

# FROM OUR FARMS TO YOUR TABLE, EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

SPRING 2025



## FARMERS FEED AND FUEL ONTARIO'S ECONOMY:



50,000 farms +  
11.7 million acres  
of farmland =

**\$50.6 billion**  
annual contribution to provincial economy

**\$26.2 billion**  
annual agri-food exports

**871,000 jobs**  
11% of Ontario's workforce

\*includes entire farm to food service value chain

## HOW DOES THAT COMPARE TO THE AUTO SECTOR?

**\$13.9 billion**  
contribution to provincial economy  
**100,000 jobs**

\*auto assembly and parts manufacturing

## ONTARIO AGRICULTURE MATTERS— TO ALL OF US, EVERY DAY

As the province's largest general farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) represents 38,000 farm families across the province. We are a trusted voice for farmers, agriculture, and rural Ontario, advocating for policies and programs that help our sector thrive—economically, environmentally, and socially.

Whether you represent a rural riding where agriculture is the economic backbone and farmers are your neighbours, or an urban constituency where farming might feel foreign, we all share a connection to farmland—through the food we eat, the fuel we use, the fibre in our clothes, and the flowers that brighten our homes and gardens. Agriculture touches everyone, every day of the year.

OFA works with all levels of government, industry, stakeholders, and community partners to ensure that Ontario's farms, farm families and the entire agri-food sector remains strong, competitive, and sustainable. From land use planning and rural infrastructure to environmental stewardship, innovation, and food security, OFA brings thoughtful, evidence-based solutions to the table.

We look forward to working with each of you—new and returning MPPs—to build stronger rural communities, a resilient food system, and a better Ontario for all.

*Let's grow Ontario together.*

## Did you know the following MPPs have a direct connection to farming?

**Ernie Hardeman**, who has served as an MPP since 1995, owned and operated Hardeman Feed Limited in Salford ON.

**Mike Schreiner**, first elected in 2018, was raised on a grain and cattle farm, instilling a deep appreciation for agriculture and environmental stewardship.

**Lisa Thompson**, serving at the Legislature since 2011, farms with her husband near Teeswater and was the General Manager of the Ontario Dairy Goat Cooperative before entering politics.

**John Vanthof**, a former dairy farmer from Earlton, has been a vocal advocate for agriculture and rural issues in the Legislature since first becoming an MPP in 2011.

**Rob Flack** owns a beef farm in Renfrew County and served as President & CEO of Masterfeeds, a leading Canadian animal nutrition company in Canada, before coming to Queen's Park in 2022.

**Paul Vickers** is a dairy farmer from Meaford and former chair of dairy co-operative GayLea Foods Inc. who was newly elected this year.

### Did we miss anyone?

Drop us a line at [comms@ofa.on.ca](mailto:comms@ofa.on.ca) and tell us about your farm connection!



## PRESERVING ONTARIO'S FARMLAND: A CORNERSTONE FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND FOOD SECURITY

Ontario's farmland isn't just part of the landscape — it's the foundation of our food system, our communities, and a \$50.6 billion agri-food sector. As the province grows, so too is the pressure on this finite resource.

**Now more than ever, we need responsible land use planning that balances development with farmland preservation.**

### A critical resource under threat

Ontario has already lost 1.7 million acres of farmland between 1996 and 2021. Today, we are losing the equivalent of four Canada's Wonderlands every day. With less than 5% of the province's land suitable for farming, this loss isn't just unfortunate. It's permanent.

This is about more than land — it's about protecting our long-term food security, economic resilience, and the very fabric of rural and urban Ontario.

### Planning for the future: Smart growth, strong farms

Ontario's future depends on thoughtful, responsible land use planning. With strategies like in-fill development and higher-density housing, Ontario can grow responsibly while keeping prime farmland for agricultural uses.

*"Protecting farmland isn't just about drawing lines on a map—it's about keeping farms and farmers viable and rural communities strong. It reinforces the importance of protecting our food-producing capacity before it's too late."*

Drew Spoelstra, President, Ontario Federation of Agriculture



## BUDGET MEASURES SUPPORT FARMERS AND RURAL ONTARIO

OFA welcomes several measures from the provincial budget that align with our pre-budget submissions and advocacy efforts:

- An increase in Risk Management Program funding from \$150 million to \$250 million annually.
- Introduction of a "Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian" day on June 27 to encourage consumption of local food and farm products.
- New funding and support for Ontario grape growers, wineries, distilleries, cideries, and microbreweries.
- A \$223 billion infrastructure investment plan, including rural roads and high-speed broadband.
- Doubling of annual funding for the Rural Ontario Development program for the next two years.
- A \$30 million increase over three years for the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund.

## ADDRESSING THE U.S. TARIFF THREAT: PROTECTING ONTARIO'S AGRI-FOOD SECTOR

Ontario exports more than \$26 billion in agri-food products annually — much of it to the United States. Tariff threats and trade uncertainty put this at risk.

OFA urges the provincial government to engage with industry in their work with the federal government to:

- ✓ Develop targeted support programs
- ✓ Invest in Ontario's food and agriculture production capacity
- ✓ Promote "buy local" initiatives
- ✓ Expand export opportunities
- ✓ Address interprovincial trade barriers

**Without action, these risks threaten jobs, food affordability, and economic stability.**







## AGRICULTURE OFFERS SOLUTIONS TO HOUSING, CLIMATE CHANGE, FOOD SECURITY AND MORE

Food and farming touches all of us, whether urban or rural. We all have to eat, after all, but Ontario's agri-food sector is also a multibillion pillar of the provincial economy, supporting 11% of jobs in our province.

Ontario's farms are also part of the solution to many of our biggest challenges, from affordable housing and climate change to economic growth.

Protecting farmland is a way to ensure that these solutions remain possible – but there's more to it than that.

### Reducing barriers to growth

Government can support the agri-food sector by reducing regulatory burdens, addressing labour shortages, and supporting local food systems.

#### Key takeaways for MPPs:

- Farmers need a reduced regulatory burdens for agricultural wash water and storm water systems, lower development charges for farm buildings, and tax programs that reflect modern farm business realities.
- New policies and programs that encourage on-farm innovation will prepare farms for the future.
- Better programs and strategies are needed to promote jobs and careers in agri-food and address the critical labour gap in the sector.

### Investing in rural Ontario

Strong rural infrastructure is essential to strong communities and a competitive economy. That means roads, broadband, reliable power, schools, and health-care – and we urge the province to prioritize rural infrastructure as a key component of long-term, province-wide prosperity.

#### Key takeaways for MPPs:

- Rural Ontario needs physical and social infrastructure to attract and keep residents and investment.
- Reliable energy, roads, bridges, and internet are the foundation of a competitive rural economy.
- Schools and healthcare access are essential to strong, sustainable rural communities.



### Your chance to meet directly with Ontario farmers!

While you are at home in your riding over the summer months, we'd love the opportunity to show you a farm, farm business, farmers' market, or agritourism enterprise in your neighbourhood.

Connect with us at [comms@ofa.on.ca](mailto:comms@ofa.on.ca) and we'll be happy to host something for you and your team!



**Contact us for  
more information:**

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