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Published plans and annual reports 2020-2021: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Plans for 2020-2021, and results and outcomes of all provincial programs delivered by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs in 2019-2020.

Ministry overview

Ministry's vision

The vision for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) is to foster the sustainable economic growth of rural Ontario and of the agri-food sector and its associated value and supply chains.

The ministry does this by encouraging and supporting economic development, research, knowledge transfer and innovation. It also provides assurance and oversight of the agri-food system and protects the productive capacity of our natural resources.

These activities help strengthen the agri-food sector and rural and urban communities. They support good jobs, attract investment, help ensure food security, and contribute to Ontario's economic success.

COVID-19 response

OMAFRA recognizes the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a widespread concern, including for the agriculture and agri-food industry. The ministry is doing everything it can to keep Ontario's food supply system strong and this includes working closely with government partners and the agriculture and agri-food industry. These efforts include ongoing engagement with our partners and taking action to support the agri-food sectors and rural communities during this crisis and in anticipation of recovery.

Ministry programs

Strong agriculture, food and bio-product sectors and strong rural communities

Rural Ontario is home to about 2.5 million people — approximately 19% of Ontario's population. In addition to agricultural businesses, rural Ontario offers diverse industries, including wholesale trade and retail trade, health care, social assistance, educational institutions and manufacturing. The ministry offers a range of resources, including Economic Development, Research, Business Risk Management Transfers and Agriculture and Rural Affairs Capital.

Economic development

OMAFRA provides support to Ontario's rural communities by developing and delivering local and regional economic development programs, tools and resources, including Business Retention and Expansion, First Impressions Community Exchange, Downtown Revitalization, Community Immigrant Retention in Rural Ontario, Newcomers and Youth Indicators, Regional Economic Analysis Resources, Performance Measurement Resources, and Regional Advisory Services. These resources support our rural communities by helping them identify and advance initiatives that will foster economic growth and prosperity.

OMAFRA also continues to foster vibrant rural economies by partnering in rural infrastructure programs, community and regional support programs, and the Rural Economic Development program.

The ministry's Rural Economic Development program helps rural and Indigenous communities remove barriers to economic development, so they are better positioned to attract investment, create jobs and enhance economic growth.

Foodland Ontario helps to increase awareness, celebrates local food and encourages consumers to choose Ontario food first. The ministry supports the use of the Foodland Ontario logo on Ontario fresh and processed food products.

Ontario's agriculture and agri-food sectors are an important economic engine and contribute to our high quality of life by providing good

jobs and safe food.

Research

The ministry works in partnership with industry, academia, agencies, other Ontario ministries, provincial governments and the federal government to advance research and innovation that promotes the growth of the agriculture and food sector. Each year, OMAFRA invests approximately \$75 million in research. Agri-food research helps strengthen Ontario's competitive edge and leads to both new products and contributes to safe food, a healthy environment and strong communities.

The ministry's renewed our long-standing partnership with the University of Guelph through a 10-year agreement, known as the Ontario Agri-food Innovation Alliance. As an essential research component in Ontario's agri-food and bio-products sector, this partnership supports the growth and competitiveness of Ontario's agri-food sector, creates jobs and further solidifies the province's position as a global leader in agri-food education, research and innovation.

The partnership has resulted many innovative projects, including technological developments that dairy farmers have commercialized and adopted to improve herd health, support breeding programs and improve profitability. In addition, this support has helped launch Mirexus, a spin-off company from University of Guelph research, that manufactures corn-based nanoparticles for cosmetic, biomedical and other applications.

The research, made possible through our continued partnership, will help equip undergraduate and graduate students with the skills they need to become the next generation of researchers, innovators and policy-makers in Ontario's growing agri-food sector.

OMAFRA also invests in open research programs that have funded numerous projects to address many issues including food safety, climate change, soil health, plant and animal health, water management, bio-products development, and precision agriculture.

The ministry works with industry and other partners to focus research priorities, co-invest in research projects and infrastructure, and to encourage uptake by applying formal research into active use and technology transfer activities.

OMAFRA is implementing a strategy that will modernize its research and innovation programs, services and infrastructure, in partnership with governments, industry and academia. Through these partnerships, and strategically targeted investments, the government can leverage knowledge, technology and intellectual capacity to build a sector that is aligned with government and industry priorities.

Business Risk Management transfers

Through its Business Risk Management (BRM) programming, the ministry helps Ontario's agricultural producers manage risks beyond their control, including weather and market volatility. The programming includes other assistance to support initiatives that improve sector profitability. OMAFRA offers a variety of programs, primarily delivered through its Crown agency, Agricorp.

Programs include the federal/provincial programs under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (AgriInvest, AgriStability, AgriInsurance (Production Insurance), AgriRisk and AgriRecovery), and the provincial-only Risk Management Program (RMP) which includes the Self-Directed Risk Management Program (SDRM) for edible horticulture.

Agriculture and rural affairs capital

Working with federal, provincial and municipal governments, OMAFRA administers several municipal capital programs on behalf of the Ministry of Infrastructure (MOI), with an emphasis on communities with populations of less than 100,000. These programs allow communities to build on projects that meet local needs, support revitalization and the repair of critical infrastructure, and help to create jobs in construction and related industries.

The ministry's research is supported by the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario (ARIO), and includes research stations, labs and related agricultural infrastructure. These facilities provide the capacity for research on a wide variety of agri-food issues and support industry-driven research while leveraging third party investments. In 2018-19, a new Agronomy Research Services Building in Winchester was completed along with a significant portion of the new Beef Research Facility in Elora.

Better public health and environment

OMAFRA provides oversight of the agri-food system in Ontario and is responsible for the emergency management activities related to farm animal disease, food contamination, agricultural plant diseases and pest infestations.

Ontario is working to reduce unnecessary red tape for farmers and agri-businesses while at the same time maintaining and strengthening the rules that protect health and safety, and helping businesses grow and cut costs, including:

- Engaging stakeholders in the review of the licensing, certification and permitting processes in more than 20 programs delivered by the ministry, to streamline processes and reduce burden on applicants.
- Making changes that remove burdensome construction and equipment requirements for small dairy processors under the *Milk Act*,

while respecting and maintaining food safety and quality.

- Proposing to proclaim into force the repeal of the *Livestock Medicines Act*, which contains outdated and duplicative requirements, and to substitute more streamlined requirements around the sale of livestock medicines in new regulations under the *Animal Health Act*.

The ministry also provides leadership to Regulatory Compliance Ontario (RCO), which works with 17 other regulatory ministries to deliver training, programs and resources that instil modern regulatory service principles across government.

OMAFRA's outcome-based programs protect and advance public health, animal health, plant health, and food safety. They support economic viability and sustainability of Ontario's agriculture industry and rural communities, as well as provide confidence to consumers that Ontario's food is safe.

OMAFRA is working closely with Federal, Provincial and Territorial (FPT) partners and industry associations to advance the implementation of the three pillars of traceability (premises identification, animal identification and movement reporting) throughout the livestock sector in preparation for the amendment to the federal *Health of Animals Act* and Regulations, expected to be published in Canada Gazette I in 2020.

OMAFRA is also working closely with Federal, Provincial and Territorial (FPT) partners and industry associations to advance the implementation of priorities identified in the national Plant and Animal Health Strategy. The priority areas for plant health include emergency management, biosecurity and surveillance and monitoring.

