



LONG-TERM THINKING FOR TODAY'S ISSUES

October 10, 2018

Hon. Ernie Hardeman, MPP
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
11th Floor,
77 Grenville Street
Toronto, ON
M7A 1B3
Discussed in person and delivered via email:
minister.omafra@ontario.ca

Hon. Steve Clark, MPP
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
17th Floor, College Park
777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON
M5G 2E5
Via email: minister.mah@ontario.ca

Dear Ministers Hardeman and Clark,

Re: Farmland Preservation

The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO) is an Accredited Farm Organization representing the interests of over 4,000 farm families in Ontario who are called to the vocation of farming. CFFO policy promotes economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable farming, advocating that farmers receive fair return for their production and stewardship efforts.

The CFFO is concerned about the long-term protection of our farmland. We believe that good planning and density targets in urban areas can prevent sprawl onto our valuable food-growing and naturally sensitive lands. Without such government intervention, population growth will continue to drive conversion of productive farmland to residential and industrial development. In light of concerns about food security, we note that growth is expected primarily in the regions of the province that are also home to our most productive farmland.

The focus of the CFFO's requests is on *monitoring and measuring* farmland assets because we cannot manage what we do not measure.

For this reason, we are asking the Ontario government to take the following actions to further protect productive farmland under growth pressure in the province:

- 1) **Extend the agricultural land-base mapping and system guidelines outside the Growth Plan Area** to apply in municipalities that have class 1-4 farmland and in all areas experiencing growth pressure.
- 2) **Expand the Agricultural System Portal to include data outside the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH)** and to include additional layers that are relevant to farmers and to the overall economic development of the agri-food system in Ontario.

1) Agricultural Land-Base Mapping and System Guidelines

Within the GGH region, significant protections on farmland and natural heritage features have been put in place, particularly through the Greenbelt Plan, the Growth Plan for the GGH, the Niagara Escarpment Plan, and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.

The CFFO sees the established concept of the Agricultural System model within the Growth Plan Area, consisting of the provincially mapped agricultural land base and the agricultural network, as a beneficial approach to protecting farmland and fostering successful agri-food businesses.

The CFFO wants the Agricultural System model to be extended to other regions of the province with class 1-4 farmland and areas that are also experiencing growth pressure.

2) Agricultural System Portal

The Agricultural System Portal was created as an online tool to encourage economic development of agriculture within the GGH region. The CFFO sees this as a valuable tool for farmers, agri-food businesses, and policy makers. We ask that this tool be updated regularly and expanded for use as an economic development tool across the province, not just within the GGH region.

In particular, we want to see existing data beyond the GGH added to all current layers in the portal. We also want to see new layers that are relevant to farmers and agri-food businesses, such as the provincial Natural Heritage System mapping. Once new Municipal Official Plans are approved, that mapping should also be added to the portal.

Summary

Creating the conditions for economic success within the agri-food system is a key element of farmland preservation. Government policies that foster economic development, such as the Agricultural System model, ensure that our farmers can successfully continue to operate businesses on our productive farmland. Tools like the Agricultural System Portal encourage greater capitalization on the potential of our province-wide agri-food sector, which will contribute to overall economic growth in both rural and urban areas.

Our ultimate concern is that, given the current measurement and management focus mainly on certain areas, such as the GGH, there is the risk that important management issues are not in focus for the rest of the province. Treating certain areas as more valuable can cause development pressures and other ramifications for surrounding areas. Provincial farmland assets need to be treated holistically.

We appreciate your consideration of these issues.

Sincerely,



Clarence Nywening, President
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario