

**ONTARIO AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS AND
BUSINESS**

RESEARCH AND SERVICES COMMITTEE

2004 ANNUAL REPORT

**TO
ONTARIO AGRICULTURAL SERVICES
COORDINATING COMMITTEE
February 2004**

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1. Executive Summary

The purpose of Agricultural Economics and Business Research and Services Committee (AE&BRSC) is to identify and prioritize future agricultural economics and business research and service needs of Ontario's agri-food industry stakeholders.

Ontario Farm and Agri-Business owners, managers and workers continue to balance the challenges of business profitability and competitiveness, with environmental sustainability, food safety assurance, and community and public support for the agri-food industry.

To help the Ontario Agri-food Industry meet these challenges, the Ontario Agricultural Economics and Business Research and Services Committee recommends that research be undertaken to address the following issues listed in priority sequence:

- I. Competitiveness of the Agri-Food Industry
- II. Business Impacts of Environmental Sustainability and Food Safety/Quality Requirements on the Agri-Food Industry
- III. Risk Management
- IV. Agricultural Business Management Practices
- V. Market Opportunities
- VI. International Trade Opportunities and Threats
- VII. Agri-Food Industry and Rural Countryside Linkages**

The Research Priorities contained in the 2002-2006 Strategic Report have been largely incorporated into the Priority Issues of the OMAF/University of Guelph **Resources Management and Environment Research Program**. Those issues are:

- Efficient Nutrient Management
- Climate Change - Mitigation and Adaptation
- Threats to Water Resources - Water Quality and Quantity
- Evaluating Best Management Practices
- On-Site Waste Management and Treatment
- Enhanced Agri-Food Business Management
- Innovation and Development of Market Opportunities
- Risk Management Policy
- Optimizing Trade Agreements
- Open category

In 2003 the OMAF **New Directions Research Program** listed Value Chains as one of three priority research areas of interest. While successful research projects under this program have yet to be announced, Value Chain research projects would contribute to research in one of the Research Priority areas identified in the 2002-2006 Strategic Report - *Competitiveness of the Agri-Food Industry*.

2. 2003 Industry/Sector Scan

A broad Industry/Sector Scan is contained in the 2002-2006 Strategic Report. This section provides an update on significant market shocks and policy changes that affected the agricultural sector in 2003. While the policy change outlined below (the Agricultural Policy Framework) was known when the Agricultural Economics and Business Research and Services Committee put together its 2002-2006 Four Year Strategic Report, the market shocks outlined below were not anticipated. Despite this, the recommendations made in the 2002-2006 strategic report continue to be valid. Very little change has been made to those recommendations.

The Agricultural Policy Framework

Ontario signed the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Agricultural Policy Framework in December 2003. The Agricultural Policy Framework is to be a broad and long-range vision for a self-sustaining and progressive agriculture industry. It is envisioned to be “an agriculture policy that is comprehensive, integrated and ensures that farmers have the tools to address issues, be competitive and capture opportunities in the areas of science, food safety and environmental stewardship.”

The framework has five pillars:

- Business Risk Management
- Food Safety and Food Quality;
- Environment;
- Industry Renewal;
- Science and Innovation; and

As well, the framework seeks to build international markets for Canadian agricultural and food products by “branding Canada” as the world leader in food safety, innovation and environmentally responsible production.

The Agricultural Policy Framework recognizes and acts upon the fact that a successful and economically sustainable agriculture industry in the long-term is dependent on much more than safety net programs. The APF recognizes the need for innovation, environmental responsibility, food safety, consumer confidence, marketing, production, and business management to all work together in order to develop and sustain a viable agri-food sector over the long-term. This approach to the long term sustainability of the agriculture and agri-food industry is quite consistent with the strategic research priorities set by the AE&BRSC in 2002.

The APF element receiving by far the most attention during 2003 was the Business Risk Management Element. Agreement on the Business Risk Management element of the

Agricultural Policy Framework has an immediate impact on the safety net system available to Canadian producers.

There are now two national safety net programs.

- The Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization Program (CAIS) replaces the Net Income Stabilization Program (NISA) and the Ontario Farm Income Disaster Program (OFIDIP).
- Production Insurance is intended to provide opportunities to enhance and expand the current Crop Insurance programs to other commodities.

