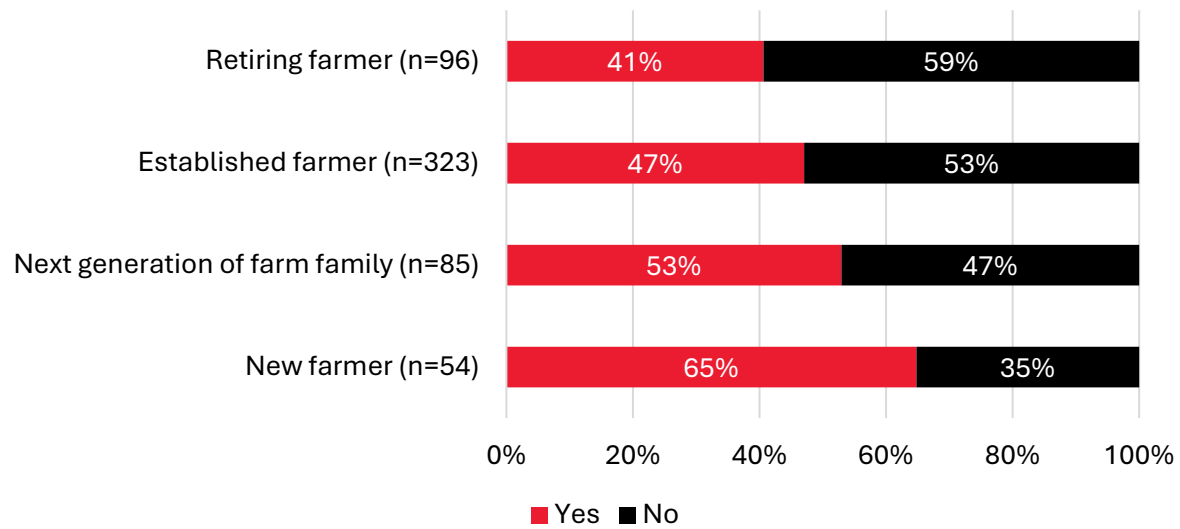


Figure 18. Experience of respondents answering whether they sell directly to consumers, offer agritourism, or create value-added agriculture products. (n=5

Appendix B: Workshop Information Packages

Market Trends and In-Demand Local Products in Ontario

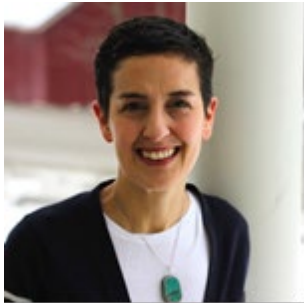


Agenda

| Time | Activity | Speaker |
|----------|--|--|
| 10:00 am | Welcome | Cathy Lennon – General Manager, OFA |
| 10:05am | Setting the stage | Krista Chapman, Consultant and project manager, Wilton Consulting group |
| 10:15am | Cultivating Local – farmer survey results | Krista Chapman |
| 10:25am | Keynote: All roads begin at the farm | Tara Pereira – Executive Director, Vermont Fresh |
| 10:50am | Foodland Ontario: Consumer Insights | Carolyn Puterbough – Business & Economic Advisor, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFA) |
| 11:05 am | Panel session | Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amy Bowen – Director of Consumer, Sensory and Market Insights, Vineland Research & Innovation Centre• Erica Pate - Fruit Crop Specialist, OMAFA• Nicole Marenick – Managing Director, MM Marketing <i>Moderated by Carolyn Puterbough</i> |
| 11:55am | Next steps | Danielle Sharman – Farm Policy Analyst, OFA |
| Noon | Adjourn | |

About the speakers

Tara Pereira



As Executive Director of Vermont Fresh Network, Tara works to advance relationships among farmers, chefs, and consumers to grow markets and eat more locally grown food. In her role, she develops industry facing and public facing programs to foster and support local partnerships. This includes managing the DigInVT.com platform, a website devoted to promoting authentic culinary and agricultural experiences in Vermont and sharing the stories of the food and farm community. Tara has worked in marketing and communications for over 25 years. She began her

career in the San Francisco Bay Area producing television focused on farm to table restaurants and the local farms of Northern California. After moving to Vermont, Tara worked with Vermont nonprofits and small businesses to develop and implement their marketing and communication strategy plans. Most recently in 2022, Tara completed a food studies certificate program at the Anna Tasca Lanza center for Sicilian food culture and knowledge in Sicily, Italy.

Carolyn Puterbough



Carolyn Puterbough works as a Business & Economic Advisor with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. Carolyn's work supports the process of communities identifying and initiating their own solutions to building healthy, economically viable rural communities. Carolyn has worked in economic development for 20 years at both a local and provincial level and in her community is an active volunteer. Carolyn is a University of Guelph grad with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture.

Erica Pate

Erica Pate has been a Fruit Crop Specialist with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) since 2017. As a Fruit Crop Specialist, she is responsible for knowledge mobilization and applied research for Ontario berry growers, focusing on production, pest management, and marketing. Prior to her current role as a fruit crop specialist Erica worked as the Direct Farm Marketing Specialist (OMAFRA).



Dr. Amy Bowen

Amy Bowen is the Director of Consumer, Sensory and Market Insights at the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre. Her research uses sensory and consumer science to understand the drivers that impact consumer preference, choice and adoption of horticultural products and technologies. She leads a group of industry experts with extensive knowledge of horticultural products, value chains and consumer markets to support research and innovation by providing multidisciplinary solutions from concept design and testing to finished product evaluations for fresh, processed or packaged horticultural commodities and technologies.



Amy has a PhD in Biological Sciences with a specialization in Plant Science, Oenology and Viticulture from Brock University, a BSc. Honours in Molecular Biology and Genetics from the University of Guelph and is a Certified Sommelier. She sits on the Scientific Advisory Panel of the Canadian Institute of Food Science and Technology and the Innovation Steering Committee of the Canadian Produce Marketing Association.

Nicole Marenick



With over 20 years experience in consumer & trade marketing, specializing in food and agriculture for the past 18, Nicole Marenick is a well-connected agri-food marketing professional. She has successfully developed and managed campaigns for both new and established brands, industry associations and non-profit organizations. Expertise includes research, digital media management, influencer collaborations, advertising, and PR. She has a Hons. BA in Political Science and Communications and a Post Graduate Diploma in Marketing.

Getting Started in Value-Added Agriculture, Food and Beverage



Agenda

| Time | Activity and speakers |
|----------|---|
| 10:00 am | Welcome Danielle Sharman, Farm Policy Analyst, Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) |
| 10:05am | Setting the stage Krista Chapman, Wilton Consulting Group |
| 10:15am | Presentation – Permitted Uses John Turvey, Senior Policy Advisor Land Use Policy & Stewardship, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) |
| 10:30 am | What to expect when you're adding value: Practitioner perspectives on what you need to know to get started <ul style="list-style-type: none">• John Molenhuis, Business Analyst Cost Production Specialist, OMAFA• William Cottingham – Farm Property Valuation Specialist, Municipal Property Assessment Corporation• Stephanie Balaban, Manager – Liquor Eligibility, Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario• Kyle Meikle, Supervisor, General Programs (Health Protection), Region of Peel – Health Services |
| 11:20 am | Peer Panel: Value-added stories from Ontario farmers <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Angela Devitt, Business Owner, Stone Bridge Flour• Tom Heeman, Chief Flavour Officer, Heeman's |
| 11:50 am | Financing your value-added venture Danielle Sharman, OFA |
| Noon | Adjourn |

About the speakers

Presentation – Permitted Uses

John Turvey



John Turvey has been a practicing land use planner for more than 25 years. After graduating from the University of Western Ontario with a Bachelor's degree in Geography (Urban Development), and Queen's University with a Master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning, John began his professional career as a planner with a brief stint at the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in Toronto.

He later moved to the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) where he has worked as a Rural Planner, a Rural Community Advisor, and a Land Use Policy Advisor. Since March 2021 he has been Senior Policy Advisor in the Land Use Policy and Stewardship Unit of OMAFRA. He has worked on a variety of provincial land use planning initiatives including the Greenbelt Plan, reviews of the Provincial Planning Statement and reviews of the Minimum Distance Separation Formulae. He has appeared as an expert witness before both the Normal Farm Practices Protection Board and the Ontario Land Tribunal. He is a member of the Ontario Professional Planner's Institute (OPPI) and the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP).