Managed honey bees are pollinators that play a crucial role in Ontario agriculture. OMAFRA works with beekeepers to maintain the viability of this sector through education and outreach, an inspection program, and monitoring for pathogens and pests. Through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, up to \$500,000 is being invested directly with beekeepers to strengthen the health of managed honey bees and Ontario's beekeeping sector.

The ministry is working with the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) to enhance environmental protection efforts through technical education and advisory services. This will assist Ontario's producers address climate change issues, manage soil and water impacts and recover resources from agri-food waste.

In April 2018, the ministry released 'New Horizons: Ontario's Agricultural Soil Health and Conservation Strategy to help grow and sustain the province's strong agricultural sector, while protecting the environment and building resilience to climate change. The strategy is a long-term framework that sets a vision, goals and objectives for soil health and conservation in Ontario from 2018 to 2030. It includes actions for government and industry leadership to take to help achieve the desired outcomes. The strategy was developed collaboratively with stakeholders, and continued collaboration through a new Soil Action Group will support its successful implementation.

Ontario launched a soil mapping initiative that will contribute to the growing understanding of how soil properties can inform land management. The new data collected by the soil mapping pilot will help farmers adjust their management practices by:

- providing data to support agricultural production, management and stewardship practices
- contributing information to support soil health efforts and
- further protecting the quality of Ontario's lakes, rivers and streams.

OMAFRA is also working with MECP on elements of the Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan, which have implications and opportunities for agri-food sector. These include supporting the leadership of the agriculture and agri-food sector in implementing:

- the Ontario Great Lakes Strategy and Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health,
- the provincial climate change impact assessment, and
- improved access for the sector to clean technology funding and compliance flexibility mechanisms.

OMAFRA is also exploring opportunities to revitalize the Environmental Farm Plan with sector leadership.

The government, with its partners, released the Canada-Ontario Action Plan (the Plan) for Lake Erie in February 2018. The Action Plan outlines Canada's and Ontario's proposed actions to meet commitments under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA), and the Canada Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health (COA). The long-term objective of the plans is to reduce phosphorus entering the Central and Western Basins of Lake Erie by 40%. To achieve these science-based targets, action is needed by all parties, including agriculture.

Of 128 actions in the Plan, 25 are directly related to agriculture. OMAFRA has the lead for 19 of those actions, and six actions have been introduced by the agriculture sector. Canada, Ontario and partners, under the Lake Erie Action Plan Implementation Team, are developing a workplan to document their ongoing implementation of the actions in the plan.

Working with the agriculture and agri-food sector, OMAFRA is finding ways to balance the competitive production of food with managing the environment. With stewardship initiatives such as the Environmental Farm Plan, an education and risk assessment program for farmers, and the industry-led 4Rs Stewardship program (the right fertilizer at the right rate, the right time and in the right place), the ministry is continuously improving recommendations for best management practices to be more effective in promoting soil health and in

supporting a sustainable agriculture sector.

Through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP), \$5.84 million in cost-share funding was invested in 2018-19 to support farmers in implementing best management practices that reduce phosphorus loadings in the Lake Erie basin, as well as practices across Ontario that support soil health.

The CAP program (April 2018-2023) supports research, monitoring, education, tool development and increased adoption of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for soil health and water quality priorities under the Environmental Stewardship priority area.

Building on the success of Great Lakes Agricultural Stewardship Initiative, a new sub-program of CAP, delivered by the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association, the Lake Erie Agriculture Demonstrating Sustainability (LEADS) program has been introduced. The program provides technical support for field-specific risk assessment through the Farmland Health Check-Up and access to cost share funding over five years to support producers to act to reduce the risk of nutrient loss on farm.

OMAFRA's drainage program is guided by three pieces of legislation, including the *Agricultural Tile Drainage Installation Act*, the *Tile Drainage Act* and the *Drainage Act*. The businesses supported by this legislation collectively invest \$100 million annually in productivity improvements of agricultural land, by improving trafficability and increasing crop productivity, while reducing soil erosion, and nutrient and sediment transport to water bodies. The industry is linked to over 100 independent businesses.

The Drainage Act provides a legal process and grants for landowners to petition a municipality to construct an outlet drainage system (commonly referred to as a "municipal drain"). More than 44,500 kilometers of outlet drains have been constructed, supporting improved productivity of 1.9 million hectares of the 3.6 million hectares of cropland in Ontario.

Ontario and Quebec are collaborating on a \$1.5 million call for proposals to research climate change impacts on soil health, food processing and food safety and the development of best practices to address those impacts.

Ministry administration and policy

OMAFRA continues to provide high quality customer service and efficient program delivery. To drive success for rural Ontario, the ministry will ensure rural consideration is given in policy and programs across government and will develop key performance measures and metrics to promote economic growth and opportunities to support a high quality of life for its residents.

Following the March 2019 announcement by the Open Government Office in the Ontario Digital Service, OMAFRA will continue to support the resumption and expansion of the publication of open data to Ontario's Data Catalogue. Sharing government data aligns with the recommendations of the Ernst & Young report (Line by Line review), which notes that sharing data and information is in the public interest. Publishing reliable, trustworthy and valuable government data to the public through Ontario's Data Catalogue unlocks the value of data held by the government, provides transparency and accountability for government spending and decision-making, helps government and business build better programs and services; and is a key to creating a true digital-first government.

The ministry will also continue to meet its requirements under the Ontario government's Digital First strategy for Ontario to be the first government in Canada to mandate an all-of-government digital approach to service delivery.

COVID-19 response

OMAFRA invested in greater meat inspection capacity to help ensure operational needs are met for the continued inspection of food and meat products. The ministry also helped Ontario's Food Terminal to remain open and distributing food by investing in advanced sanitization measures.

2020-21 Strategic plan

Cutting red tape and reducing regulatory burden

The ministry is committed to making rural Ontario and Ontario's agri-food sector open for business and open for jobs. The ministry is helping Ontarians succeed by cutting red tape and unnecessary regulatory burdens while maintaining those rules that protect food safety, public health, plant and animal health.

The ministry continues to actively support the government's Open for Business Action Plan (2018), which includes contributing towards the province's target to reduce barriers to business growth and to achieve government-wide savings of \$400 million in compliance costs for Ontario businesses.

In a series of roundtables hosted by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, farmers, food processors and agri-businesses across Ontario provided feedback about issues affecting the agricultural economy, and areas where the government could consider cutting red tape to help reach government targets.

The ministry has been working to extend deadlines for a variety of government programs and to adjust requirements to help the sector during the COVID-19 outbreak.

In addition, OMAFRA reviewed its existing licences, certificates, permits, program deadlines and fees to make things easier for clients and stakeholders managing the impacts of COVID-19. As a result, the ministry has already extended more than 20 provincial agri-food licences, permits and program application deadlines to provide some relief to businesses across the sector.

Supporting domestic agricultural product and food production

A strong agri-food sector relies on domestic production and processing of food and bioproducts to help boost Ontario's economy, create good jobs and put food on the tables of Ontarians. Ontario's agri-food industry contributes \$47.7 billion in GDP and supports over 837,000 jobs, representing 11.6% of the province's labour force.

