

Published plans and annual reports 2023–2024: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Plans for 2023–2024, and results and outcomes of all provincial programs delivered by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs in 2022–2023.

Ministry overview

Ministry's vision

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs supports innovation, increasing trade, safeguarding the food supply chain and ensuring the safe and sustainable production of food. The end goal is to develop a sustainable, resilient, trusted and thriving agri-food system, as well as strong rural communities.

To achieve this, OMAFRA oversees and implements the following key activities:

- Advances the Grow Ontario Strategy. Grow Ontario is the government's plan to strengthen the agri-food sector, fuel economic growth, ensure an efficient, reliable, and responsive food supply and address ongoing agri-food sector vulnerabilities through new innovations.
- Directly supports the Grow Ontario plan through implementing significant partnership frameworks and agreements that came into effect on April 1, 2023. These include the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP) which is the next five-year federal-provincial-territorial agricultural policy and programming framework, and the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance, the ministry's new five-year agreement with the University of Guelph and the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario.
- Oversees Ontario's agri-food system and promotes a 'One Health' approach

through delivery of food safety legislation at provincially regulated facilities and administering legislation and programming in the areas of animal, plant and environmental health. One Health is a collaborative, multi-disciplinary approach to attain optimal health outcomes recognizing the interconnections of people, animals, plants, and the environment.

- Works with the agri-food sector to find ways to help ensure the competitive production of food, such as reducing unnecessary red tape, while maintaining and enhancing food safety, animal health and environmental outcomes.
- Provides accessible tools, educational events, demonstrations, publications, and other services to the agri-food sector to increase competitiveness, productivity and profitability, improve risk anticipation, mitigation and response, expand domestic and international markets and increase environmental sustainability.
- Promotes economic growth and job creation in the agri-food sector and rural communities by investing in businesses across the province that are enhancing food processing capacity, adopting innovative and new technologies in agri-food workplaces, and creating opportunities and benefits for the agri-food sector and rural communities.
- Partners across provincial ministries and works with federal/provincial/territorial partners to discuss common challenges, share best practices, and identify opportunities for collaboration in support of the agri-food sector.
- Provides planning, knowledge and support to clients prior to and during emergencies to ensure food security, health and safety and protection of the plant and animal resource base.
- Administers the *Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Act* which supports the ministry in meeting its mandate and contributes to the success of the agri-food sector and rural communities. The ministry also oversees development, implementation and enforcement of legislation in areas such as regulated marketing, financial protection, drainage and normal farm practices delivered either through partner agencies or by the ministry.

Ministry wide functions such as communications, diversity and inclusion efforts help the ministry achieve its goals.

Ministry programs

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

A strong agri-food sector helps boost Ontario's economy, creates good jobs and puts food on the tables of Ontarians. In 2021, Ontario's agri-food industry contributed \$47.6 billion in gross domestic product (GDP) and supported over 750,000 jobs, representing 10.2% of the province's labour force.

Rural Ontario is home to about 2.5 million people, approximately 17% of Ontario's population. Rural Ontario businesses are diverse, including wholesale and retail trade, services, educational institutions, and manufacturing.

Economic development

The ministry enables innovation and helps strengthen the social, economic and environmental sustainability of a diverse agri-food sector, including working with partners to coordinate a wide range of initiatives. This work promotes growth in the agri-food sector by improving access to trusted information, fostering the adoption of new innovative technologies and best practices, and promoting regulatory compliance for business sustainability.

OMAFRA provides sector investment support through programs such as:

- the Strategic Agri-Food Processing Fund, which enhances processing capacity in Ontario through investments in major expansions and modernization of food processing facilities focusing on critical needs for the sector supply chain or broader strategic benefits
- the Agri-Tech Innovation Program, which supports agri-food businesses adopting innovative and new technologies to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission among workers
- the Grassroots Growth Initiative, which provides support to organizations that create broader opportunities and greater benefits for the agri-food sector and rural communities

OMAFRA promotes vibrant rural economies through the Rural Economic Development program to help rural and Indigenous communities remove barriers to

economic development, attract investment, create, retain, and fill jobs and enhance economic growth. The ministry uses a rural lens to ensure rural interests are considered in policies and programs across government and promotes economic growth and opportunities to support a high quality of life for residents.

OMAFRA also launched several initiatives focused on the mental health of farmers and their family members, such as access to no-cost counselling services specific to the issues farmers and their family members face. In addition, the ministry supports recruitment and training of community volunteers to watch out for Ontario farmers and their families in case they show signs of mental health struggles. OMAFRA also helped expand mental health literacy in the farming community.

To encourage Ontarians to identify and buy locally grown food, the ministry's Foodland Ontario program helps to increase awareness, celebrate local food and encourage consumers to choose Ontario food when shopping by encouraging Ontario businesses to use the Foodland Ontario logo on their food products.

The ministry's technical and business specialists work with the agri-food sector to increase competitiveness, productivity, and profitability; improve risk anticipation, mitigation and response; expand domestic and international markets and increase environmental sustainability. These accessible services are delivered to partners through demonstrations, publications, training, mobile apps and web-based applications.

In support of domestic agriculture production ministry staff provide education events, workshops across the province and develop material available on several different platforms (such as social media and newsletters). These cover a range of topics including production efficiency, pest and disease management, best management practices (BMPs), sustainability, biosecurity, emergency preparedness, on farm applied research and other relevant topics.