Research into the effect and effectiveness of these new programs fits well with the 2002-2006 AE&BRSC Research Priority - *Risk Management*

There is also clear recognition within the APF framework agreement that enhancing business management information and practices is critical to the long-term strength of the agriculture industry. This recognition is most clearly articulated through the Industry Renewal element, which is intended to focus on strengthening the industry by:

- enhancing the level and availability of business management information, resources and advice within the industry;
- providing opportunities for a new generation of farm business managers
- and
- by helping producers developing new markets and new market opportunities for their agriculturally based products.

This recognition of the need for enhanced business management fits very well with a number of the AE&BRSC recommendations.

BSE:

The discovery of a single case of BSE in an Alberta beef cow in May 2003 sent shock waves through the Canadian agri-food industry. The immediate impact was the closure of all export markets to Canadian cattle and beef products, as well as all other ruminant animals and products such as sheep and lamb. The closure has had a profound negative impact on both individual producers and the Canadian agri-food industry.

Canada exported 70% of total Canadian beef and cattle production in 2002. On a net basis (subtracting all imports), Canada exported 53.2% of its beef and cattle produced. Canadian beef and cattle exports were valued at \$2.18 and \$1.82 billion respectively

The subsequent opening of United States markets to limited imports of beef products raised hopes and strengthened beef prices by the fall. However the additional discovery of a case of BSE in a dairy animal in a herd in Washington State in December 2003 caused a considerable slowing in efforts to re-open the boarder to live animal exports from Canada to the United States. It also had an immediate negative impact on beef prices in the United States, as their export markets closed.

Canada-US Exchange Rate:

The second major market shock affecting Canadian agriculture was the significant appreciation in the value of the Canadian Dollar as compared to the U.S. dollar during 2003. Again, given Canada's significant reliance on exports to the United States for agricultural commodities, intermediate food products, and consumer ready food products, this has had a significant impact on a wide number of sectors, including but not limited to the hog sector, greenhouse floriculture, greenhouse vegetables, and many food products.

Summary:

The combined effect of BSE impacted markets, and the change in Canada-US dollar exchange rate, from an agricultural economics and business research and services perspective is to highlight the vulnerability associated with Canada's strong reliance on export markets for both agricultural commodities and food products. The 2002-2006 AEBC&SC Four-Year Strategic Report highlighted the success Canada has enjoyed in terms of intermediate and consumer ready food product exports. The events of 2003 have highlighted the need for research into ways to mitigate the potential negative impacts of market and macro-economic shocks that can occur almost, or literally, overnight. One of the Research Priorities in the 2002-2006 Strategic Report – *International Trade Opportunities and Threats* – came into sharp focus during 2003.

3. Report of Action Taken Since Last Strategic Report

The Research Priorities contained in the 2002-2006 Strategic Report have been largely incorporated into the Priority Issues of the OMAF/University of Guelph Resources Management and Environment Research Program. Those issues are:

- Efficient Nutrient Management
- Climate Change - Mitigation and Adaptation
- Threats to Water Resources - Water Quality and Quantity
- Evaluating Best Management Practices
- On-Site Waste Management and Treatment
- Enhanced Agri-Food Business Management
- Innovation and Development of Market Opportunities
- Risk Management Policy
- Optimizing Trade Agreements
- Open category

A detailed list of research projects being undertaken in each of these priority issues can be found at the Resources Management and Environment Research Program web site

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/research/omaf/envIRON/index.shtml>

In 2003 the OMAF New Directions Research Program listed Value Chains as one of three priority research areas of interest. While successful research projects under this program have yet to be announced, Value Chain research projects would contribute to research in one of the Research Priority areas identified in the 2002-2006 Strategic Report - *Competitiveness of the Agri-Food Industry*.

4. Issues

The Agricultural Economics and Business Research and Services Committee identified the following priority research issues for 2003-2007. The major issues are prioritized with number I being the highest priority; number II the second highest priority etc. Similarly sub issues within each major issue are prioritized with number 1 as the highest priority; number 2 the second highest priority etc.