To support our domestic production, OMAFRA's focus is to foster investment and job creation in Ontario. Ministry staff help food and beverage processors and bio product manufacturers, from across the province, realize the potential of new international markets and drive greater foreign and domestic investment. Countries such as China, India, and Vietnam are already increasing global demand for meat and higher value agri-food products. In addition, by 2050, the [world population is projected to be 9.8 billion \(https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/world-population-prospects-2017.html\)](https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/world-population-prospects-2017.html), and the demand for high-quality foods and agricultural products grown and processed in Ontario are anticipated to increase.

The ministry continues to offer the agri-food sector education, business-to-business and domestic trade show programming to further build awareness and demand for Ontario grown and produced food and beverage products.

Ontario has the people, drive, and know-how to respond while ensuring that increased production does not compromise the environment.

OMAFRA is supporting agriculture and agri-food employers of Temporary Foreign Workers who are required to self-isolate for 14 days on arrival due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response to the need for additional labour, OMAFRA created an online jobs portal to match potential workers with employers looking to fill roles in the farming and agri-food sector, making it easier to match people to essential jobs and training resources throughout the provincial food supply chain.

OMAFRA's COVID-19 response efforts also include linking producers, processors, distributors, warehousing, retail and foodservice outlets to help them mitigate some of the capacity problems they are facing. The ministry has worked with the agri-food industry to address excessive inventory at distribution companies and has helped to develop partnerships at the processor and distribution levels to address gaps in freight and storage.

Growing the agri-food sector through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership

Equally important for Ontario's economic success is the ministry's work to provide support to producers, processors, organizations and collaborations through the agricultural policy framework known as the Canadian Agricultural Partnership.

Launched in April 2018, the Canadian Agricultural Partnership is a five-year, federal-provincial-territorial initiative to strengthen the agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products sector. The aim is to increase its competitiveness, prosperity and sustainability. In Ontario, strategic initiatives focus on economic development, environmental stewardship, and protection and assurance.

The ministry is creating new economic opportunities for Ontario's agri-food industry by providing targeted investments across the agri-food value and supply chain and emphasizing the importance of two-way trade. The ministry maintains its support of the supply management system, which helps maintain a stable, high-quality supply of products for Ontario's food processors and consumers.

The Canadian Agricultural Partnership also includes funding to help farmers manage risks that threaten the viability of their farm, such as unpredictable weather or market volatility. Under the initiative, the federal and provincial governments have committed an estimated \$1.5 billion in the Ontario agri-food sector: approximately \$1.1 billion for Business Risk Management funding and \$417 million for strategic initiatives funding.

Our participation in the Canadian Agricultural Partnership form part of our government's efforts to grow Ontario's agri-food sector by strengthening the connection between agri-food producers, processors and consumers.

To help the sector during the COVID-19 outbreak, OMAFRA extended deadlines for two Canadian Agricultural Partnership initiatives; one provides support to provincially-inspected abattoirs and the other supports food safety enhancements in provincially-inspected dairy plants.

In response to COVID-19, OMAFRA recently announced a new Canadian Agricultural Partnership program that will see an investment of up to \$1 million dollars in addressing labour challenges by better connecting workers with in-demand jobs in the agri-food sector. This program is designed to help primary agriculture, food processing companies and grocery retail stores recruit and train workers who are all critical parts to keeping our food supply chain strong.

In addition, the governments of Canada and Ontario are investing up to \$2.5 million to help the agri-food sector expand their online presence, providing more opportunities for producers to grow their business and offer more food choices for families who are shopping from home during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, the ministry launched the Agri-food Workplace Protection Program to help farmers and processors enhance health and safety measures to better protect employees and ensure the continued supply of food products during the COVID-19 outbreak. The funding will be used for initiatives like purchasing personal protective equipment, enhanced cleaning and disinfection, and redesigning workstations.

Risk Management program

The government is committed to preserving Ontario's Risk Management program. This includes exploring options to update the program to be more insurance-based to better support farmers and producers in managing risks beyond their control, such as changing costs and market prices.

In response to COVID-19, [OMAFRA](#) has extended enrollment and some reporting deadlines for Risk Management Program's Livestock and Grain and Oilseeds producers until June 30, 2020.

Support for rural communities

[OMAFRA](#) provides support to Ontario's rural communities by developing and delivering local and regional economic development programs, tools and resources that support our rural communities by helping them identify and advance initiatives that will foster economic growth and prosperity.

The government is committed to ensuring that communities across Ontario have access to broadband and cellular connectivity. In July 2019, the Ontario government released its Broadband and Cellular Action Plan, which is expected to generate up to \$1 billion in total investment over five years, resulting in new connections for up to 220,000 homes and businesses. The investment will help families to stay in touch, connect businesses with the world, and make rural communities investment-ready.

Environmental stewardship

Ontario farmers, farm businesses and organizations, together with support from governments, continue to show their strong environmental leadership. Farmers continue to voluntarily adopt best sustainability management practices to manage their land and drive economic growth. They also continue to support water quality improvements for the benefit of all Ontarians, including reducing phosphorus entering Lake Erie's western and central basins by 40% before 2025.

Under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, the Lake Erie Agriculture Demonstrating Sustainability (LEADS) initiative builds on the successes of the Great Lakes Agricultural Stewardship Initiative. [LEADS](#) helps farmers in reducing nutrient losses, particularly phosphorus, to improve soil health. These actions help strengthen pollinator habitats and the sustainability of the agricultural sector.

[OMAFRA's](#) approach to environmental stewardship is focused on supporting those environmental actions that build accountability within Ontario's agri-food sector, allowing the sector to demonstrate leadership in sustainability without unnecessary red tape and regulatory burden. [OMAFRA](#) works collaboratively with the agri-food industry, government, researchers, municipalities and non-governmental organizations to achieve results with:

- a range of non-regulatory/Open for Business approaches,
- expanded uptake of best management practices by farmers,
- increased efficiency by leveraging resources and expertise through cooperation, and
- a strengthened evidence base to measure performance, target investments and demonstrate progress.

Economic development

The ministry enables innovation and fosters change with the aim to strengthen the social, economic and environmental sustainability of a diverse agriculture sector, including working with a broad set of agriculture, rural, government and academic partners to coordinate a wide range of initiatives. This work promotes change in the agriculture industry by improving access to trusted information, fostering the adoption of new innovative technologies and best practices, and promoting regulatory compliance for business sustainability.

The ministry's advisory services target those areas of the agri-food sector that will increase competitiveness, productivity and profitability; improve the anticipation, mitigation and response to risks; expand domestic and international markets and increase environmental sustainability.

The advisory services include the development, continuous improvement and dissemination of timely information and best practices; identification and validation of innovative technologies; surveillance, monitoring and mitigation of plant pest and disease threats; and ensuring access to critical tools to support business decisions (e.g. minor use program for pest management, plant disease models). These

accessible services are delivered to partners through demonstrations, publications, training, mobile apps and web-based applications.

The ministry also proactively protects the resilience of the agriculture sector by providing knowledge and support to clients prior to and during emergencies to ensure the public good, food security, and protection of the plant and animal resource base. For example: preparing for emergency responses to production-limiting diseases, such as PED and African swine fever (ASF), as well as identifying and solving problems like plant diseases (e.g., DON in corn), and supporting industry and federal, provincial and territorial governments in the development of emergency response plans.

Ensuring food safety and animal health

OMAFRA is dedicated to enhancing food safety and animal health through education and outreach, advisory services, surveillance, emergency management and compliance verification and action. The ministry continues its ongoing work to become an effective modern regulator. For example, OMAFRA works closely with farmers and agri-food processors to set clear expectations and achieve outcomes that meet food safety and animal health and welfare regulatory requirements.

Protecting the health and well-being of Ontarians during the COVID-19 pandemic includes protecting food safety and the food supply system. OMAFRA has taken steps to support a safe food supply, including investing in greater inspection capacity to help ensure operational needs are met. The ministry also helped Ontario's Food Terminal to remain open and distributing food by investing in advanced sanitization measures.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency and OMAFRA have partnered to share inspection resources to safeguard food security and production due to resource constraints imposed by COVID-19.

Ministry Planned Expenditures 2020-21 (\$M)

Expenditure Type	Amount (\$M)
COVID-19 Approvals	0.0
Other Operating	670.3
Capital	118.1
Total	788.4

Detailed financial information

Combined Operating and Capital Summary by Vote

Operating Expense

Votes/Programs	Estimates 2020-21 \$	Change from Estimates 2019-20 \$	%	Estimates 2019-20 ^[1] \$	Interim Actuals 2019-20 ^[1] \$	Actuals 2018-19 ^[1] \$
Ministry Administration Program	22,623,900	34,000	0.2	22,589,900	22,237,200	24,836,853
Better Public Health and Environment	77,308,100	(2,207,100)	(2.8)	79,515,200	78,534,800	73,403,438
Strong Agriculture, Food and Bio-product Sectors and Strong Rural Communities	418,440,900	(16,906,000)	(3.9)	435,346,900	410,455,200	462,773,519
Policy Development	16,379,600	(1,254,800)	(7.1)	17,634,400	16,436,500	16,983,530
Total Operating Expense to be Voted	534,752,500	(20,333,900)	(3.7)	555,086,400	527,663,700	577,997,340
Statutory Appropriations	1,097,187	16,173	1.5	1,081,014	235,600	3,238,858
Ministry Total Operating Expense	535,849,687	(20,317,727)	(3.7)	556,167,414	527,899,300	581,236,198
Consolidation Adjustment - Agricorp	128,573,400	(2,740,600)	(2.1)	131,314,000	297,317,100	139,025,582
Consolidation Adjustment - Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario (ARIO)	6,792,000	(41,000)	(0.6)	6,833,000	11,075,500	6,202,234
Consolidation Adjustment - Ontario Racing Commission	-	-	-	-	-	834
Consolidation Adjustment - Colleges	-	-	-	-	-	(12,750)

Votes/Programs	Estimates 2020-21 \$	Change from Estimates 2019-20 \$	%	Estimates 2019-20 ^[1] \$	Interim Actuals 2019-20 ^[1] \$	Actuals 2018-19 ^[1] \$
Consolidation Adjustment - General Real Estate Portfolio	(919,400)	8,887,300	-	(9,806,700)	(9,806,700)	(9,273,768)
Consolidation Adjustment - Ontario Infrastructure and Lands Corporation	-	-	-	-	-	(96,569)
Operating Expense Adjustment – Cap and Trade Wind Down Account Reclassification	-	-	-	-	-	1,269,293
Total Including Consolidation & Other Adjustments	670,295,687	(14,212,027)	(2.1)	684,507,714	826,485,200	718,351,054

Operating Assets

Votes/Programs	Estimates 2020-21 \$	Change from Estimates 2019-20 \$	%	Estimates 2019-20 ^[1] \$	Interim Actuals 2019-20 ^[1] \$	Actuals 2018-19 ^[1] \$
Ministry Administration Program	1,000	-	-	1,000	1,000	-
Better Public Health and Environment	5,000,000	(4,000,000)	(44.4)	9,000,000	9,000,000	1,889,100
Total Operating Assets to be Voted	5,001,000	(4,000,000)	(44.4)	9,001,000	9,001,000	1,889,100
Ministry Total Operating Assets	5,001,000	(4,000,000)	(44.4)	9,001,000	9,001,000	1,889,100

Capital Expense

Votes/Programs	Estimates 2020-21 \$	Change from Estimates 2019-20 \$	%	Estimates 2019-20 ^[1] \$	Interim Actuals 2019-20 ^[1] \$	Actuals 2018-19 ^[1] \$
Strong Agriculture, Food and Bio-product Sectors and Strong Rural Communities	121,500,000	(74,525,200)	(38.0)	196,025,200	332,592,100	208,389,001
Total Capital Expense to be Voted	121,500,000	(74,525,200)	(38.0)	196,025,200	332,592,100	208,389,001
Ministry Total Capital Expense	121,500,000	(74,525,200)	(38.0)	196,025,200	332,592,100	208,389,001
Consolidation Adjustment - Agricorp	1,505,800	829,800	122.8	676,000	402,000	505,197
Consolidation Adjustment - Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario (ARIO)	(4,920,600)	(912,300)	-	(4,008,300)	(5,310,100)	(8,751,553)
Consolidation Adjustment - Colleges	-	-	-	-	-	(9,123,304)
Consolidation Adjustment - General Real Estate Portfolio	-	-	-	-	-	(53,590)
Capital Expense Adjustment - Trillium Trust Reclassification	-	-	-	-	-	156,045,314
Total Including Consolidation & Other Adjustments	118,085,200	(74,607,700)	(38.7)	192,692,900	327,684,000	347,011,065

Ministry Total Operating and Capital Including Consolidation and Other Adjustments (not including Assets)

Votes/Programs	Estimates 2020-21 \$	Change from Estimates 2019-20 \$	%	Estimates 2019-20 ^[1] \$	Interim Actuals 2019-20 ^[1] \$	Actuals 2018-19 ^[1] \$
Ministry Total Operating and Capital Including Consolidation and Other Adjustments (not including Assets)	788,380,887	(88,819,727)	(10.1)	877,200,614	1,154,169,200	1,065,362,119

Note: The 2019–20 Interim Actuals include extraordinary production insurance payout of \$175 million above annual forecast due to 2019 crop conditions and \$137 million of in-year transfers from the Ministry of Infrastructure to deliver infrastructure programs.

Ministry Allocation of 2020-21 Base Spending

68%

Strong Agriculture, Food and Bio-product Sectors and Strong Rural Communities: \$541M

17%

Consolidated Agencies and Adjustments: \$131M

10%

Better Public Health and Environment: \$77M

3%

Ministry Administration Program: \$23M

2%

Policy Development: \$16M

Historic Trend

Historic Trend Analysis Data	Actuals 2017-18 121 \$	Actuals 2018-19 121 \$	Estimates 2019-20 121 \$	Estimates 2020-21 \$
Ministry Total Operating and Capital Including Consolidation and Other Adjustments (not including Assets)	993,497,386	1,065,362,119	877,200,614	788,380,887
Variance (%)	-	7%	-18%	-10%

The ministry's historical trends in Actuals fluctuate primarily due to variability in its demand-driven programs, which make up for most of its budget.

The 2019-20 and 2020-21 Estimates show relative decreases to the prior years due to the ministry having only a partial budget for municipal infrastructure programs to begin its fiscal years, including a smaller portion to begin the 2020-21 year relative to the 2019-20 year. The 2017-18 and 2018-19 Actuals also reflect total spending on the municipal infrastructure programs relative to the partial budget for these programs that the ministry has at the beginning of the fiscal year (Estimates).

For additional financial information, see:

- [Expenditure Estimates \(https://www.ontario.ca/page/expenditure-estimates\)](https://www.ontario.ca/page/expenditure-estimates)
- [The Public Accounts of Ontario 2019-20 \(https://www.ontario.ca/page/public-accounts-ontario-2019-20\)](https://www.ontario.ca/page/public-accounts-ontario-2019-20)
- [Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19 \(https://budget.ontario.ca/2020/marchupdate/index.html\)](https://budget.ontario.ca/2020/marchupdate/index.html)

Agencies, boards and commissions (ABCs)

The agencies of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) perform a range of functions, including delivering Business Risk Management programs, supervising Ontario's 23 marketing boards and three representative commodity associations, and fulfilling other regulatory, operational and advisory functions.

The ministry is responsible for the governance and oversight of 11 provincial agencies in accordance with the Agencies & Appointments Directive, 2015. The following is a list of the ministry's agencies, boards and commissions accountable to the Minister.

Consolidated agencies

Agencies with assets, liabilities, revenues or expenses greater than \$50 million, or an annual surplus or deficit, or receiving an outside revenue source of greater than \$10 million, are consolidated in OMAFRA's budget.

Agricorp

Type of agency: Board-governed/Operational Enterprise

Constituting instrument: *AgriCorp Act*

Function:

Agricorp was created in 1997 with a mandate to deliver crop insurance and other agricultural business risk management programs. Agricorp currently delivers three core programs, AgriStability, Production Insurance and the suite of Risk Management Programs, as well as several smaller programs, such as the Farm Property Class Tax Rate Program.

Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario (ARIO)

Type of agency: Board-governed/Operational Service

Constituting instrument: *Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario Act*

Function:

ARIO is focused on ensuring Ontario maintains its competitive advantage in agri-food and agri-products research and innovation and concentrates its efforts in four ways:

1. Providing strategic advice to the Minister on agri-food and agri-products research and innovation;
2. Implementing the ARIO's Infrastructure Strategy to modernize the province's agri-food and agri-products research and innovation physical and virtual infrastructure;
3. Promoting the Ontario agri-food and agri-products research and innovation system; and
4. Providing administrative and managerial oversight of open research programs and the 17 ARIO-owned research properties with over 6,500 acres, 280+ buildings with a book value of approximately \$80 million, and over 20 tenants that include government, not-for-profit, industry and private-sector organizations.

Financial information for consolidated agencies (\$M)

Agencies	2018-19 Expenditure Actuals	2018-19 Revenue Actuals	2019-20 Expenditure Interim Actuals	2019-20 Revenue Interim Actuals	2020-21 Expenditure Estimates	2020-21 Revenue Estimates
Agricorp	139.5	154.5	297.7 ^[3]	151.9	130.1	166.5
ARIO	(2.5)	2.7	5.8	58.8	1.9	2.4

Non-consolidated agencies**Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Appeal Tribunal (AFRAAT)/ Board of Negotiation (BON)**

Type of agency: Non Board-governed/Adjudicative

Constituting instrument: *Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Act* and *Environmental Protection*

Function:

The function of the AFRAAT is to provide a fair and impartial hearing and decision process for those who are aggrieved by a direction, policy, order or decision, or who require the resolution of a dispute pursuant to one of 17 provincial statutes related to the agriculture and food industry. Most of the matters heard by the Tribunal arise from appeals of decisions made under the following eight statutes: *Drainage Act*, *Agricultural Products Insurance Act*, *Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs Act* (for appeals of decisions made under the *Farm Products Marketing Act* and the *Milk Act*), *Assessment Act*, *Food Safety and Quality Act*, *Farm Registration and Farm Organizations Funding Act* (applications heard), *Farm Implements Act* and *Agricultural Employees Protection Act*.

The BON was established to provide people seeking settlement in cases where contaminants have caused damage to livestock, crops, trees or other vegetation, a place to present their case to obtain a non-binding decision by an independent panel of agency appointees. While the jurisdiction for requesting assistance from the BON falls with the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks in legislation, the administration of the process for BON hearings was transferred to OMAFRA in 1999. Since that time, no cases have been brought forward for a BON decision.

Normal Farm Practices Protection Board (NFPPB)

Type of agency: Non Board-governed/ Adjudicative

Constituting instrument: *Farming and Food Production Protection Act*

Function:

The NFPPB reviews and resolves disputes related to an agricultural operation, including the determination of what constitutes a normal farm practice; and makes the necessary inquiries and orders to ensure compliance with its decisions.

Grain Financial Protection Board (GFPB)/Livestock Financial Protection Board (LFPB)

Type of agency: Board-governed/Trust

Constituting instrument: *Farm Products Payments Act*

Function:

Under the *Farm Products Payments Act*, funds and boards are established to protect producers from non-payment by licensed buyers.

The GFPB collects fees, administers a compensation fund and makes decisions on claims made against the funds. The fund was set up under the Grain Financial Protection Program to protect producers of grain corn, soybeans, wheat and canola in the event of defaults on payment by licensed buyers. It also protects owners of grain who store their grain in licensed grain elevators.

The LFPB collects fees, administers a compensation fund and makes decisions on claims made against the fund. The fund was set up under the Ontario Beef Cattle Financial Protection Program to protect producers and other sellers of beef cattle in the event of defaults on payment by licensed buyers.

Business Risk Management Review Committee (BRMRC)

Type of agency: Advisory

Constituting instrument: Order in Council

Function:

The BRMRC has the authority to consider requests for reviews and make non-binding recommendations to the program administration for the following programs: AgriStability; Ontario's Risk Management Program (including Ontario's Self-Directed Risk Management Program); Ontario's Wildlife Damage Compensation Program; and any other program to which the Lieutenant Governor in Council or the Minister assigns responsibility.

Rural Economic Development Advisory Panel (REDAP)

Type of agency: Advisory

Constituting instrument: Order in Council

Function:

The REDAP is responsible for providing non-binding recommendations to the Minister on applications for funding under the Rural Economic Development (RED) program and any other program that the Lieutenant Governor in Council or the Minister may assign.

Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission (OFPMC)

Type of agency: Non Board-governed/ Regulatory

Constituting instrument: *Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Act*

Function:

The OFPMC administers the *Farm Products Marketing Act* and the *Milk Act*, develops and implements regulated marketing policy, represents Ontario's interests in regulated marketing at the national level and supervises Ontario's 23 marketing boards and three designated associations. It also provides leadership in the form of advice, facilitation and direction, as well as educational programs to these boards and associations.

Ontario Food Terminal Board (OFTB)

Type of agency: Board-governed/ Operational Enterprise

Constituting instrument: *Ontario Food Terminal Act*

Function:

The OFTB has a mandate to acquire, construct, equip and operate a wholesale fruit and produce market, and operate such facility for the distribution and handling of fruit and produce.

Ministry organization chart

- Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: Honourable Ernie Hardeman
 - OMAFRA Classified Agencies
 - Parliamentary Assistant (Agriculture and Food): Toby Barrett
 - Parliamentary Assistant (Rural Affairs): Randy Pettapiece
 - Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: Greg Meredith
 - Legal Services ^[4] : Michelle Ireland (A)
 - Communications Branch: Rebecca Morier
 - Chief Information Officer Land and Resources IT Cluster ^[5] : Rocco Passero
 - Research & Corporate Services Division: Lee-Ann Walker
 - Business Services Branch: Heather Harrison (A)
 - Research & Innovation Branch: Jen Liptrot
 - Business Planning & Financial Management Branch: Jennifer Kidon
 - Strategic HR Branch: Alaina Oda
 - Audit Services Branch ^[6] : Nancy Lavoie
 - Food Safety & Environment Division: Kelly McAslan
 - Food Safety Systems Development Branch: Laurie Adrien (A)
 - Food Safety Inspection Delivery Branch: Renée Bowler
 - Environmental Management Branch: Thom Hagerty
 - Animal Health & Welfare Branch: Dr. Greg Worley
 - Economic Development Division: Randy Jackiw
 - Agriculture Development Branch: Colleen Fitzgerald-Hubble
 - Business Development Branch: Doug Reddick
 - Rural Programs Branch: Carolyn Hamilton
 - Policy Division: David Hagarty
 - Farm Finance Branch: Heather Cassidy
 - Economic Development Policy Branch: Scott Duff
 - Food Safety & Environmental Policy Branch: Andrea Martin
 - Intergovernmental & Trade Policy Branch: Karl Maiterth
 - Director, Farm Products Marketing Commission: Brendan McKay

Appendix: 2019-20 Annual report

Annual report

The Ontario government is committed to making rural Ontario, and Ontario's agri-food sector, open for business and open for jobs.

Ontario is shrinking administrative costs while improving government services for farmers, food processors and agri-businesses across Ontario.

It is reducing red tape and regulatory burdens while maintaining rules that protect food safety and animal health.

Ontario is also investing in key programs like the Risk Management Program, standing up for Ontario's farmers globally and supporting on-farm environmental stewardship initiatives.

COVID-19 response

To ensure continuity of regulatory oversight in the food processing sector during the COVID 19 pandemic, OMAFRA is investing in support for front line inspection delivery. OMAFRA staff with expertise in food safety are receiving specialized training to prepare them to be deployed as needed for slaughter, meat processing, dairy, foods of plant origin and fish inspection. The investment is providing additional front-line inspection capacity to be responsive to labour shortages due to illness and/or increased inspection demand related to fluctuations in the food supply chain and ensure that oversight of high-risk food processing operations is maintained.

Through a Transfer Payment Agreement under the Grassroots Program, the Ontario Food Terminal Board (OFTB) is receiving funding to assist with enhance screening and enhanced sanitization measures at the Ontario Food Terminal and maintain maximum continuity of the food supply chain.

Restoring accountability and trust

- The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) is committed to delivering effective and efficient programming. In 2019-20, the ministry continued its focus on efficiency measures and controls to help manage spending, including:
 - implemented more cost-efficient ways to communicate with stakeholders, such as holding online and teleconference meetings rather than travelling; and
 - identified expenses that could be put on hold, with limited impact on the ministry's program and services delivery.

Strong agriculture, food and bio-product sectors

- Ontario's agri-food industry contributes \$47.7 billion to the provincial GDP and supports over 837,000 jobs, representing 11.6% of the province's labour force.
- In 2019, agri-food exports rose to \$16.6 billion, up 4.0% from \$15.9 billion in 2018.
- Ontario is the top agri-food exporting Canadian province, followed by Saskatchewan.
 - In 2019, Ontario's major export partners were the US (79%) followed by Asia (10%) and the EU (5.5%).
- In 2018-19, the ministry influenced \$636 million in investments and the creation/retention of 1,616 jobs by Ontario food and beverage manufacturers.
 - The ministry hosted five events where Ontario food and beverage manufacturers met directly with grocery retail buyers. This resulted in over \$3 million in new local incremental sales and over 500 new local products now featured in Ontario grocery stores.
- The Ontario Food Terminal is the largest wholesale fruit and vegetable terminal in Canada and plays a key role in moving produce from Ontario and around the world to Ontario families. In 2019, the government completed a comprehensive independent review of the Terminal, which provided valuable insights into opportunities for economic growth that will help the Terminal remain a vital part of the agri-food sector for years to come.
 - In addition, as part of A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Ontario Food Terminal lands were designated as a Provincially Significant Employment Zone.
 - The ministry is continuing to work with the Ontario Food Terminal Board and users of the Terminal on strategic planning and enhancements that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the Ontario Food Terminal.
- Through the Feeder Cattle and Commodity Loan Guarantee Programs, the government backed over \$230 million in operational loans, benefiting more than 1,000 farmers across the province.
- Managed honey bees play a crucial role in Ontario agriculture through pollinating crops.
 - OMAFRA works with beekeepers to maintain the viability of the sector through education and outreach, an inspection program, and monitoring for pathogens and pests.
 - Through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, up to \$500,000 is being invested directly with beekeepers to strengthen the health of managed honey bees and Ontario's beekeeping sector.
- Emergency Preparedness Planning
 - Animal diseases – both those that could affect humans and those that affect only animals – can have a significant negative impact on Ontario's agri-food industry. One such disease is African swine fever, which has devastated the pork industry in Asia and other parts of the world. The ministry has been working closely with other government partners and industry on enhancing biosecurity to prevent the disease, while ensuring that should the disease be found here producers, processors and government partners are prepared.
 - Pandemic planning / COVID-19 – starting in March 2020, the ministry has been working with all Ontario government ministries to respond to COVID-19. The outbreak has had a significant impact on Ontario's agri-food industry, and as such, the ministry continues to adjust its operations to respond.

Cutting red tape and reducing regulatory burden

- Ontario is maintaining standards to keep Ontario workers and families safe and healthy while working to reduce unnecessary red tape for farmers and agri-businesses, to help businesses grow and cut costs.
- OMAFRA is undertaking a review of the licensing, certification and permitting processes in more than 20 programs delivered by the ministry. Results will be used to identify ways to streamline processes and reduce burden on applicants.
- OMAFRA supports the cross-ministry work of Regulatory Compliance Ontario (RCO), which delivers training, programs and supports to instill the modern regulatory service principles across government. Consistent application of the principles by front-line staff helps improve regulatory interactions with business, reduce burdens, and support economic growth.
- OMAFRA has targeted unduly costly and burdensome regulations within the agri-food sector while maintaining rules that help keep Ontarians safe and healthy. These include:
 - Changes that removed burdensome construction and equipment requirements for small dairy processors under the *Milk Act*, while respecting food safety and quality.
 - Changes to regulations under the *Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001*, such as moving to a one-time licensing requirement for meat plants while maintaining a rigorous inspection and enforcement system.
 - A proposal to repeal the *Livestock Medicines Act*, which contains outdated and duplicative requirements, and to include more streamlined requirements around the sale of livestock medicines in new regulations under the *Animal Health Act, 2009*.
 - With the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, OMAFRA amended the regulation under the *Nutrient Management Act, 2002* to remove the requirement to update a strategy every five years, if nothing has changed, and to increase flexibility to deal with nutrients from farm-like animals that are kept on facilities other than farms, such as game

farms.