What to expect when you're adding value: Practitioner perspectives on what you need to know to get started

John Molenhuis



John has been with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness as the Business Analysis and Cost of Production Specialist for the past 23 years. He leads financial benchmarking projects and cost of production budgeting information for the Ontario agriculture sector. John has a degree in Agricultural Business from the University of Guelph.

William Cottingham



William Cottingham is an acting Manager, Valuation and Customer Relations at the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation with a focus on residential and farm properties.

With 14 years of property valuation experience, William has held various positions including Property Inspector, Property Valuation Analyst and Property Valuation Specialist.

William holds a Bachelor of Education degree with the University of Toronto and an undergraduate degree with Trent University and is an accredited member (M.I.M.A.) with the Institute of Municipal Assessors.

Stephanie Balaban

Stephanie joined the Alcohol & Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO) in 2007 as a Customer Service Representative. She moved to the Licensing & Registration Branch as an Eligibility Officer in 2012. She then held the position of Senior Eligibility Officer from 2016 until April 2024 when she was promoted to Manager – Liquor Eligibility. Prior to coming to the AGCO, Stephanie worked at Kraft Canada and held various positions from 2002 to 2007 including Customer Response Representative, Kraft Kitchens Food Specialist and Product Information Analyst. Stephanie holds a [B.A.Sc.](#) in Food and Nutrition from Toronto Metropolitan University.



Kyle Meikle

Kyle Meikle is a Supervisor at Peel Region Public Health, overseeing a team of Public Health Inspectors who conduct inspections of food premises, recreational water facilities, and small drinking water systems. His team also handles investigations related to these areas, as well as potential rabies exposures and public health hazards. With over 7 years of experience as a Public Health Inspector and 3+ years in a supervisory role, Kyle brings extensive expertise to his position.



Selling at Farmers' Markets



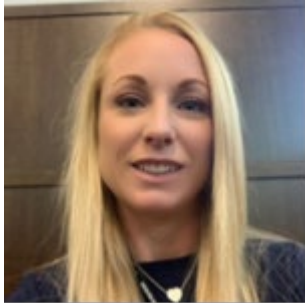
Agenda

| Time | Activity and speakers |
|----------|--|
| 10:00 am | Welcome Danielle Sharman, Farm Policy Analyst, Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) |
| 10:05am | Setting the stage Krista Chapman, Wilton Consulting Group |
| 10:15am | Food safety, risk management, & insurance: An introduction to the key considerations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rachael McArthur, Senior Public Health Inspector, Regional Municipality of Durham• James Yang, Partner Success Specialist, Duuo by Co-operators• Catherine Clark, Executive Director, Farmers' Markets Ontario |
| 10:55 am | Grassroots insights: Farmer experience and lessons learned <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jenny Groenheide, Farmer, Terrymore Farms and Thunder Bay Country Market Board Director• Alex Chesney, Thames River Melons• Erin McLean, McLean & Buckhorn Berry Farms |
| 11:35 am | The power of Foodland Ontario <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jeff O'Donnell, Team Lead, Domestic Marketing Unit, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness |
| 11:55 am | Resources and funding opportunities Danielle Sharman, OFA |
| Noon | Adjourn |

About the speakers

Food safety, risk management, & insurance: An introduction to the key considerations

Rachael McArthur



Rachael is a graduate from the University of Guelph and Toronto Metropolitan University with degrees in Biological Sciences and Public Health & Safety.

In 2009, she was hired with the Durham Region Health Department (DRHD) as a Public Health Inspector and has worked in various program areas. Since 2020, she has worked as the Food Safety & Legal Senior Public Health Inspector.

Rachael has also been the Professional Development councillor on the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors Ontario Branch Executive for the last 10 years.

James Yang



James Yang is the Partner Success Specialist at Duuo by Co-operators. His journey in insurance began in 2019 when he started working at Co-operators, and in April 2023, he began working at Duuo.

James has experience working with various partners, such as property managers, event organizers, and venue owners. His primary responsibility is ensuring partners have everything they need to help their clients manage their risk and get insurance. In building these partner relationships, James has been able to foster a sense of confidence and reliability within farmers' markets that go the extra mile to ensure their events and vendors are protected. Since James joined the team, Duuo by Co-operators has continued to successfully introduce vendor insurance to farmers' markets and vendors across Canada.

Catherine Clark



Catherine Clark is the Executive Director of Farmers' Markets Ontario representing 180 member farmers' markets. She is responsible for delivering and implementing several programs such as a robust group insurance program for members; operating and managing two MyMarket verified farmers' markets in the GTA; and she carries out the delivery of the MyPick verified local farmer program. She is also surrounded by qualified experts in the field of communications, marketing and social media within the organization. She is a Board member of the Ontario Fruit & Vegetable Convention, the Treasurer for Horticultural Crops Ontario

and a Board member of the Canadian Farmers' Markets Association. Catherine owned a small farm in Northern Ontario and now resides in Brighton.

Grassroots insights: Farmer experience and lessons learned

Jenny Groenheide

Today Jenny Groenheide represents Thunder Bay Country Market and their farm, Tarrymore Farms, where she grows and sells beef and eggs. Selling product at a Farmers Market is a large part of the farm business. Being at a market is more than selling, it has become a big part of who Jenny is as a farmer. Her motto is "If you are not happy doing what you do, then make a change and move on".



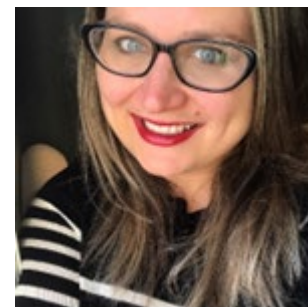
Alex Chesney

Alex Chesney is a Registered Dietitian and farmer living and working on her family's fruit & vegetable farm in Southwestern Ontario. Her dietetic practice is fairly intertwined with her role as a farmer, as they work hand-in-hand. Specifically, Alex's work is rooted in food, nutrition, and agriculture education and communication. She creates spaces for people to experience and interact with their food, at its source, and provide education about how food is grown, how to prepare it, and the nutritional properties it provides. Pick-your-own fruits and vegetables, on-farm workshops and tours, farmers' markets, recipe development, and produce home delivery (paired with nutrition tips, recipes, and tips & tricks for food storage and preservation) are just a few of the activities that keep Alex busy.



Erin McLean

Erin McLean grew up on her family farm and has been attending farmers' markets since they moved there in 1991, when she was five years old. Their farm has since expanded to participate in six farmers' markets each week, in addition to offering on-farm sales, pick-your-own (PYO) activities, and festivals. She loves the sense of community that farmers' markets provide, along with the incredible locally produced items they bring to people from near and far, creating a well-rounded local shopping experience. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her partner and two-year-old daughter. She also loves traveling and always seems to find a new farmers' market to explore, no matter where she is in the world.



The Power of Foodland Ontario

Jeff O'Donnell



Jeff O'Donnell joined the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness in 2007. Since 2011, Jeff has been working as a Team Lead to support the delivery of Foodland Ontario which is the province's key domestic marketing program to encourage consumers to identify, ask for and purchase Ontario foods first. Jeff provides team leadership in the planning and execution of communication and stakeholder relation strategies to support the economic development and competitiveness of Ontario's agri-food sector. Jeff has also been responsible for leading project teams during the implementation of many elements of the province's Local Food Act, such as multiple Local Food Reports and aspirational goals for Local Food Literacy, Access, and Broader Public Sector Local Food Procurement.

Selling to Restaurants and Institutions



Agenda

| Time | Activity and speakers |
|----------|---|
| 10:00 am | Welcome Joanne Fuller, Projects and Training Coordinator, Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) |
| 10:05 am | Setting the stage Krista Chapman, Wilton Consulting Group |
| 10:15 am | Selling to restaurants: Advice and lessons learned Paul Sawtell, Co-Founder and CEO, 100km Foods |
| 11:35 am | Rooted in Ontario: Insights from businesses on nurturing local food relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brianna Humphrey, CEO, Radical Gardens • Dr. Genevieve Sartor, Owner, New Grain Kitchen • Jackie Fraser, Owner, Fraberts Fresh Food |
| 11:10 am | An Introduction to FeastOn Kshitij Ratan, Program Sales Coordinator, Culinary Tourism Alliance |
| 11:25 | Farm-to-Fork: Strengthening partnerships between farmers, distributors, and universities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woody Darling, District Sales Manager, Flanagan Food Service • Tracey Bechtel, Produce Manager, Flanagan Food Service • Mark Kenny, Senior Manager, Procurement, University of Guelph |
| Noon | Next steps and adjourn Joanne Fuller, OFA |

About the speakers

Selling to restaurants: Advice and lessons learned

Paul Sawtell



Paul Sawtell is the co-founder and co-owner of 100km Foods Inc., an award-winning local food distribution company based in Toronto. Since 2008, Paul has sought to create a strong, viable and fair local food economy that benefits not only consumers, but also the farmers and producers who grow their food. It's Paul's belief that for-profit organizations, aimed at doing the right thing, can be instruments for real change. 100km Foods Inc. is currently in its 17th year of operation.