- I Competitiveness of the Agri-Food Industry**
- II Business Impacts of Environmental Sustainability and Food Safety/Quality Requirements on the Agri-Food Industry**
- II Risk Management**
- IV Agricultural Business Management Practices**
- V Market Opportunities**
- VI International Trade Opportunities and Threats**
- VII Agri-Food Industry and Rural Countryside Linkages**

I. Competitiveness of the Agri-Food Industry

Context:

Increasing competitiveness increases profitability and access to markets. The Ontario agri-food industry competes with global exports and imports on a daily basis. The innovative application of technology, knowledge, and skill to available resources increases profitability by creating added value or reducing costs.

The consolidation trend across the agri-food sector to gain economies of scale derived from newer technologies is one example of increasing competitiveness through reducing costs per unit.

The changes that are happening in our rural communities also impact our ability to compete in the both domestic and export marketplaces.

With the continued movement to a global marketplace it is critical to have accurate economic data and effective benchmarks to enhance Ontario producers' and agri-businesses' ability to compete in that marketplace.

Priorities:

1. Increase the competitiveness of **agri-food value chains** in Ontario.
 - Develop best practice models through comparative research of successful and unsuccessful value chains.
 - Inventory the status of Ontario agri-food value chains, the power of various links within the value chains, and measure the business impact of the value-chains. For example, assess the impact of “branding” production practices thorough the value chain as a market competitiveness tool.
2. Analyze the **cost of production** characteristics of Ontario production, marketing and regulatory systems.
 - Analyze variability within commodities resulting from different marketing strategies and production systems, typology characteristics of managers, farm size and technology adaptation.
 - Analyze the reasons for differences between the top third and bottom third of producers within a commodity in terms of profitability. Create industry benchmarks and best practices from the analysis.
 - Analyze differences in costs and profitability between Ontario and other jurisdictions.
3. Identify opportunities for agriculture sector development through **clustering**
 - Analyze current agriculture industry clusters and assess comparative economic and community advantages and barriers to cluster development in the agri-food sector.
 - Evaluate strategies for developing and managing relationships and technologies within clusters.
4. Research **comparative trade advantages** and their effect on future competitiveness of Ontario with other jurisdictions, including assessing the impact of such characteristics as more open borders, supply management and subsidies as it relates to existing trade agreements. Assess the future impacts of new exporting nations and regions on the future competitiveness of Ontario – e.g. South American field crops.
5. Analyze the comparative advantages of Ontario to focus on **innovation and niche products/value added** as compared to bulk commodity production. Determine how technological advancements, land use patterns, proximity to markets, trade issues, and human resources in Ontario should direct industry development decisions.

6. Identify and analyze improved systems for market price determination, market information sharing, and **price discovery/transparency mechanisms** within agricultural markets.
 - Assess the impact of value chains on markets and price discovery mechanisms.
 - Compare contract design to allow for enhanced market transparency.
7. Study the **role of municipalities** in industry competitiveness. Measure the impacts of land use planning, environmental and land protection programs, property tax systems, and incentive measures such as tax incentive zones, on the ability of the agri-food industry to remain competitive.
8. Assess the **impact of technology** on the competitiveness and innovation of the agri-food industry.
 - Analyze farms and agri-businesses in terms of size, technology addition, needs and marketing methods.
 - Analyze strategies for the development and diffusion of new technologies in the sector.
 - Define the impact of new biotechnology products on the Ontario agri-food industry.
 - Analyze the impact of technology on farm size, management, and decision making.
9. Develop strategies and programs for private and public organizations to improve the **innovation capabilities** of the agri-food and ag-biotech sectors. In particular analyze how new technology and management systems are created and the role of public policy in facilitating innovation.
10. Analyze and assess mechanisms to increase options for **access to capital** in the agri-food sector, including equity financing, land tenure systems and community capital.

II Business Impacts of Environmental Sustainability and Food Safety/Quality Requirements on the Agri-Food Industry

Context:

The goal of an environmentally sustainable agri-food industry in Ontario is driven by: the stewardship ethic of the industry to maintain and enhance the resource base for future use, groundwater safety concerns by rural residents, concerns around air quality and climate change, and consumer demand for both “green” products and product traceability. Producing and processing safe quality foods in an environmentally sustainable way brings both business costs and opportunities to the industry.