Ministry staff also work across the province to provide resources, connections, and supports to help grow Ontario's food and beverage business. Ministry advisors assist food and beverage processors with investments to be competitive and realize the potential to expand their domestic and export markets. This trade support for Ontario agri-food businesses includes:

- free webinars with expert tips to doing business in international markets

- business introductions to establish trade relationships
- tradeshow events and trade missions to boost the visibility of Ontario products
- helpful, ongoing advice and resources to navigate trade regulations and market trends
- business-to-business meeting programs for Ontario food and beverage manufacturers with major domestic and international retailers
- co-packing and co-manufacturing services
- foreign direct investment, incoming, outgoing and site selector missions

Research

The ministry works with industry, academia, agencies, other Ontario ministries, other provincial governments and the federal government to advance research and innovation that enables the growth, competitiveness and long-term sustainability of the agri-food sector. This further solidifies the province's position as a global leader in agri-food capacity building and skills development, research and innovation.

The results are seen in many innovative projects, such as technological developments that have been commercialized and adopted to support future policy and program decisions affecting agri-food sector needs. In addition, this support has helped launch spin-off companies from the University of Guelph, resulting in economic development of the sector and contributing to the ministry's Key Performance Indicator (KPI) to support business innovation in Ontario.

OMAFRA also invests in open research programs and projects to enhance food safety, 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 to modernize its research and innovation programs, services and infrastructure including investments in research facilities in Elora, Ridgetown and New Liskeard. Through partnerships with governments, industry and academia, and strategically targeted investments, the government can

leverage knowledge, technology and intellectual capacity to build a sector that aligns with government and industry priorities.

The Grow Ontario Strategy has outlined goals to enhance research and innovation, which supports the ministry's KPI for the number of patents and licenses granted through ministry funded research. These include:

- Build and maintain world-class research infrastructure to encourage the use of innovation and enhance the sustainability and profitability of the agri-food sectors.
- Over 250 patents and licences granted through Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs-funded research by 2030.
- Develop innovative technologies to advance uptake of new innovations.
- Ensure the translation and transfer of research into practical solutions for Ontario's agri-food sector, getting the research from the lab onto the farm.
- Grow the market for Ontario innovative technologies domestically and globally.
- Grow the use of data to support business decisions and increase efficiencies within the agri-food sector and value chain.
- Work with sectors to better measure data driven solutions.

Business Risk Management transfers

Through its Business Risk Management (BRM) programming, most of which is delivered through its crown agency, AgriCorp, the ministry helps Ontario's agriculture producers manage risks beyond their control, including weather and market volatility to improve sector profitability.

Programs include the federal-provincial programs under the Sustainable CAP (AgriInvest, AgriStability, AgriInsurance (Production Insurance), and AgriRecovery framework), and the provincial-only Risk Management Program, which includes the Self-Directed Risk Management Program for edible horticulture.

Agriculture and Rural Affairs capital

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 research capacity to support industry-driven research while leveraging third party investments to ensure the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the agri-food sector for decades to come. Several major capital projects are underway to modernize key research platforms supporting field crops, livestock and greenhouse/horticulture.

Better public health and environment

OMAFRA has adopted a 'One Health' approach to designing and implementing programs, policies and regulation, working with partners to improve human, animal, plant and environmental health.

OMAFRA plays a key role in protecting the public interest through oversight of food safety, animal health and nutrient management. In addition, OMAFRA partners with the agri-food sector to provide education and program support in areas including animal health, animal welfare, food safety, traceability, nutrient management, and environmental best practices.

The ministry is responsible for emergency management activities related to animal health, food contamination, agricultural plant diseases and pest infestations.

Ontario will continue working with the agri-food sector to find ways to help ensure the competitive production of food, such as reducing unnecessary red tape while maintaining food safety, animal health and environmental outcomes.

The ministry has developed Resiliency and Public Trust programming to enhance the agri-food sector's capacity to develop, improve, and implement effective Protection and Risk Resilience practices to mitigate disruptions, improve public trust and consumer confidence, and help the sector thrive.

In addition, stewardship programming will support Ontario's producers in whole farm planning and taking action to improve environmental sustainability, productivity, and drive innovation and technology adoption.

The Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program is a new program dedicated to mitigating climate change and supporting the agricultural sector to continue to address sustainability outcomes.

The Grow Ontario provincial agri-food strategy identifies Ontario's commitment to

increase agri-food innovation and adoption to help farmers become the best stewards of the land and the environment and continue to demonstrate leadership in sustainability. This includes enhancing the On Farm Applied Research and Monitoring (ONFARM) initiative to improve knowledge on the efficacy of best management practices to increase productivity, soil health and water quality. This supports the ministry's KPI for the level of environmentally beneficial BMP adoption. The strategy and provincial budget made new three-year commitments to expand Ontario's Soil Resource inventory and soil mapping, and develop the Ontario Agricultural Soil Information System (OASIS).