Rooted in Ontario: Insights from businesses on nurturing local food relationships

Brianna Humphrey



Brianna Humphrey created Radical Gardens in 2013 after dealing with a severe illness. It originally started as an organic farm that had an online farmer's market that delivered to your door. In 2015 Brianna purchased a building that was previously a restaurant, and her partner Steve McIntosh came on board. They created a farm to table restaurant in Timmins featuring an ever-changing menu of house made items. Since then, they have achieved many accolades resulting in over 15 awards as well as expanding into catering, specialty bakery, a food truck and so much more.

Dr. Genevieve Sartor



Dr Genevieve Sartor is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Lakehead University in the Department of Health and Behavioural Sciences, specialising in food procurement in Northern Ontario. She is also owner, chef, and sourdough baker at New Grain Bakery and Kitchen on Manitoulin Island, focusing on naturally leavened bread and locally sourced ingredients that champion the bounty and uniqueness of Northeastern Ontario.

Jackie Fraser



Jackie Fraser owns and operates Fraberts Fresh Food in Fergus with her husband, Chef Derek Roberts.

Fraberts is a small, family-owned local food shop specializing in locally grown produce, ready-made meals, local meat, and locally made goodies, with a deli and pizza counter and catering services for all sized events.

Jackie grew up on a dairy farm in Huttonville. She developed a passion for local food while working in farm markets as a teen. She graduated from the University of Guelph in 1994 with a B.Sc.(Agr) and again in 1996 with an M.Sc. in Land Resources Management. She completed the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program in 2006.

Before making the leap as an entrepreneur, Jackie had an engaging career spanning from environmental consulting to the aggregate industry, and finally as Executive Director of Agricultural Groups Concerned About Resources and the Environment (AGCare). She is currently the Vice Chair of the Ontario Food Terminal Board.

Jackie and Derek live in Fergus with their two daughters.

An introduction to Feast On

Kshitij Ratan

Kshitij is a culinary professional and advocate for local food systems, overseeing the Culinary Tourism Alliance's Feast On® program. With a postgraduate degree in Food Tourism Entrepreneurship from George Brown College, he drives sustainable growth by supporting chefs, producers, and food tourism businesses across Ontario.

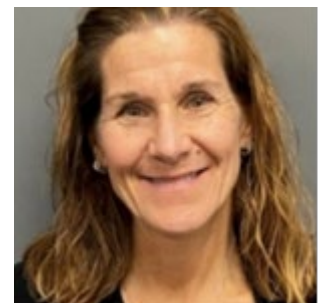
A trained chef with a degree in Culinary Arts, Kshitij brings a wealth of experience from his career in luxury hospitality and fine dining. His expertise in food systems, sustainability, and tourism development underscores his commitment to strengthening local food communities and promoting culinary excellence.



Farm-to-Fork: Strengthening partnerships between farmers, distributors, and universities

Tracey Bechtel

Tracey Bechtel is the Produce Specialist at Flanagan Foodservice. Her career has been with this family owned and operated company for 34 years. She has extensive food service knowledge in the independent restaurant business and was a Territory Manager for 20 years in the Guelph area. Running is her passion, and she is a health nut but loves a good margarita



Mark Kenny



Accredited by the National Institute of Supply Chain Leaders, Mark Kenny is the Senior Manager - Procurement, Planning & Operations at the Hospitality Services, University of Guelph.

He has worked in the hospitality industry since day one and is passionate about local food, local music and global education. Mark's love for local food, procurement and sustainability has allowed him to be involved in many unique projects and to volunteer with regional committees and organizations. One of those organizations, Taste Real - Guelph

Wellington Local Food, appointed him to be their 1st Local Food Ambassador in February 2012. His motto is EatWell. LaughOften. Follow his #LocalFood stories and recipes here: www.cookingbydegrees.ca

Woody Darling



Woody Darling has nearly 40 years of experience in the foodservice industry. His first 20 years were spent in various roles within the restaurant sector. For the past two decades, he has worked in food distribution, first as a Territory Manager and currently as a District Sales Manager at Flanagan Foodservice, Canada's largest family-owned and operated food distributor, with a team of eight sales representatives.

Selling Online and Leveraging Social Media Platforms



Agenda

| Time | Activity and speakers |
|----------|--|
| 10:00 am | Welcome Danielle Sharman, Farm Policy Analyst, Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) |
| 10:05 am | Setting the stage Krista Chapman, Wilton Consulting Group |
| 10:15 am | Presentation – Social media 101 Nicole Marenick, MM Marketing |
| 10:45 am | Farmer insights: How to elevate your social media <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emily Fitzpatrick, Farmer-Florist, Mapleton Acres• Romy Schill, Owner, Revolution Wool Company |
| 11:20 am | Growing digital: Farmers' experiences in online markets <ul style="list-style-type: none">• RJ Taylor, Owner, Spring Fish/Cedar Crest Fish• Emma Butler, Owner, J&E Meats |
| 11:55 am | Wrap up and adjourn Danielle Sharman, OFA |

About the speakers

Presentation – Social media 101

Nicole Marenick



With over 20 years experience in consumer & trade marketing, specializing in food and agriculture for the past 18, Nicole Marenick is a well-connected agri-food marketing professional. She has successfully developed and managed campaigns for both new and established brands, industry associations and non-profit organizations. Expertise includes research, digital media management, influencer collaborations, advertising, and PR. She has a Hons. BA in Political Science and Communications and a Post Graduate Diploma in Marketing.

Farmer insights: How to elevate your social media

Emily Fitzpatrick



Emily is the lead farmer-florist at Mapleton Acres. She's the only farmer-florist who is full-time at their flower farm located between Fergus and Arthur. As a former educator and small business owner, Emily, and her husband, Andy, moved to the farm in 2019 and found flowers in 2021. Mapleton Acres grows many of the flowers you see in flower shops from their 2-acre field, focused on celebrating the beauty that can be grown here in Ontario through their flower subscriptions, on-farm store, workshops, and their signature cut-your-own flowers experience in August and September. Explore the flowers for yourself at

mapletonacres.com or over on Instagram @MapletonAcres.

Romy Schill



The Schill family manages a large commercial sheep flock focusing on accelerates year-round lambing to supply meat lambs to local butchers and breeding stock to other producers. About 10 years ago Romy started to develop a business using their wool and now she works almost full time on the wool retail business doing everything from social media, website design, to product development and production.

Labelling and Attributes: Organic, Free Range, Gluten-Free and more



Agenda

| Time | Activity and speakers |
|----------|---|
| 10:00 am | Welcome Danielle Sharman, Farm Policy Analyst, Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) |
| 10:05 am | Setting the stage Krista Chapman, Wilton Consulting Group |
| 10:15 am | Labelling compliance 101: Key regulations and considerations Wenrong Sun, Senior Inspector, Canadian Food Inspection Agency |
| 10:50 am | Becoming certified organic Erica Shelley, Executive Director, Organic Council of Ontario |
| 11:10 am | Farm to label: Navigating labelling programs for Ontario Farmers <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chelsea Martin, Program Manager, Ontario Cattle Feeders' Association• David Beking, Managing Partner, Beking's Poultry Farm• Luc Chabot, Senior Director of Business Stakeholder Relations, Dairy Farmers of Canada |
| 11:50 am | Resources and funding opportunities Danielle Sharman |
| Noon | Adjourn |

About the speakers

Labelling compliance 101: Key regulations and considerations

Wenrong Sun



Wen Sun has been a Senior Inspector with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) for 18 years, conducting food labelling inspections, food safety investigations, and food recalls. Before joining the CFIA, Wen worked as a microbiologist for a poultry vaccine manufacturer and exporter for seven years. She graduated from the University of Guelph with a Master's degree in Food Science.

Becoming certified organic

Erica Shelley



Dr. Erica Shelley, from Kitchener, Ontario, is a researcher, educator, and beekeeper dedicated to improving soil, pollinators, and human health. She develops innovative solutions such as using fungi to manage pests in beehives and bee vectoring for sustainable agriculture. As Executive Director of the Organic Council of Ontario, she is passionate about promoting organics to support resilient farms and ecosystems.

Farm to label: Navigating labelling programs for Ontario Farmers

Chelsea Martin



Chelsea Martin works for the Ontario Cattle Feeders Association as the Program Manager and Auditor for the Ontario Corn Fed Beef Quality Assurance Program. Growing up in agriculture, Chelsea understands the importance of quality assurance, sustainability, and supporting local family farms. With over 5 years of experience auditing farms for the OCFB QA Program and the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef Program (CRSB) as of December 2020, she understands the importance of on-farm verification. Her work helps farmers demonstrate their commitment to producing high-quality products alongside sound business management practices.

David Beking

David Beking is the CEO of Beking's Poultry Farm and the third generation on the family farm. With a background in public health, he brings a unique perspective to agriculture, food production and farm products. Their family farm produces free run, and free-range organic eggs in Eastern Ontario. They also run a CFIA inspected grading station on the farm and distribute all their eggs to stores and restaurants across Ontario and Quebec.



Luc Chabot

Luc Chabot joined Dairy Farmers of Canada (DFC) as Director, Business Stakeholder Relations in 2020. As a member of the extended leadership team, he leads the strategic planning, development, and enhancement of Blue Cow logo marketing campaigns and programs throughout the dairy value chain.



Exploring Agritourism Opportunities



Agenda

| Time | Activity and speakers |
|----------|---|
| 10:00 am | Welcome Danielle Sharman, Farm Policy Analyst, Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) |
| 10:05am | Setting the stage Krista Chapman, Wilton Consulting Group |
| 10:15 am | The Growing Agritourism Act: What you need to know Kevin Vallier, Executive Director, Agritourism Ontario |
| 10:35 am | From field to visitor: Building an agritourism experience on your farm <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jim Muzyka, Owner & General Manager, Terre Bleu & Fennario Meadows• Hollis English, Entrepreneurship Coach and Consultant• Heather Brophy, Owner, Valleyview Little Animal Farm |
| 11:15 am | Navigating the red tape roundabout for agritourism Krista Hulshof Duynisveld, CEO, VELD Architect |
| 11:50 am | Resources and funding opportunities Danielle Sharman, Farm Policy Analyst, Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) |
| Noon | Adjourn |

About the speakers

The Growing Agritourism Act: What you need to know

Kevin Vallier



Kevin currently serves as CEO of Agritourism Ontario, a province-wide association that represents farms in the agritourism sector. With a government and public relations background, Kevin has assisted the board with several key issues facing the agritourism sector. Kevin attended Brock University (psychology), Niagara College (post-grad public relations) and the Ivey Business School at the University of Western Ontario (marketing). His career spans several sectors including professional sports, the arts, and healthcare.

Kevin has twin daughters and is a 7x Ironman triathlete. He coaches girls hockey and has served on several boards of community organisations.

From field to visitor: Building an agritourism experience on your farm

Jim Muzyka



Jim owns and operates Terre Bleu and its new farm, Fennario Meadows which produces the lavender that goes into the 65 different products that are sold online and through the Terre Bleu store in Elora. Located on 100 acres on the Escarpment, northwest of Creemore, the farm was established in 2019 and is home to 20 thousand lavender plants from 7 different varieties. It is not currently open to visitors as permits are pending.

Hollis English



Hollis English is an Entrepreneur Lifestyle Coach and Consultant with over 2 decades of experience in entrepreneurship and business. Growing up on a potato farm in Alliston, Ontario she learned a lot about agriculture and family farming. She spent 14 years growing their family business Murphy's Farm Market and Bakery with her siblings where they specialize in exceptional experiences, handmade baked goods and fresh produce. She uses her entrepreneurial experience to support business owners in their personal and professional growth, helping them create businesses that are aligned with the lifestyles they want to lead. She has

spent years leading teams, designing branding, packaging and creative marketing and exceptional on farm experiences and loves to help her clients in these areas. She believes kindness and empathy are the keys to great leadership and building genuine connections with others is what life and business is all about. The pursuit of creativity and her 4 children keep her days and her heart full.

Heather Brophy

Heather Brophy is the owner and operator of Valleyview Little Animal Farm, a fun and educational attraction for young families and school groups in the rural Ottawa area. Heather grew up on a dairy farm and her education is in Food Service Supervision and Accounting. She has been a member of Agritourism Ontario, formerly the Ontario Farm Fresh Market Association and Ottawa Tourism for 25+ years, was a member of the Ottawa Rural Tourism Council and Vice President of Ottawa's Countryside.



In her spare time, Heather is an active curler, cyclist, and traveller. She resides with her family and their dog Sherman on their beef farm in rural Ottawa.

Navigating the red tape roundabout for agritourism

Krista Hulshof Duynisveld



Krista brings 15 years' worth of experience in architecture. She is a firm believer and supporter of agritourism and is excellent at cutting red tape. She believes her role beyond architecture is to help your business succeed. Architects are the facilitators and translators of all the members that makeup the team to build a building. She speaks contractor, planner, engineer, and client languages to ensure that everyone understands and working to the same priorities. She is an agritourism, barn conversion, and high-performance building expert who lives in a passive barn conversion she designed. VELD architect as

worked with clients such as Brooks Farms, Brantwood Farms, Huron Estates Winery, and Clovermead. Krista grew up on a dairy farm, is married to a pig farmer, with 3 kids and operates her own hobby, permaculture orchard.

Selling Local in Rural and Remote Ontario



Agenda

| Time | Activity and speakers |
|----------|---|
| 10:00 am | Welcome Joanne Fuller, Projects & Training Coordinator, Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) |
| 10:05am | Setting the stage Krista Chapman, Wilton Consulting Group |
| 10:15 am | Rural Agri-Innovation Network – Building a resilient farm and food sector David Thompson, Vice President of Programs, Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre |
| 10:35 am | Panel: Growing your direct-to-consumer farm business <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jacob Murray, Chief Operating Officer, Topsy Farms• Nancy Frey, Owner, Breault Family Farm |
| 11:15 am | Building bridges: Direct sales strategies in rural and remote communities Angela Pollak, Partner, Four Corners Algonquin |
| 10:40 am | Resources and funding opportunities Krista Chapman, Wilton Consulting Group |
| Noon | Adjourn |

About the speakers

Rural Agri-Innovation Network – Building a resilient farm and food sector

David Thompson



David Thompson is the Vice President of Programs at the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre, where he spearheads initiatives to foster innovation and drive economic development in Northern Ontario. With a strong focus on sustainability and agri-food technology, David leads programs that connect diverse stakeholders, strengthen regional systems, and advance the adoption of innovative technologies.

Panel: Growing your direct-to-consumer farm business

Jacob Murray



Jacob Murray, a co-owner and operator at Topsy Farms in Ontario, holds a B.A. from the University of Waterloo and boasts 38 years of experience in sheep farming and wool production. Topsy Farms has consistently embraced environmental sustainability, exemplified by the introduction of forest walking trails and the "Connect to the Land" program in 2018, allowing visitors to experience the farm for free.

Topsy Farms has leveraged social media effectively, growing its following to an impressive 156k friends across Instagram, Facebook, Twitter X, Threads, YouTube, BlueSky and TikTok. Every month, they engage with millions of people across the globe through blogs, videos, and stories.

During the pandemic, Jacob and Topsy collaborated with Kubota Canada to create the award-winning #GrowStronger national gardening campaign. In 2021, Topsy Farms initiated a rewilding campaign, reclaiming 1 linear kilometer of farmland for exclusive use of nature. The relationship between the two companies remains strong to this day.

Topsy Farms' notable achievements have been widely recognized, with features in HBO's "The Last of Us," The National Observer, Ottawa Business Journal, Global News, Blog TO, The Globe and Mail, Toronto Sun, and CBC's "The National."

Nancy Frey



Nancy and her husband, Alain launched their farm-to-table business in June 2020 after a devastating barn fire forced them to rethink their beef cow-calf farming model. At the time, they were in their mid-50s, underinsured, and seeking a new direction. With a background in banking, including four years as a Small Business Advisor specializing in farm lending, Nancy knew the industry's financial challenges and felt they needed a fresh approach to make their farm profitable. They began by selling ground beef and stew beef at their local Farmers Market in New Liskeard, later adding pasture-raised chicken, pork, and turkey. The business grew quickly, and in 2022, they built a small store on their farm to meet customer demand.

By 2023, the couple expanded further, hiring their first employees and adding local produce and products like preserves, honey, and maple syrup. They also hosted a successful fundraiser for local food banks, raising over \$6,900. As of 2025, they plan to harvest a substantial number of animals to meet growing demand and have started producing tallow-based skin creams and lip balms. Alain continues working off-farm full-time, while his wife plans to retire from her Executive Director role and focus on growing their farm-to-table business. Together, they are excited about the future and their continued journey in farming.

Building bridges: Direct sales strategies in rural and remote communities

Angela Pollak



Angela Pollak is a partner at Four Corners Algonquin (www.fourcornersalgonquin.ca) and Wild Company (www.wildco.ca, soon to be launched) in South Algonquin Ontario. She has served on numerous boards, including the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation and executive positions with the Regional Tourism Organization 12 (Explorers Edge/The Great Canadian Wilderness) and the David Onley Award for Leadership in Accessibility Committee. Her day-to-day work involves program planning, accessibility advocacy and capacity building which has resulted in \$2m in funding for capital improvements to bathrooms, equipment, and local trails for small tourism operators in Ontario. She has degrees in Communication and Library Science.

Beyond Food: Textiles, Ornamental Horticulture & More



Agenda

| Time | Activity and speakers |
|----------|--|
| 10:00 am | Welcome Danielle Sharman, Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) |
| 10:05am | Setting the stage Krista Chapman, Wilton Consulting Group |
| 10:15 am | Using branding and marketing communications to generate value Dr. Alicia Rihn, Assistant Professor, University of Tennessee Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics |
| 10:35 am | Beyond the Barn: Direct-to-consumer strategies from Ontario farmers <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Romy Schill, Owner, Revolution Wool Co.• Mark MacGowan, Owner, MacGowan's Christmas Tree Farm• Mike Degagne, Owner, Waxwing Commons• Janis Harris, Flower Farmer-Florist, Harris Flower Farm |
| 11:15 am | Supporting Ontario Farmers: Insights from agri-product commodity organizations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Melanie Kempers, General Manager, Ontario Beekeepers' Association• Matthew Rowe, CEO, Campaign for Wool |
| 11:50 am | Resources and funding opportunities Danielle Sharman, OFA |
| Noon | Adjourn |

About the speakers

Using branding and marketing communications to generate value

Dr. Alicia Rihn



Alicia joined the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at the University of Tennessee – Knoxville in July 2020. She is a Minnesota native with a background in specialty crop marketing research. Her research and extension programs focus on consumer behavior, willingness-to-pay, and perceptions of specialty crops and niche products. She is interested in addressing how people perceive products, interact with them, and the best marketing strategies to add value for customers and businesses alike. She uses eye-tracking technologies and applied economics to generate actionable insights based on these topics of interest. Her current research topics include plant benefit information, native plant

perceptions, alternative pest control methods, ecommerce, point-of-sale information, labor, and the economy.

Beyond the barn: Direct-to-consumer strategies from Ontario farmers

Romy Schill



The Schill family manages a large commercial sheep flock focusing on accelerates year-round lambing to supply meat lambs to local butchers and breeding stock to other producers. About 10 years ago Romy started to develop a business using their wool and now she works almost full time on the wool retail business doing everything from social media, website design, to product development and production.

Mark MacGowan



Mark and Marsha MacGowan started MacGowans Christmas Tree Farm in 2005. MacGowans Christmas Tree Farm is a 110 acre farm in rural Ottawa, and sits on the banks of the Mississippi River. 40 acres of the farm are in cultivation for Christmas Trees.

Both Marsha and Mark were in the tech sector and they were in search of a rural life style and an exit plan from the Technology world. It took 20 years of no vacations to build what is now a viable business that has allowed us to retire from our off farm jobs early and focus all of our energy on the farm. Mark's technology background and Marsha's Client services background served us

well with Management skills, Customer service skills, Financial Management skills, technology skills, all vital to growing our business. We just had to learn to grow beautiful Christmas Trees!

Mark serves on the Arnprior Region Federation of Agriculture board, and he also serves on the board for Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario. Marsha serves on the board of our local community association.

Mike Degagne

Mike is the co-owner and operator of Waxwing Commons Ecological Farmstead. With over a decade of experience living offgrid, homesteading and running a small business Mike is a wealth of knowledge on and off the farm and has a leading role in both the labour and retail roles of our operations. A lover of the outdoors and fierce advocate for regenerative agriculture, Mike connects with land and resources as his Metis ancestors have in Northern Ontario for centuries.



Janis Harris

Janis Harris, a passionate many-generation farmer, Janis has transformed her family's farm into a thriving, sustainable flower business that cultivates beauty, creativity, and connection. Her dedication to growing high-quality, locally-sourced blooms reflects her commitment to environmental stewardship and community engagement. Her keen eye for colour and design is apparent in the bouquets and arrangements she does for local farmers markets, weddings and events. Janis is the current Vice President of the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers and the past Canadian Regional Director for that Association. Harris Flower Farm is located near St.Thomas Ontario. About 8 acres of flowers are in cultivation. The flowers are field and greenhouse grown with blooms available from late February to December.



Supporting Ontario farmers: Insights from agri-product commodity organizations

Melanie Kempers

Melanie Kempers grew up on a dairy farm in Prince Edward County. It was her love of agriculture and the outdoors that brought her to Guelph to obtain a BSc in Agriculture (many years ago!). Not really knowing much about bees, she applied for a summer student job with the OBA Tech-Transfer Program and stood amongst a swarm in her first week on the job. With that amazing experience, she was hooked. Melanie has been with the OBA, supporting the beekeeping industry, for 19 years now and still finds bees fascinating. She has moved into the role of General Manager and works to help all beekeepers in Ontario, from those with 1 hive to those with 10,000 hives.



Matthew Rowe

Matthew is the CEO of The Campaign for Wool in Canada and its parent organization, The Canadian Wool Council. Matthew also serves as the Head of the Canadian Delegation to the International Wool Textile Organization, the global authority for wool standards.

Before taking on a leadership role in Canada's wool textile industry, Matthew was Vice-President at Prince's Trust Canada (formerly Prince's Charities Canada). In that role, he was responsible for developing and communicating the Canadian charitable work of our Patron: The former Prince of Wales, including the creation of an Indigenous languages revitalization program responsible for over 88 children's titles in 16 endangered languages.



A communicator by nature, Matthew has regularly appeared in national and international media on a range of topics. Prior roles with Canada's Senate and House of Commons and stints in policy, media and international development have all contributed to a strong professional network and multi-disciplinary approach to problem solving.

Matthew is a graduate of Mount Allison University and is a recipient of both The Queen's Golden (2002) and Diamond (2012) Jubilee Medals for his service to the community. In 2021, he was granted the Freedom of the City of London (UK) and membership in The Worshipful Company of Woolmen, the world's oldest wool guild.

Appendix C: Post-Workshop Survey Questions and Results

Post-Workshop Questions

1. Please indicate your role in the sector (select all that apply)

- ☐ Farmer
- ☐ Prospective farmer
- ☐ Retired farmer
- ☐ Government employee
- ☐ Farm or commodity organization representative
- ☐ Food and/or beverage processor/entrepreneur
- ☐ Agribusiness
- ☐ Other (please specify)

2. Please indicate your age.

- ☐ Under 35
- ☐ 35-59
- ☐ 60 and above
- ☐ Prefer not to say

3. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements.

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| The format was an effective way to share information about selling to Ontarians. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The speakers delivered content in an effective and engaging manner. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The information was presented in a clear and logical way. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I increased my confidence in undertaking new direct-to-consumer marketing opportunities. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I advanced my knowledge of selling directly to consumers in Ontario. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

4. Did you learn something at the workshop that you intend to implement on your farm, food business, or in your organization in the next five years?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Comments

5. Overall, how satisfied were you with this Cultivating Local Workshop? 1 thumbs up = not satisfied, 5 thumbs up = very satisfied.

Comments

6. Please provide any additional comments or feedback to help us inform future workshops.

Post Workshop Results

Cultivating Local – Multi-Survey Analysis

Context: Survey Monkey allows you to combine results from multiple surveys to analyze them together. However, it does not allow you to download all the results into an excel document, but you can pull images of the graphs it creates. Please find the responses to all 9 workshops for each of the questions below.

Majority (70%) of respondents were farmers (Figure 1). Over half (54%) of the respondents were between the ages of 35-59 with **11% being under the age of 35** (Figure 2).