Priorities:

1. Evaluate the **economic impacts** of international agreements, provincial legislation and municipal bylaws relating to environmental and food safety and quality issues on agriculture. Evaluate potential treats and opportunities to the agri-food industry associated with restricting greenhouse gas emissions, opportunities for carbon sequestering and possible green taxes.
2. Identify **best management practices** for environmental and food safety/quality records and processes. Determine the cost/benefits of enhanced record keeping and management practices to the individual business and the value chain, including research into mechanisms to assess who bears any net costs of compliance.
3. Assess alternate **approaches to food safety/quality management** and the impacts of food safety and quality problems on firms and sub-sectors.

III. Risk Management

Context:

Managing risk to minimize loss exposure while maintaining profit opportunities is an age old and ongoing business challenge. In addition to national efforts to improve publicly supported safety nets under the current Agricultural Policy Framework discussions; producers and agri-food businesses need information and tools for to help them more effectively manage their own financial and business risks within their own business. As well as traditional financial and production risks, businesses now need to understand and manage such things as environmental, food safety and biosecurity risks.

Priorities:

1. Identify needs and develop creative tools to help farmers and business advisors integrate traditional price risk and market risk management techniques with financial and production **risk management strategies**. Identify opportunities of non-traditional risk management systems. For example, strategic alliances that spread risk, or risk management partnerships.
2. Identify tools and strategies to manage **business interruption** risk. For example private or public business interruption insurance to cover such interruptions as farm family tragedy, biosecurity, and disease outbreaks.
3. Develop **management tools** throughout the value chain to reduce food safety, health, bio-security and environmental risks.
4. Measure the **impact of the current and potential safety net programs** including program costs versus benefit, integration among programs and the impact on production and marketing decisions. Assess the effectiveness of safety net programs in dealing with disasters. Assess the integration and comparability of participation in multiple safety net programs.

IV Agricultural Business Management Practices

Context:

Continuous improvement in farm business management is needed to meet the opportunities and challenges provided by changes in government policies, technology, environmental and food safety concerns, labour issues, industry consolidation, value added and I.P market development, globally influenced markets, business growth and ownership transfer.

Priorities:

1. Develop best management practices, tools and strategies for retaining and attracting skilled and manual **labour** in the agriculture industry.
 - How do labour management practices and farm type/size impact labour attraction and retention?
 - What practices would assist agri-food business managers to more effectively compete for workers with other employers?
 - Research mechanisms for the determination of comparative wage rates.
 - Determine how public policy and labour legislation impact skilled and manual labour availability in agriculture, including policies associated with demographics and immigration.
2. Develop and research tools and processes for successful **ownership and management succession** of farm family businesses. Identify gaps and best management practices.
3. Assess the current and potential **integration of on-farm information** systems being used for business management, environmental and food safety tracking.
 - How can information best be integrated into management decision making?
 - Determine what lessons can be learned from other industries.
 - What are the economic benefits and costs to individual businesses of information collection and management? Assess the impact of regulatory and tax information requirements on business management. For example – what has been the impact of cash accounting for tax purposes on business management in agriculture?
4. Research business management decision of farm managers at various stages of their careers to determine the influence stage in **business lifecycle** (entry, expansion, niche maintenance, downsizing, exit) has on business decision making. Enhance information on business lifecycle and business type currently available within the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Farm Typology model.

V Market Opportunities

Context:

Ontario has developed strong marketing systems to meet the needs of producers and consumers. However every agricultural sector is faced with constantly changing challenges when marketing its products.

Niche marketing and the demand for new products, including such things as identity preserved products, pose challenges for buyers and sellers in terms of meeting market demands.

Producers' need to consider of their output as products rather than commodities has led to new challenges in the agri-food marketplace. The consolidation in wholesale and retail sectors has meant that there are fewer buyers than ever striving to meet profit targets and the ability to market effectively in that environment is challenged.