A number of initiatives proposed under Sustainable CAP are designed to advance goals within the Soils Strategy and support direct actions by producers to improve soil health on Ontario's farms. These include:

- Cost-share programming to support the implementation of impactful soil health best management practices that support on-farm productivity and sustainability.
- Targeted soil health knowledge translation and transfer activities that build farmers' understanding of the economic and environmental benefits of soil health best management practices and how to adopt these practices across diverse production systems.
- Enhancements to AgriSuite, modernizing and enhancing the technology platform that provides custom plans to support soil health best management practice adoption. This supports the ministry's KPI for the level of environmentally beneficial BMP.
- An applied research and knowledge sharing initiative, building out local and regional capacity that connects producers with local expertise to support innovative practices and adoption of soil health BMPs.

Ministry administration

OMAFRA continues to provide high quality customer service and efficient program delivery. The ministry strives to make its public facing services “simpler, faster and better” with many digital modernization advancements underway to program and operational delivery that are aligned with the Digital Service Standard.

The ministry's Information Management and Information Technology strategy, Digital OMAFRA 2.0, demonstrates a greater commitment to advancing the ministry's data

maturity. This will support the ministry's ability to more effectively and efficiently share and leverage data across the ministry and with our partners.

OMAFRA will continue to support the expansion of the publication of open data to Ontario's Data Catalogue including an enhanced focus on government agency data.

Policy development

OMAFRA provides evidence-based policy analysis and advice in support of ministry and government priorities to foster economic growth in Ontario's agri-food sector and rural communities, while providing assurance and oversight of the agri-food system and supply chains and protecting the productive capacity and sustainability of Ontario's natural resources. In addition, OMAFRA provides ministry support to the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission (OFPMC).

The OFPMC is a non-board governed agency of the ministry established to help drive the province's regulated marketing system forward. This is done to enable prosperous, thriving, and dynamic agri-food industries within Ontario's economy, and to promote investment confidence by:

- Administering the provisions of the *Farm Products Marketing Act* and the *Milk Act*, to ensure the regulated marketing system remains reliable and effective.
- Supervising regulated marketing organizations to whom power and authority has been delegated under the legislation and ensuring boards, associations, producers and processors comply with the legislation and regulations in place.
- Building trust in the sector by measuring and communicating the performance of the agency, while demonstrating alignment between the government and the agency.
- Addressing challenges and opportunities in the regulated marketing sector by collaborating with stakeholders to find equitable, unbiased and industry-led solutions.

2023–24 strategic plan

Grow Ontario strategy

Grow Ontario is Ontario's long-term plan to strengthen the agri-food sector, fuel economic growth, ensure an efficient, reliable, and responsive food supply and address ongoing agri-food sector vulnerabilities through new innovations.

This strategy outlines actions to build consumer confidence, support farmers and processors, increase yields, promote Ontario-grown food, grow the agri-food talent pool, and strengthen the food supply chain – while increasing the commercialization and adoption of innovative new technologies and practices that enhance competitiveness, add productivity, create economic growth, and strengthen the sector. This supports the ministry's KPI of the number of new technologies, practices, processes assessed, evaluated and or demonstrated.

Grow Ontario outlines three key priorities:

- strengthening agri-food supply chain stability
- increasing agri-food technology and adoption
- attracting and growing Ontario's agri-food talent

Ontario's agri-food sector is, and always will be, a cornerstone of our thriving economy. The province's agri-food sector is the largest and most diverse in Canada. It is an important economic driver for the province and Canada, and a significant jurisdiction internationally. Ontario accounts for \$14.5 billion, or 41.9% of Canada's national food and beverage GDP, and also represents the third largest contributor of farm cash receipts in the country in 2021. This supports the ministry's KPI for dollars of investment influenced, and jobs created/retained in food and beverage manufacturing.

The Ontario government is committed to making the agri-food sector and rural communities open for business, open for jobs and positioned for success now and into the future. Under the Grow Ontario Strategy, Ontario aims to:

- Increase total agri-food sector employment by 10% by 2032.
- Increase the total number of large animal veterinarians practicing in Ontario.
- Attract and grow Ontario's academic and technical expertise, ensuring flexibility in education and multidisciplinary experiential learning so that students gain the high-tech skills required — including robotics, automation and genomics — to meet the needs of the modern agri-food sector.

- Recruit new talent to undertake world-class research and innovation to meet challenges of the agri-food sector and capitalize on opportunities.
- Make Ontario the destination of choice for International Agri-food Workers.

Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP)

Ontario's farmers count on government investments to support the growth and sustainability of the agri-food sector, and they can continue to count on that commitment through Sustainable CAP.

Grow Ontario is our plan to strengthen the agri-food sector, fuel economic growth, ensure an efficient, reliable, and responsive food supply and address ongoing agri-food sector vulnerabilities through new innovations. The Sustainable CAP will help enable the goals outlined in the strategy, which include increasing the production of food by 30% over the next 10 years, growing agri-food exports by 8% annually, and to build and maintain world-class research infrastructure. This supports the ministry's KPI for Growing Ontario's exports.

It will position Ontario's sector for continued success as a world leader in environmentally, economically and socially sustainable agriculture.

Under the initiative, the federal and provincial governments are committing an estimated \$1.77 billion to the Ontario agri-food sector: approximately \$1.2 billion for BRM funding and \$569 million for strategic initiatives funding over 5 years. This includes programming that supports productivity and growth, environmental stewardship, protection and risk resilience, and research and innovation.

In 2023–2024, Sustainable CAP programming investments and initiatives will build on the progress made throughout the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) to strengthen, grow and advance Ontario's agri-food sector.

As a critical component to the Sustainable CAP program, the Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program is a new program dedicated to mitigating climate change and supporting the agricultural sector to better address sustainability outcomes.

Supporting the agri-food sector through the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance

The ministry's new five-year agreement with the University of Guelph and the

Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario came into effect April 1, 2023. Through the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance, the ministry will invest over \$343 million over the term of the agreement for fundamental programming to help the broader agri-food sector build resiliency by:

- Managing threats to food production and food security such as African swine fever and avian influenza.
- Advancing science, research, innovation and commercialization of new products, processes and practices that support the long-term success of the agri-food system.
- Building a skilled workforce and develop talent that will advance Ontario's agri-food sector including veterinary medicine in the agri-food sector and rural communities.
- Maintaining and maximizing use of the network of state-of-the art research centres owned by the Government of Ontario through its agency, the ARIO and managed by the University of Guelph through the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance.

The Alliance provides expertise and access to a unique agri-food research, laboratory analysis and knowledge transfer system. This is done through the provision of agri-food and rural research, laboratory services, veterinary education, research centre management and the new addition of training, education and certification for agricultural producers to meet requirements under legislation. The new agreement will build on the success of the previous agreement, which increased Ontario's GDP by \$1.4 billion, supported more than 1,300 jobs and invested in research and innovation that led to new businesses in Ontario.

Food safety, animal health & plant health and emergency preparedness

OMAFRA is dedicated to continued enhancement of food safety and animal health and welfare through compliance monitoring (inspection, testing and audit), education and outreach, advisory services, investigations, surveillance, emergency management and compliance verification and action. The ministry continues its work as an effective, consistent and risk-based modern regulator by working closely with farmers and processors to set clear expectations and achieve food safety and animal health and welfare requirements and supporting long-term sustainability in the industry and workforce.

The ministry also supports the agri-food sector by providing knowledge and support to clients prior to and during emergencies to ensure food security, health and safety and protection of the plant and animal resource base. This includes prevention and biosecurity efforts and preparations for emergency responses to diseases which are not currently in Ontario but could have significant impacts if not prevented such as African swine fever (ASF) and Foot and Mouth Disease, and plant pests such as Spotted Lanternfly. Staff also work to identify and treat problems related to plant diseases (for example, vomitoxin in corn), and support industry and governments in developing emergency response and recovery plans. OMAFRA and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency continue to work together to prepare for and respond to animal diseases with potentially significant economic impacts on the domestic agricultural sector.

Cutting red tape and reducing regulatory burden

In full support of the Grow Ontario strategy, the ministry is committed to reducing red tape and unnecessary regulatory burden to lower operating costs for businesses and improve Ontario's competitiveness.

The ministry is working collaboratively with the agri-food sector to reduce regulatory burden, while preserving the regulations that keep Ontarians, their environment and their food safe and healthy. By cutting red tape, government-wide efforts have saved Ontario's agri-food sector over \$3.4 million since 2018, giving farmers more time to run their farms and grow their businesses.

The ministry will continue to work with the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction on future initiatives that reduce burden for the agri-food sectors to support industry competitiveness.

Ministry planned expenditures 2023–24 (\$M)

Expenditure type	Amount \$M
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Expenditure type	Amount \$M
Operating	816 . 1
Capital	6 . 3
Total	822 . 4

Detailed financial information

Combined operating and capital summary by vote

Operating expense						
Votes/prog rams	Esti mat es 202 3-2 4 \$	Chan ge from estim ates 2022- 23 \$	%	Esti mat es 202 2-23 [1] \$	Inter im actu als 2022 -23 ^[1]]	Act ual s 202 1-2 2 ^[1] \$
Ministry administrati on program	22 , 462 ,90 0	1 ,400	0 . 0%	22 , 461 ,50 0	20 ,8 32 ,6 00	20 , 178 ,60 5

Votes/progr ams	Esti mat es 202 3–2 4 \$	Chan ge from estim ates 2022– 23 \$	%	Esti mat es 2022 –23[1] \$	Inter im actu als 2022 –23[1] \$	Act ual s 202 1–2 2[1] \$
Better public health and environmen t	95, 342 ,30 0	15,81 6,500	19 .9 %	79, 525 ,80 0	80,6 52,0 00	73, 771 ,23 4
Strong agriculture, food and bio-product sectors and strong rural communitie s	483 ,05 6,8 00	(\$37, 249,4 00)[2]	(7 .2 %)	520 ,30 6,2 00	512, 458, 200	449 ,30 0,7 08
Policy developmen t	16, 247 ,30 0	600	0. 0%	16, 246 ,70 0	14,4 64,5 00	13, 690 ,21 9
Total including consolidatio n & other adjustments	816 ,14 2,7 87	5,082 ,300	0. 6%	811 ,06 0,4 87	868, 128, 387	668 ,05 5,9 84

Votes/progr ams	Esti mat es 202 3–2 4 \$	Chan ge from estim ates 2022– 23 \$	%	Esti mat es 2022 –23[1] \$	Inter im actu als 2022 –23[1] \$	Act ual s 202 1–2 2[1] \$
Total operating expense to be voted	617 , 10 9, 3 00	(\$21, 430, 9 00)	(3 .4 %)	638 , 54 0, 2 00	628, 407, 300	556 , 94 0, 7 66
Statutory appropriatio ns	1, 0 97, 187	N/A *****	N/ ***** A ***	1, 0 97, 187	511, 387	362 , 30 0
Ministry total operating expense	618 , 20 6, 4 87	(\$21, 430, 9 00)	(3 .4 %)	639 , 63 7, 3 87	628, 918, 687	557 , 30 3, 0 66
Consolidatio n adjustment — Agricorp	197 , 12 1, 2 00	27, 35 9, 900	16 .1 %	169 , 76 1, 3 00	238, 589, 000	108 , 10 6, 5 02
Total including consolidatio n & other adjustments	816 , 14 2, 7 87	5, 082 , 300	0. 6%	811 , 06 0, 4 87	868, 128, 387	668 , 05 5, 9 84

Votes/progr ams	Esti mat es 202 3–2 4 \$	Chan ge from estim ates 2022– 23 \$	%	Esti mat es 2022 –23[1] \$	Inter im actu als 2022 –23[1] \$	Act ual s 202 1–2 2[1] \$
Consolidatio n adjustment — Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario (ARIO)	5,4 70, 000	49,00 0	0. 9%	5,4 21, 000	4,84 1,00 0	5,7 68, 149
Consolidatio n adjustment — Colleges	N/A *****	N/A *****	N/ ***** A ***	N/A *****	N/A *****	(\$2 06, 668)
Consolidatio n adjustment — General real estate	(\$4 ,65 4,9 00)	(\$895 ,700)	N/ ***** A ***	(\$3 ,75 9,2 00)	(\$4, 220, 300)	(\$2 ,91 5,0 65)
Total including consolidatio n & other adjustments	816 ,14 2,7 87	5,082 ,300	0. 6%	811 ,06 0,4 87	868, 128, 387	668 ,05 5,9 84

Votes/progr ams	Esti mat es 202 3–2 4 \$	Chan ge from estim ates 2022– 23 \$	%	Esti mat es 2022 –23[1] \$	Inter im actu als 2022 –23[1] \$	Act ual s 202 1–2 2[1] \$
portfolio						
Total including consolidatio n & other adjustments	816 , 14 2, 7 87	5, 082 , 300	0. 6%	811 , 06 0, 4 87	868, 128, 387	668 , 05 5, 9 84

Operating assets

Votes/p rogram s	Esti mat es 2023 –24 \$	Chang e from estima tes 2022–2 3 \$	%	Esti mate s 2022 –23[1]] \$	Interi m actua ls 2022– 23[1] \$	Act uals 202 1–2 2[1] \$
Ministry total operati ng assets	5, 00 0, 00 0	N/A *****	N ... / ... A ...	5, 00 0, 00 0	1, 500 , 000	1, 1 49, 700

Votes/p rogram s	Esti mat es 2023 –24 \$	Change from estima tes 2022–2 3 \$	%	Esti mate s 2022 –23 ^[1] \$	Interi m actual s 2022– 23 ^[1] \$	Act uals 202 1–22 [1] \$
Better public health and environ ment	5,00 0,00 0	N/A *****	N /A ***	5,00 0,00 0	1,500 ,000	1,1 49, 700
Total operati ng assets to be voted	5,00 0,00 0	N/A *****	N /A ***	5,00 0,00 0	1,500 ,000	1,1 49, 700
Ministry total operatin g assets	5,00 0,00 0	N/A *****	N /A ***	5,00 0,00 0	1,500 ,000	1,1 49, 700

Capital expense

Votes/prog rams	Esti mat es 202	Chan ge from estim	%	Esti mat es 202	Inter im actu als	Act ual s 202
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	3-2 4 \$	ates 2022- 23 \$		2-23 [1] \$	2022 -23[1] \$	1-2 2[1] \$
Better public health and environmen t	1,0 00	1,000	N/ ***** A ***	N/A *****	N/A *****	N/A *****
Strong agriculture, food and bio-product sectors and strong rural communitie s	5,0 00, 000	(\$2,5 00,00 0)	(3 3. 3%)	7,5 00, 000	7,50 0,00 0	7,5 00, 000
Total capital expense to be voted	5,0 01, 000	(\$2,4 99,00 0)	(3 3. 3%)	7,5 00, 000	7,50 0,00 0	7,5 00, 000
Statutory appropriatio ns	1,0 00	1,000	N/ ***** A ***	N/A *****	N/A *****	N/A *****
Total including consolidatio n & other adjustments	6,2 58, 800	(\$259 ,100)	(4 .0 %)	6,5 17, 900	5,49 1,00 0	5,6 83, 662

Ministry total capital expense	5,0 02, 000	(\$2,4 98,00 0)	(3 3. 3%))	7,5 00, 000	7,50 0,00 0	7,5 00, 000
Consolidatio n adjustment — Agricorp	2,0 82, 200	(\$461 ,600)	(1 8. 1%))	2,5 43, 800	1,94 8,60 0	2,7 24, 203
Consolidatio n adjustment — Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario (ARIO)	(\$8 25, 400)	2,700 ,500	N/ A ...	(\$3 ,52 5,9 00)	(\$3, 957, 600)	(\$4 ,54 0,5 41)
Total including consolidatio n & other adjustments	6,2 58, 800	(\$259 ,100)	(4 .0 %)	6,5 17, 900	5,49 1,00 0	5,6 83, 662

Capital assets

Votes/progra ms	Esti ma tes 202 3–2	Chan ge from estim ates	%	Esti mat es 202 2–2	Inte rim actu als 2022	Act ual s 20 21–
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	4 \$	2022– 23 \$		3 ^[1] \$	–23 ^[1] \$	22 ^[1] \$
Better public health and environment	1,750,000	1,750,000	N / A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total capital assets to be voted	1,750,000	1,750,000	N / A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Statutory appropriations	N/A	N/A	N / A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ministry total capital assets	1,750,000	1,750,000	N / A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ministry total operating and capital including consolidation and other adjustments (not including assets)	822,401,587	4,823,200	0.6%	817,578,387	873,619,387	673,964,6

Historic trend table

Historic trend analysis data	Act uals 2020 –21 ^[3]	Act uals [3] 2021 –22	Esti mat es ^[3] 2022 –23	Esti mat es 2023 –24
Ministry total operating and capital including consolidation and other adjustments (not including assets)	787 ,470,076	673 ,739,646	817, 578, 387	822, 401, 587
Variance	N/A *****	–14 %	21%	1%

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

The ministry's base budget remains relatively consistent:

Item	2020 –21 actu als \$	2021 –22 actu als \$	2022–23 printed estimate s \$	2023–24 printed estimate s \$
Total spending/budget	787	674	817	822

Item	2020–21 actuals \$	2021–22 actuals \$	2022–23 printed estimate \$	2023–24 printed estimate \$
Base number	288	283	330	350
COVID-19 time-limited funding	41	32	48	N/A
Demand driven Risk Management and time-limited programs	458	358	439	472
Total spending/budget	787	674	817	822

The largest contributor to the increase in base budget from the 2021–22 Actuals to the 2022–23 Printed Estimates is the Agri-Food Processing Fund introduced in 2022–23.

For additional financial information, see:

- Expenditure Estimates (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/expenditure-estimates>)
- Public Accounts of Ontario: past editions (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/public-accounts-ontario-past-editions>)
- 2023 Ontario Budget: *Building a Strong Ontario* (<https://budget.ontario.ca/2023/index.html>)

Agencies, Boards and Commissions (ABCs)

Agencies of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) perform a range of functions, including delivering BRM programs, supervising Ontario's 22 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 10 provincial agencies in accordance with the Agencies and Appointments Directive. The following is a list of the ministry's agencies, boards and commissions accountable to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

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 BRM programs. Agricorp 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.

Agricorp delivers programs that are funded by both the provincial and federal governments, and by stakeholders.

Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario (ARIO)

Type of agency: Board-governed/Operational service agency

Constituting instrument: *Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario Act*

Function: ARIO is focused on ensuring Ontario maintains its competitive advantage in agri-food 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. Implement ARIO's infrastructure strategy to modernize the province's agri-food research and innovation physical and soft infrastructure (i.e., data, digital equipment, virtual) platforms;
- 3. Promoting the Ontario agri-food research and innovation system; and
- 4. Providing oversight of open research programs and the 14 ARIO-owned research properties with approximately 5,400 acres, 220+ buildings with a book value of approximately \$103 million, and 16 tenants that include government, not-for-profit, industry and private-sector organizations.

Financial information for consolidated agencies (\$M)						
Agencies	2021-22 expenditure actuals \$	2021-22 revenue actuals \$	2022-23 expenditure interim actuals \$	2022-23 revenue interim actuals \$	2023-24 expenditure estimates \$	2023-24 revenue estimates \$
Agricorp	110.8	228.7	240.5	269.0	199.2	300.0
ARIO	1.2	64.4	0.9	1.1	4.6	7.2

Non-consolidated agencies

Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Appeal Tribunal (AFRAAT)

Type of agency: Non board-governed/Adjudicative

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

Function: The function of the AFRAAT is to provide a fair and impartial hearing and decision process for stakeholders 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, 1996, 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, 2001, Farm Registration and Farm Organizations Funding Act, Farm Implements Act* and *Agricultural Employees Protection Act, 2002*.

Normal Farm Practices Protection Board (NFPPB)

Type of agency: Non board-governed/Adjudicative

Constituting instrument: *Farming and Food Production Protection Act, 1998*

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.

Both Boards collect fees, administer a compensation fund and make decisions on claims made against the funds. The fund set up under the Grain Financial Protection Program protects 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 fund set up under the Ontario Beef Cattle Financial Protection Program protects 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; AgriRecovery; 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 provides non-binding recommendations to the Minister on applications for funding under the Rural Economic Development 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* (FPMA), the *Milk Act* and certain regulations governing regulated marketing. Under these Acts, the OFPMC governs regulated marketing and oversees the activities of Ontario's 22 marketing boards and three Section 12 (of the FPMA) representative associations to ensure accountability as they operate within the powers and authorities given to them. The OFPMC also fosters stakeholder collaboration to achieve sector solutions, provides leadership and education to its regulated boards and associations in the form of advice, facilitation, and direction, and directs the development and implementation of regulated marketing policy or regulations in Ontario, in consultation with the Minister and ministry.

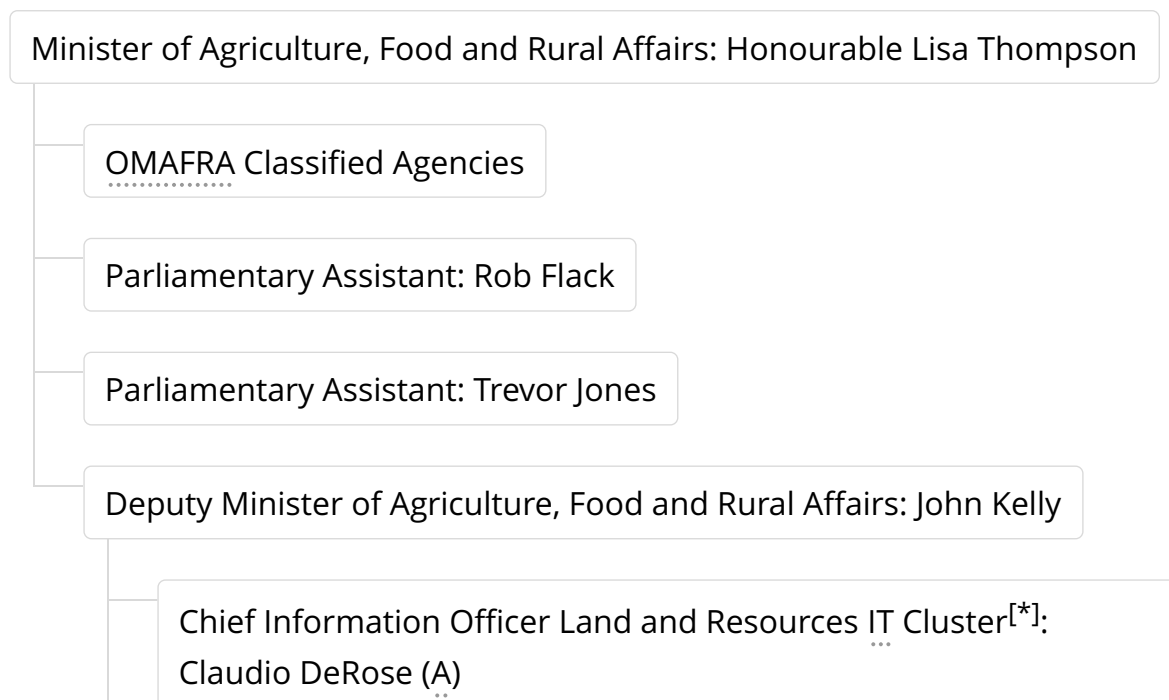
Ontario Food Terminal Board (OFTB)

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 market primarily for agricultural products, and operate such facility for the distribution and handling of agricultural products.

Ministry organization chart (March 2023)



Legal Services^[**]: Samir Khalil (A)

Communications Branch: David Spencer (A)

Executive Advisor to the Deputy Minister: Basia Florio (A)

Assistant Deputy Minister, Economic Development Division:
Randy Jackiw

Director, Agriculture Development Branch: Colleen
Fitzgerald-Hubble

Director, Labour, Trade and Economic Development Branch:
Brendan McKay (A)

Director, Rural Programs Branch: Alan Crawley (A)

Director, Program Development, Integration & Evaluation
Branch: Carolyn Hamilton (A)

Assistant Deputy Minister, Food Safety & Environment Division:
Kelly McAslan

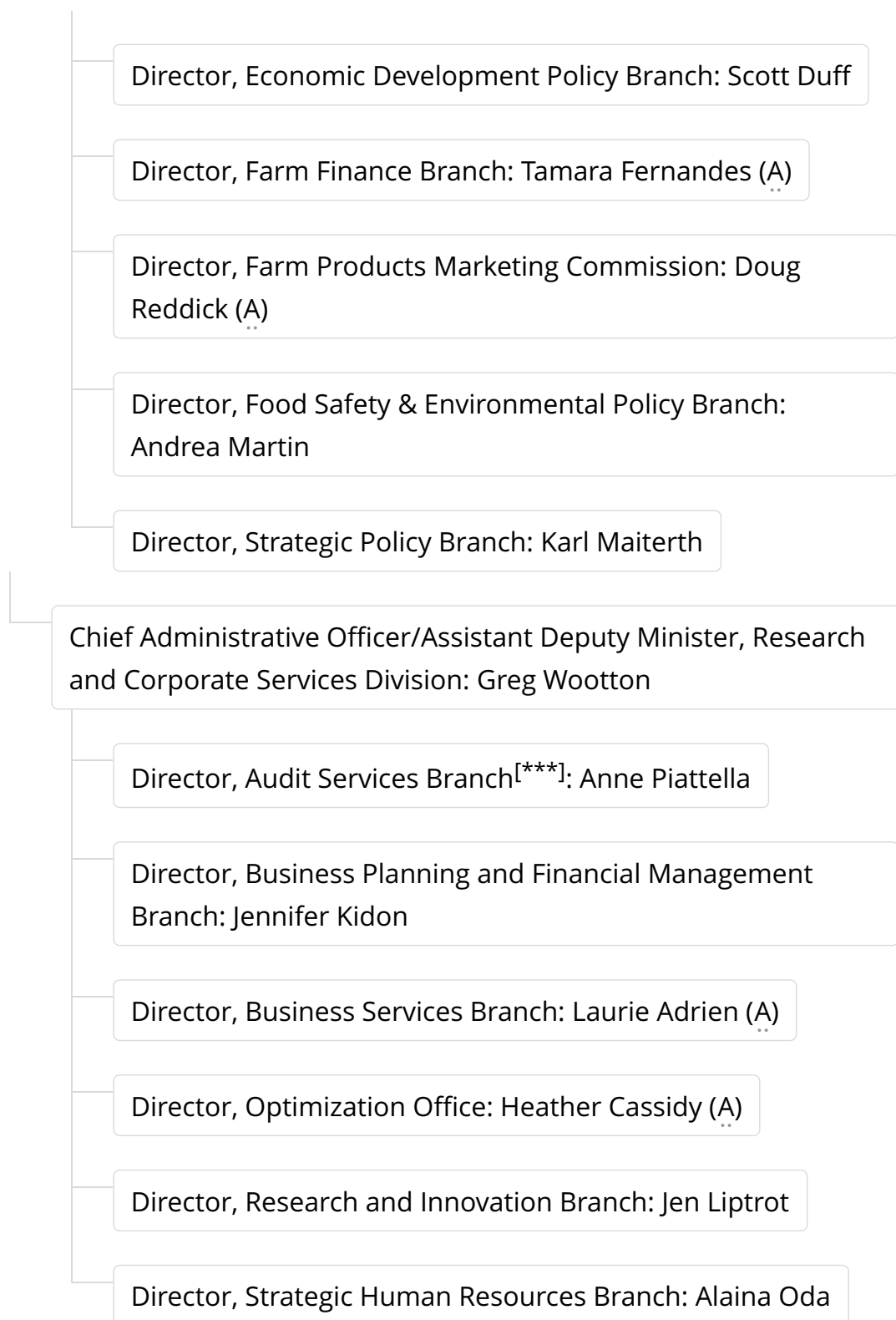
Director, Animal Health & Welfare Branch: Dr. Greg Worley