Majority of respondents **agreed** or **strongly agreed** with the following statements:

- The **format was an effective** way to share information about selling to Ontarians (89%) (Figure 3)
- The information was presented in a **clear and logical** way (87%) (Figure 4)
- The speakers delivered content in an **effective and engaging** manner (89%) (Figure 5)
- I **advanced my knowledge** of selling directly to consumer in Ontario (70%) (Figure 6)

Majority of respondents (**65%**) indicated that they **learned something at the workshop** that they intend to implement on their farm, food business, or in their organization in the next 5 years (Figure 7). Just over a quarter (28%) indicated that they might implement something they learned at the workshop.

Overall **satisfaction** of the workshop was positive with **85% ranking the workshops a 4 or 5 and an average rating of 4.2** (Figure 8).¹⁸

¹⁸ This rating is out of 5

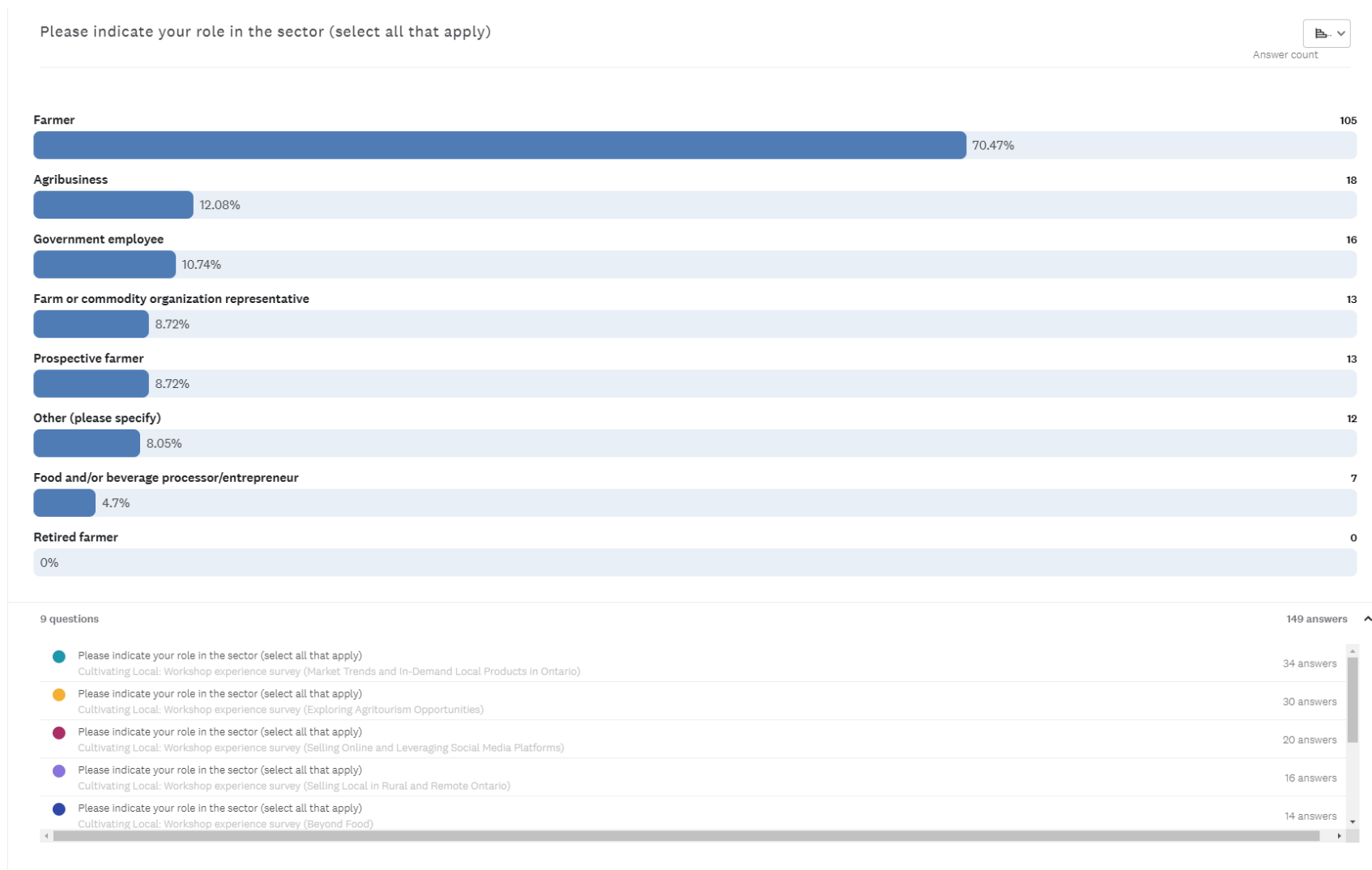


Figure 19. Please indicate your role in the sector (select all that apply). (n=149)

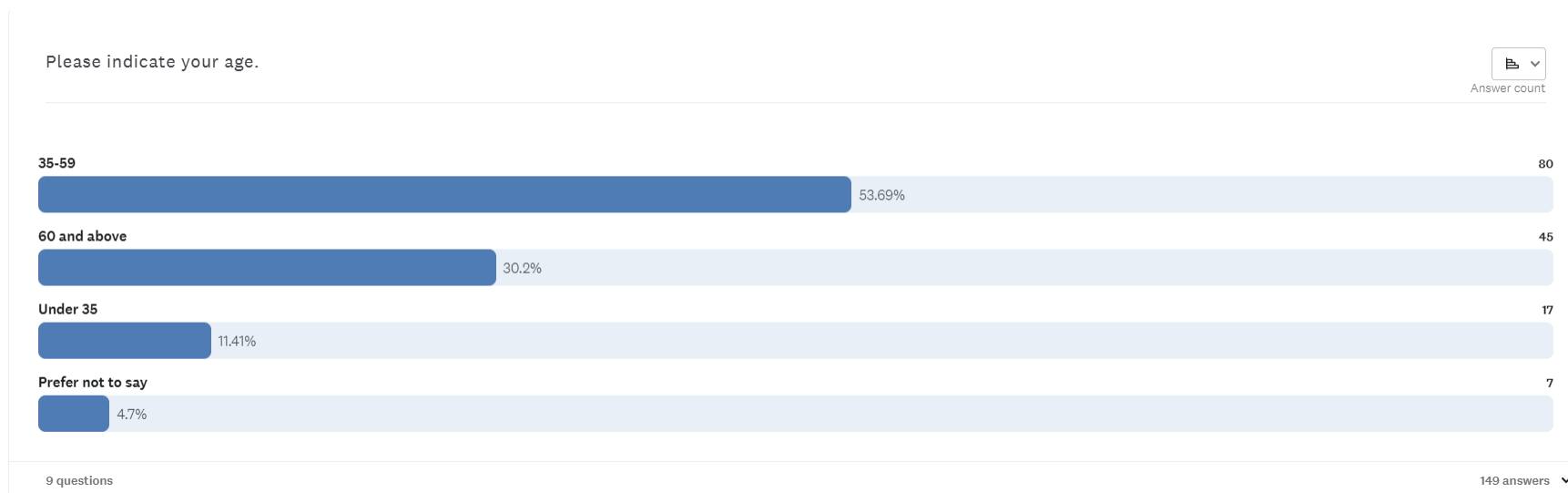


Figure 20. Please indicate your age. (n=149)