- Further changes to the regulation under the *Nutrient Management Act* have been proposed that would remove barriers to the on-farm production of biogas with upgrading to renewable natural gas. These changes would enable the farm sector to participate in an emerging renewable natural gas market.
- Changes have been proposed to the *Drainage Act* that would enable a streamlined process through a new regulation for approval of low risk activities such as minor drain improvements and recording variances from the engineer's report when building drains. It would also enable the development and adoption of protocols by reference in regulation. These changes would support investments in drainage infrastructure that respond to the need for enhanced climate resiliency while maintaining environmental protection.
- Changes to the *Agricultural Products Insurance Act* to allow Agricorp to make updates to the Production Insurance Contract of Insurance that would, when implemented, significantly reduce the amount of paperwork that farmers enrolled in Production Insurance will have to review and complete.

Supporting local food

- Buying and supporting local food creates jobs and economic growth in communities across Ontario. Examples in 2018-19 include:
 - Foodland Ontario encouraged people to choose Ontario foods first and the program continues to maintain a high recognition rate with consumers.
 - The annual Foodland Ontario Retailer Awards are the produce industry's premier competition for excellence in retail display and promotion in support of local Ontario foods. In 2018-19, more than 4,250 entries were submitted featuring fresh Ontario produce.
 - OMAFRA partnered with the Dietitians of Canada and the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association to deliver the [Fresh from the Farm](http://www.freshfromfarm.ca/home.aspx) (<http://www.freshfromfarm.ca/home.aspx>) program that allows schools to raise funds by selling bundles of Ontario produce. In 2018-19, 556 schools participated, which was a 10% increase from the previous year.
- The Ontario government continues to support the growth and success of the province's wine and grape industry. Under the VQA Wine Support Program, 97 wineries received payments totalling \$7.5 million in 2018. In 2018-19, the government also provided approximately \$2 million to 64 Ontario cideries and distilleries under the Small Cidery and Small Distillery Support program.

Supporting Ontario's agri-food value chain

- The Ministry's Vendor Engagement Program (VE) continues to offer complete education, business to business (B2B) and domestic trade show programming to further the consumption of locally manufactured Ontario Food and Beverage products and to leverage investment.
- Metro Ontario and the ministry ran seven product sourcing events across the province over the last two years contributing to over 700 new product listings and over \$10 million in new incremental sales to date.
- Sobeys Ontario and the Business Development Branch have held 4 buying events to further their local sourcing program over the last 12 months. These events produced approximately 50-75 new Ontario listings along with 30 new Ontario Vendors from primary producers to processors. Sobeys expects new sales to be near the \$2 million in year one of the program.
- The VE local sourcing program is currently generating approximately \$1 million dollars in new incremental sales weekly for the Province and continues to grow. Retail participants have included (Metro, Sobeys, Farm Boy, Longos, Loblaws)

Research

- The Ontario Agri-food Innovation Alliance continues to support the growth and competitiveness of Ontario's agri-food sector, creating jobs and further solidifying the province's position as a global leader in agri-food education, research and innovation.
- Ontario continues to invest in the renewal and modernization of the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario (ARIO)-owned research stations across the province. The ARIO is a provincial agency accountable to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs with a mandate to promote agri-food research in the province and maintain ownership and oversight of research lands and facilities across 15 research stations spread across all regions of the province.

Farm finance

- OMAFRA has been working with the agriculture sector, and other partners, so that Ontario's farmers have the tools they need to effectively manage their risks and grow their businesses. The ministry:
 - worked with key industry stakeholders to explore ways to enhance the Ontario Risk Management Program as committed to in the 2019 Ontario Budget. Plans continue to transition the program to an insurance-based model by 2021 to help ensure the greatest support goes to the areas of greatest need and that support is available when farmers need it most.
 - continued to work with federal and provincial colleagues to drive recommendations for improvements to the national suite of risk management programs resulting in small changes to AgriStability while a review and consideration of other improvements continues.
 - recognizes the scope of the risk presented by African swine fever for Ontario hog producers and the agri-food sector. The ministry is working with industry, the federal government and other provinces to be prepared to respond in a variety of ways if African swine fever is confirmed in Canada.

Agricultural system and growth plan

- OMAFRA developed the Agricultural System for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, comprised of an , and online [Agricultural System Map Portal \(http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/landuse/gis/WCAG_AGOL/index.html?appid=3cbd2393a1e548949450e21d90646353\)](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/landuse/gis/WCAG_AGOL/index.html?appid=3cbd2393a1e548949450e21d90646353).
- OMAFRA is working with municipalities to implement the Agricultural System in the Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan areas.
- For the Growth Plan area, OMAFRA worked with Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) to develop and consult on changes to “A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe”. OMAFRA has released updated Agricultural System Implementation Procedures and is working with municipalities in the Growth Plan area to implement the Agricultural System.
- OMAFRA worked with MMAH to update the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 to maintain and strengthen policies to protect farmland and the viability of farming. For example, new policies set out in the Statement encourage municipalities to take an agricultural systems approach to protecting farmland and supporting the agri-food network.

Environmental stewardship

- Ontario’s agri-food sector has continued to show leadership in environmental stewardship.
- The Made-in-Ontario Environmental Plan, released on November 29, 2018, specifically identified support for on-farm soil and water quality programming and the need to work with partners to improve agricultural management practices. This included support for programs and partnerships intended to make the agriculture and food sectors more resilient to current and future climate impacts.
- OMAFRA has supported sector efforts by collaborating with partners, investing in stewardship programs, supporting science and performance measurement to inform industry action, and reducing red tape for farmers and food processors.
 - Through the Canadian Agriculture Partnership (CAP), up to \$6 million in cost-shared funding has been committed to support implementing best management practices (BMPs) in 2019-20 that reduce phosphorus loadings in the Lake Erie basin as well as practices across Ontario that support soil health.
 - Further investments have been made through Environmental Stewardship Directed Programming, funding projects that are building awareness and capacity in the sector to adopt stewardship practices (e.g. ONFARM applied research and demonstration sites across the province) and support farmers with on the ground action and tools (e.g. AgriSuite, a mobile-friendly software application to support on-farm decision making).
 - Through CAP (April 2018-2023), a five-year investment, supports research, monitoring, education, tool development and increased adoption of BMPs for soil health and water quality priorities under the Environmental Stewardship priority area.
- To build on the successes of Great Lakes Agricultural Stewardship Initiative (GLASI), the Lake Erie Agriculture Demonstrating Sustainability (LEADS) initiative is a new sub-program under CAP, delivered by the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association. It provides cost-shared technical support for field-specific risk assessment through the Farmland Health Check-Up and access to cost-share funding over five years to help farmers act to reduce the risk of nutrient loss on farm.
 - Since 2018, more than 560 projects have been approved under the LEADS initiative, with \$5.5 million committed through CAP to support completion of these on-farm improvement projects.
- Proper soil drainage is vital to an effective and competitive agricultural industry and rural Ontario. Over \$100 million annually is privately invested in drainage, linked to over 100 independent businesses. The ministry issues licenses, inspects new machines, operators and businesses to ensure licensing conditions are met, and inspects and mediates complaints about installation workmanship. Courses in drainage installation and design continue to be offered in support of the licensing system.
- OMAFRA also administers the *Tile Drainage Act* and the Tile Loan program in partnership with participating municipalities, as well as the Drainage Act, which provides a process to petition a municipality to construct a municipal drain.
 - The program also provides grants to municipalities for construction, maintenance and repair of drainage systems and the cost to the municipality of employing a drainage superintendent.
- In April 2018, OMAFRA released ‘New Horizons: Ontario’s Agricultural Soil Health and Conservation Strategy’, to help grow and sustain the province’s strong agricultural sector, while protecting the environment and building resilience to climate change. The strategy is a long-term framework that sets a vision, goals and objectives for soil health and conservation in Ontario from 2018 to 2030, including several actions for leadership by government and soil care partners as well as a framework for measuring progress. The strategy was developed collaboratively with stakeholders.
- The Soil Action Group, a stakeholder collaboration co-chaired by OMAFRA and industry, is now focused on implementing the strategy with an initial focus on high priority actions. The Soil Action Group held its inaugural meeting March 3rd 2020. In 2018, the Canada-Ontario Lake Erie Action Plan was released to address phosphorus loadings in Lake Erie. In 2019, an Implementation Team was established to develop a workplan and communicate progress. This team includes representation from all organizations that have put forward actions, including federal, provincial and municipal governments, Conservation Authorities, non-government organizations and from the agricultural sector.
- In 2019, Ontario released an update that highlighted actions for on-farm nutrient management that includes the CAP cost share programming and support for research, planning and outreach projects. OMAFRA also supports industry-led actions such as 4R Stewardship Program, Ontario Greenhouse Environmental Strategy, Ontario Cover Crops Strategy, Thames River Phosphorus Reduction Collaborative and Timing Matters.