Priorities:

1. Analyze market responsiveness to **changing consumer** behavior and demographics. Analyze consumer responsiveness to specific quality attributes such as health, environmental, food safety and food quality. Investigate ways to ensure that producers capture a larger share of Canadian consumer spending on food.
2. Measure the **benefits through the value chain** of developing market opportunities (such as value –added, alternative crops, biofuels, nutraceuticals, niche marketing and identify preservation.
 - Assess who captures the benefits of new products and processes across the value chain. .
 - Analyze alternative strategies for developing value chains, for maintaining those chains, and for capturing and distributing the economic benefits.
3. Measure the impact of potential changes to **regulated marketing** for Ontario commodities.
4. Measure the impacts of increased **concentration in the agri-food sector** on Ontario's farm businesses and broader agri-food sector.
5. Understand and provide actions to capture opportunities resulting from **differences in consumer preferences between North American and Europe**.

VI International Trade Opportunities and Threats

Context:

The ongoing move to a more global marketplace and the continued development of trade partnerships or alliances will create challenges and opportunities for Ontario agriculture. Each round of the WTO and the creation and update of trading alliances such as North American Free Trade Agreement brings new changes. As the US remains Ontario's largest export market, the US Farm Bill and US Trade actions have a major impact on trade. Issues such as Bio-safety protocols and perceived trade barriers as the result of crop or livestock disease outbreaks could have serious impact on our agri-food industry because of our dependence on trade with other countries, especially the United States.

Priorities:

1. Identify industry/commodity wide **trade opportunities** that are available to producers and agri-business. For example – identify the attributes that foreign consumer's value in a Canada Brand or Ontario Brand label.
2. Examine the impact of trade agreements on Ontario, and identify **Ontario specific** trade issues that might be different from the national interest. Analyze the world and domestic outlook after the next round of negotiations in order to understand new barriers, new opportunities, industry conditions that will change.
3. Examine the impacts of and the potential ways of addressing **bio-security** concerns on trade. Assess the cost of addressing and preventing these concerns vs. the cost of dealing with issues after the fact.
4. Assess **trade distorting** impacts of foreign government programs (e.g. EU multi-functionality support, US country of origin labeling, and national security boarder controls).

VII Agri-Food Industry and Rural Countryside Linkages

Context:

Direct agriculture and related industry jobs continue to decline in rural Ontario. As it does, the influence of agriculture as a direct engine of economic growth will decline. As fewer people in rural Ontario actively derive their livelihood from the industry, agriculture is becoming valued more as an amenity to rural communities than as an economic force. This often puts the commercial interests of the industry at odds with the very amenity issues that other rural stakeholders value.

Priorities:

1. Identify and quantify the positive and negative impacts of agri-food **clusters** on rural communities.
2. Analyze ways to keep more **jobs** directly created by the agri-food industry in rural Ontario
3. Assess how to best enhance agricultural **value-added opportunities** in rural Ontario as an alternative to large scale least cost production – example – role of agri-tourism
4. Analyze the potential impacts and opportunities for **multi-functional support** to agriculture in Ontario. Are there effective mechanisms to compensate farm business owners for maintaining or enhancing the visual and aesthetic value of their operations?
5. Assess the degree of **reliance of agriculture on a strong rural community** – e.g. access to off-farm employment, to local markets, to agricultural labour force to social services and amenities for farmers and farm workers.
6. Assess the **value of the agriculture industry to rural economic opportunities**, - example tourism, rural residences, etc. Quantify the interaction of agriculture with the boarder rural community.

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5. Recommendations

No recommendations are made in this report.

6. Appendices

I Sub-committee Reports

There are no Sub-committees.

II. Committee Membership

Members

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Industry Stakeholders	
Patrick O'Neil	Ontario Pork 655 Southgate Drive, Guelph, ON N1G 5G6
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III. Committee Activities

The Agricultural Economics and Business Research and Services Committee meet on Tuesday December 2, 2003.

The 2002-2006 Strategic Report was reviewed, and the minor changes recommended at the December 2, 2003 meeting are reflected in this report.

The Committee also established a plan for the current cycle – leading to the 2006-2010 Strategic Report:

- November – December 2004: Committee meeting focusing on Services – ie public and private business management and agricultural economics information delivery and advisory services to the industry
- February – November 2005: 2 committee meetings focusing on identifying industry issues for 2006-2010 Strategic Review. One meeting to include a larger forum with a cross section of industry stakeholders.
- January 2006: First draft of 2006-2010 Four Year Strategic Report completed and circulated for comment.