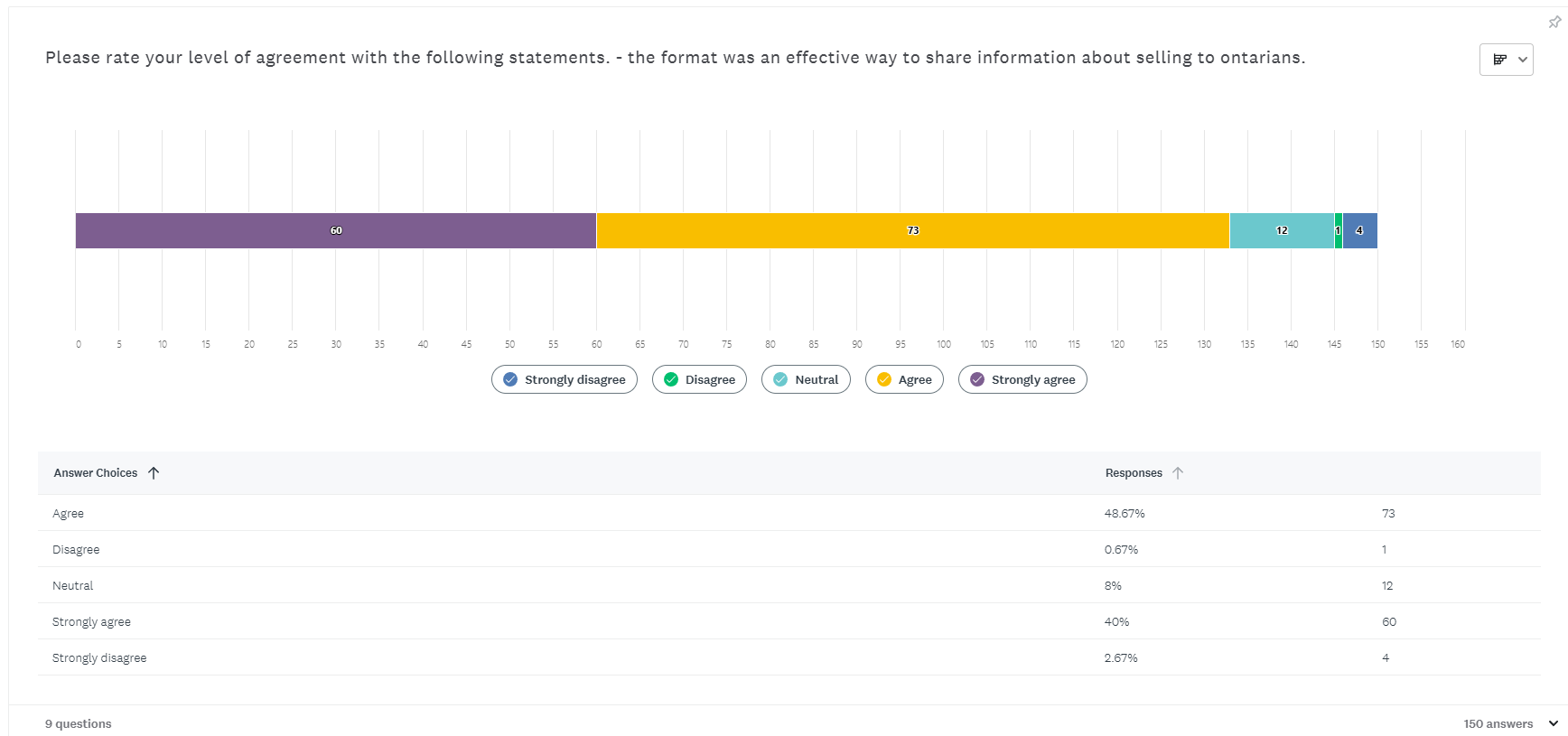


Figure 21. Agreement with the statement “**The format was an effective way to share information about selling to Ontarians.**” (n=150)

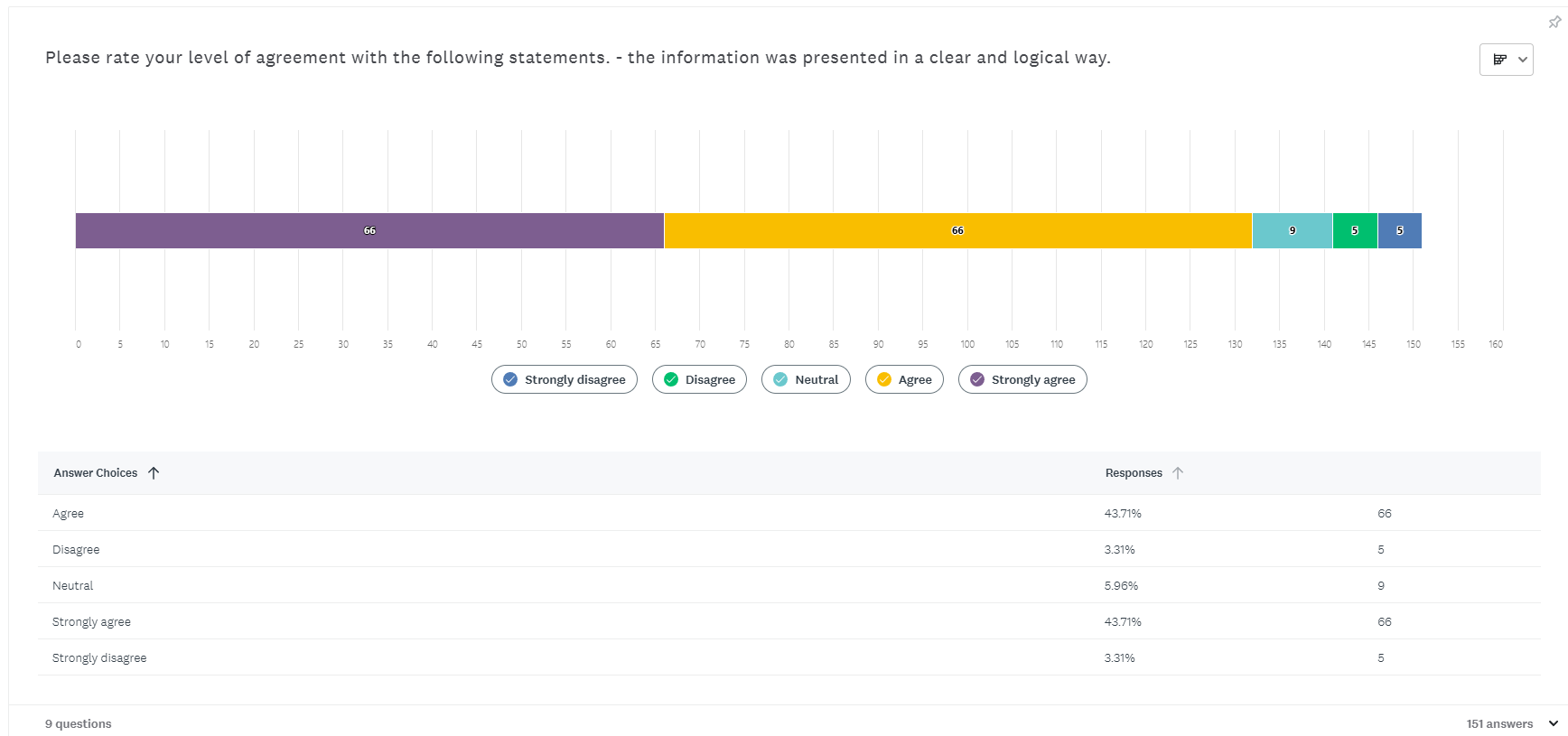


Figure 22. Agreement with the statement “**The information was presented in a clear and logical way.**” (n=151)