Food safety and animal protection

Food safety and animal protection are priorities for Ontario. [OMAFRA](#) provided inspection services to:

- Approximately 119 provincially licensed slaughter plants.
 - Inspectors are present in provincially licensed abattoirs to ensure food safety and animal welfare regulatory requirements were met.
- Approximately 363 provincially licensed freestanding plants.
 - Inspectors are present to ensure food safety requirements were met.
- [OMAFRA's Meat Inspection Program \(MIP\)](#):
 - Worked with operators to improve hygienic slaughter and reduce the pathogen levels on beef, veal, other red meat species (sheep, lamb, goats and pigs), and poultry carcasses and mandated the application of microbial control interventions to these carcasses to improve hygienic slaughter practices and reduce pathogen levels.
 - Continued efforts to reduce burden while maintaining strong food safety standards through streamlining the meat plant licence application form and making changes to the Meat Regulation (O. Reg. 31/05) that reduced administrative burden, clarified requirements to provide more business opportunities and moved to more outcome-based requirements.
 - Continued to work with meat plant operators, the Muslim Association of Canada, and Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) to raise awareness of and compliance with provincial regulations for Eid-al-Adha (Eid) at licensed meat plants across Ontario, by using communication materials to protect animal welfare and food safety.
 - Established a Meat Industry Engagement Panel with Meat and Poultry Ontario to provide a forum for industry representatives to engage with the ministry to share ideas and collaborate on ways to address industry challenges.
 - [OMAFRA](#) has enhanced communications with meat plant operators digitally. Approximately 87% of meat plant operators now receive communications digitally, reducing distribution time and costs through standard mailouts.
- [OMAFRA](#) introduced a new fish processing regulation under the *Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001* that is consistent with current industry standards, while protecting public health and supporting growth in the fish processing industry. Licensed fish processors in Ontario will be able to better brand their business by including their licence number on their packaging, in accordance with the regulation.
- [OMAFRA](#) worked with farmers' markets to ensure compliance with produce labelling regulation so that consumers can clearly identify where their food comes from.
- [OMAFRA](#) continues to lead Regulatory Compliance Ontario (RCO), an enterprise centre of excellence that now includes all 18 regulatory ministries. [RCO](#) has developed and delivered training, programs and supports that instil modern regulatory service principles across government. Consistent application of the principles by front-line staff promotes greater consistency across regulatory organizations. Since its launch, [RCO](#) initiatives have touched more than 1,900 front-line staff and managers from 67 ministries and other regulatory organizations.

Strong rural communities

- The Ontario government understands that access to affordable broadband connectivity is key to innovation and economic growth in rural Ontario. In July 2019, Ontario released its Broadband and Cellular Action Plan which is expected to generate up to \$1 billion in total investment over five years, resulting in new connections for up to 220,000 homes and businesses. The investment will help families to stay in touch, connect businesses with the world, and make rural communities investment-ready.
- Ontario's Broadband and Cellular Action Plan includes support for the Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) Project. Over the last year, [OMAFRA](#) has worked with other ministries and other levels of government to begin construction on the \$190 million broadband project.
- In the fall of 2018, the Province introduced legislation to support the development of a program to expand natural gas access to more parts of rural and Northern Ontario, including First Nations communities. The Natural Gas Expansion Support Program will help businesses in rural and Northern Ontario cut energy costs, improve their competitiveness and attract more investment.

Ministry administration and policy

- [OMAFRA](#) continued to support the development of Ontario's digital and data action plan, mentioned in the 2019 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review. The digital and data action plan also addresses policy direction included in Budget 2019 and considerations outlined in the 2018 Ernst & Young report (line-by-line review). The ministry supported the digital and data action plan by participating in a cross-ministry consultations on the data strategy, and publishing data to Ontario's open data catalogue. [OMAFRA](#) continued to make services more digitally accessible. The ministry also completed the first phase of transitioning the Beef Cattle Financial Protection Program to Agricorp to make it easier for farmers to access more of the programs they need in one place and to find efficiencies in program delivery and are working to complete the transition in 2020-21.
- Working with Agricorp and the Accredited Farm Organizations to implement changes through the Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act (Bill 66) and the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act (Bill 132) to support electronic delivery and a simplified registration process for the Farm Business Registration Program that, when implemented, will reduce paperwork and save farmers time.
- Worked with industry stakeholders to begin a review of the Financial Protection Programs as committed to in the 2019 Ontario Budget to ensure that Ontario's beef cattle and grain producers continue to have access to stable risk management tools that provide

them with the confidence to grow their businesses.

Ministry Interim Actual Expenditures 2019-20

Expenditure Type	Ministry Interim Actual Expenditures (\$M) 2019-20 ^[7]
COVID-19 Approvals	0.0
Other Operating	826.5
Capital	327.7
Staff Strength ^[8] (as of March 31, 2020)	810.56

Updated: December 14, 2020

Published: December 14, 2020

Footnotes

- [1] [^] Estimates, Interim Actuals and Actuals for prior fiscal years are re-stated to reflect any changes in ministry organization and/or program structure. Interim actuals reflect the numbers presented in the March 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update.
- [2] [^] Estimates and Actuals for prior fiscal years are re-stated to reflect any changes in ministry organization and/or program structure.
- [3] [^] The 2019–20 Interim Actuals include extraordinary production insurance payout of \$175 million above annual forecast due to 2019 crop conditions
- [4] [^] Legal Services provided by the Ministry of Attorney General.
- [5] [^] IT Services provided by the Land and Resources Cluster.
- [6] [^] Audit Services provided by Treasury Board Secretariat.
- [7] [^] Interim actuals reflect the numbers presented in the March 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update.
- [8] [^] Ontario Public Service Full-Time Equivalent positions.