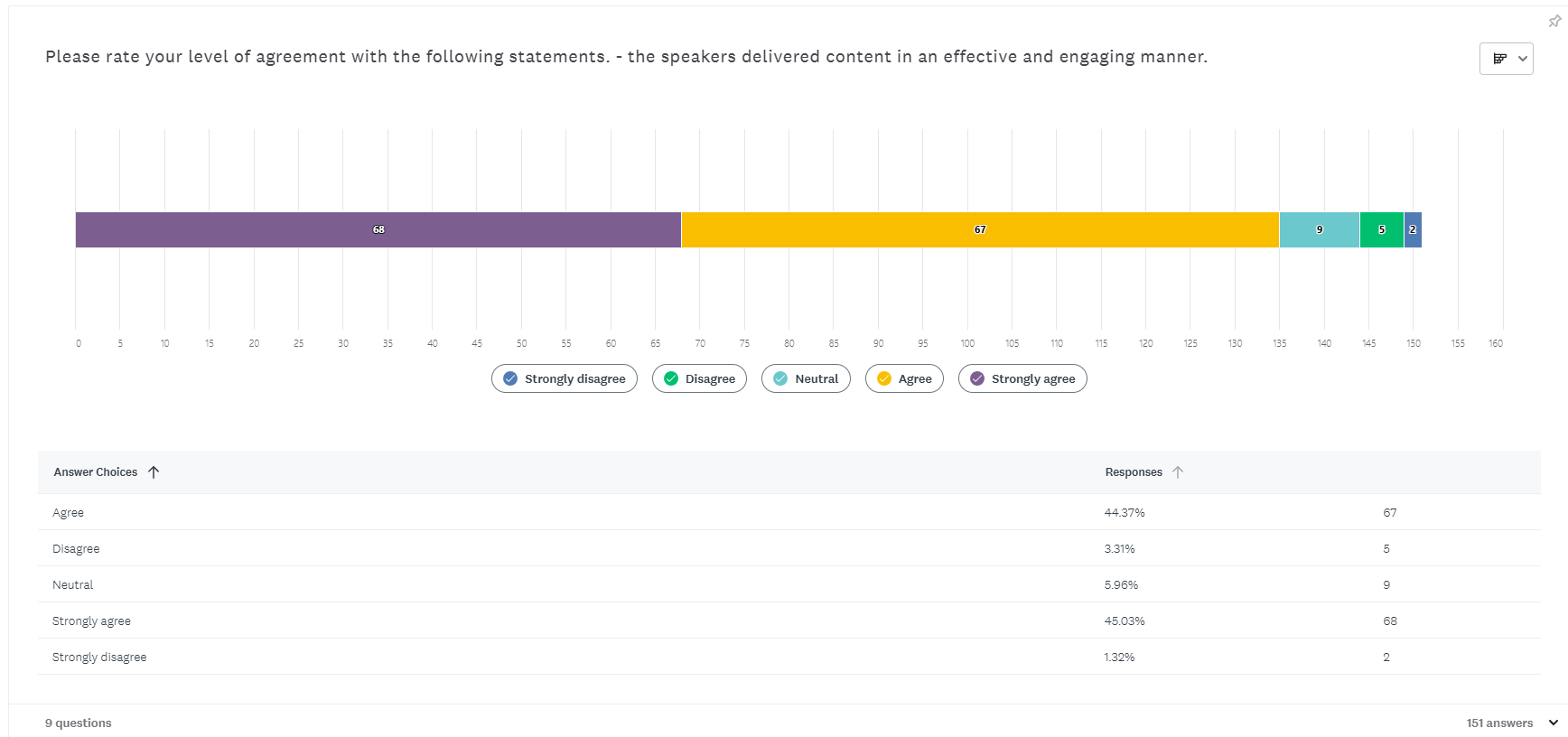


Figure 23. Agreement with the statement “**The speakers delivered content in an effective and engaging manner.**” (n=151)

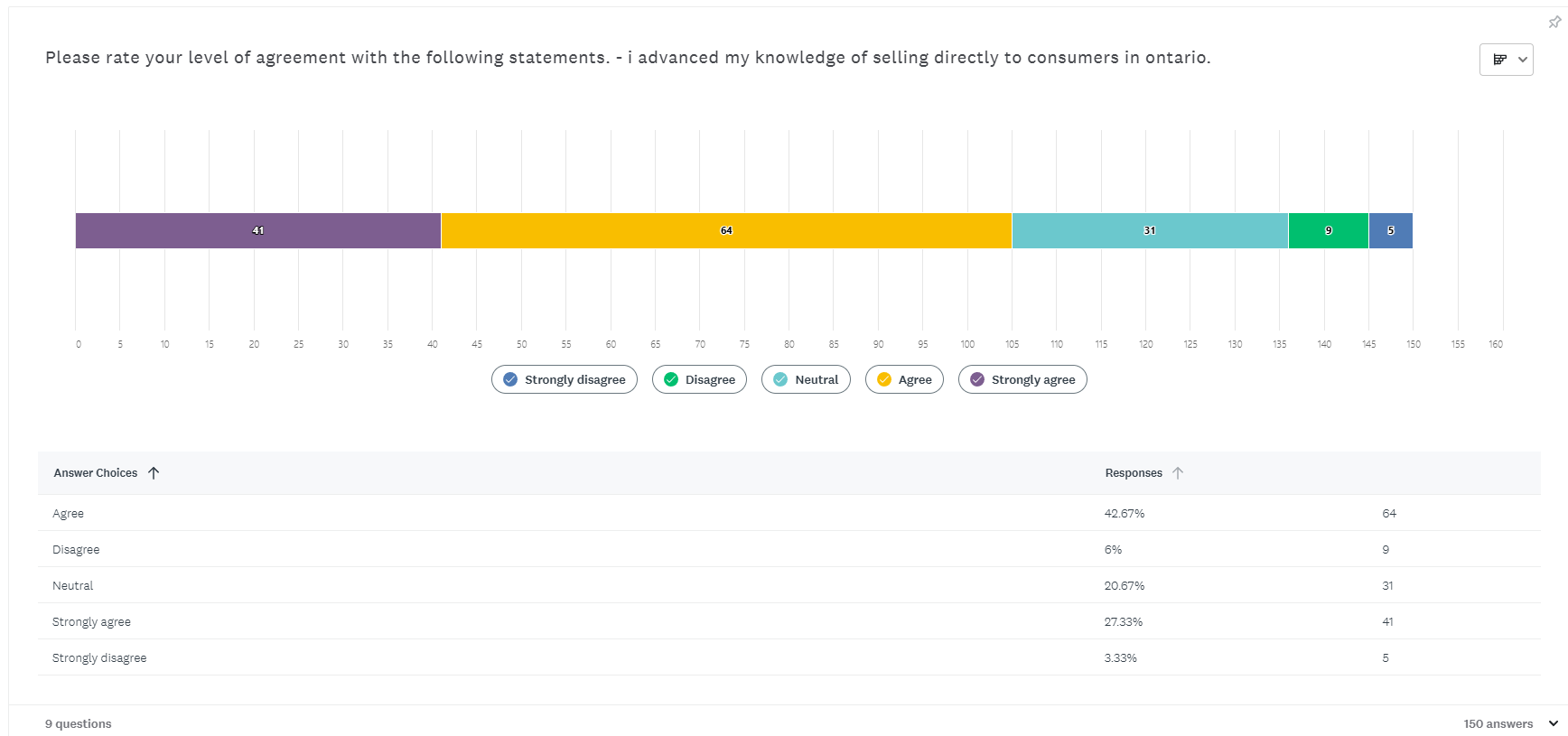


Figure 24. Agreement with the statement “**I advanced my knowledge of selling directly to consumer in Ontario**” (n=150)

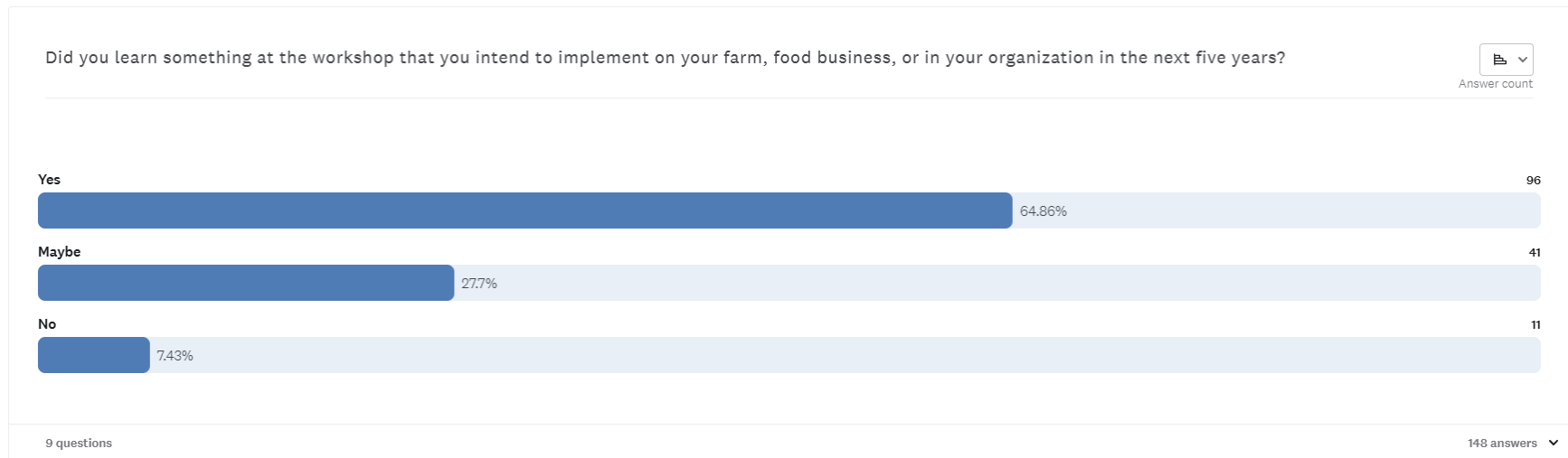


Figure 25. Respondents answer to if they learned some they plan to implement from the workshop. (n=148)



Figure 26. Level of overall satisfaction with the workshop (1=very dissatisfied, 5=very satisfied). (n=145)