Director, Environmental Management Branch: Cale Selby

Director, Food Safety Inspection Delivery Branch: Tanya
Weber-Kinch (A)

Director, Food Safety Systems Development Branch:
Natasha Bartlett (A)

Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy Division: David Hagarty



[*] IT Services provided by the Land and Resources Cluster.

[**] Legal Services provided by the Ministry of Attorney General.

[***] Audit Services provided by Treasury Board Secretariat.

Annual report

The Ontario government is committed to making Ontario's agri-food sector and rural communities open for business, open for jobs and positioned for success now and into the future.

Through its Grow Ontario Strategy, the government has set out a long-term plan to strengthen the agri-food sector, fuel economic growth, help ensure an efficient, reliable, and responsive food supply and address ongoing agri-food sector vulnerabilities through new innovations. The key priorities in this plan are strengthening agri-food supply chain stability, increasing agri-food technology and adoption and attracting and growing Ontario's agri-food talent.

Ontario is reducing administrative costs while improving government services for farmers, food processors, agri-businesses and rural communities across the province.

The ministry is reducing red tape and regulatory burdens, while maintaining rules that protect food safety, the environment and plant and animal health.

Ontario also continues to invest in key programs like the Risk Management Program (RMP) and supporting rural communities as they plan for economic growth.

Ontario is building the agri-food sector's capacity for economic growth, environmental sustainability and maintaining high level of public trust by identifying emerging issues and providing solutions. OMAFRA works with the agri-food sector, and other governments, so that farmers and other agri-food businesses have the resources they need to make informed decisions about their business practices.

COVID-19 response

The health and safety of agri-food workers, and the stability of the food supply chain, are top priorities for the ministry.

The Minister's Jobs and Recovery Council, which included a range of agri-food stakeholders, helped assess the impacts of COVID-19 and made recommendations on short and long-term needs and priorities as the industry recovered and continues to recover from the crisis.

OMAFRA acted in several key areas, including:

- Establishing the COVID Agri-Food Secretariat in 2021 to provide a centralized approach for COVID-19 response programming. The temporary COVID Agri-Food Secretariat was demobilized in December 2022, with the remaining work integrated into other areas of OMAFRA to ensure continuity of the functions and services.
- Continuing to collaborate with municipal, provincial, federal, health partners, and the agri-food sector to offer support such as vaccination clinics (for example, Welcome Centre at Toronto Pearson International Airport including a clinic for arriving International Agri-Food Workers (IAWs), agri-food workplace clinics, and GO-VAXX clinics in rural areas), isolation centres, sector outreach, rapid testing, and the development of COVID-19 related initiatives and programs under CAP.
- \$10 million committed in Budget 2022–23 to help address worker health and safety, as part of the agri-food sector's prevention and control measures through the 2022–23 Enhanced Agri-food Workplace Protection Program. OMAFRA received 294 eligible applications, and over \$6.2 million was disbursed against submitted claims as of March 31, 2023.
- Providing further funding support through its COVID-19 Agri-Food Prevention and Control Innovation Program, which allocated \$22.5 million in cost-share funding support to farming operations and processor businesses under the Agri-Tech Innovation Program (ATIP). ATIP funded 144 projects that focused on supporting agri-food businesses to adopt innovative and new technologies that could reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission among workers.
- Approving over 2,800 agri-food businesses to participate in the Provincial Antigen Screening Program (PASP) and distributing over two million free Rapid Antigen Tests to the sector.
- Collaborating with Canada to expand coverage under Production Insurance for COVID-19 related production losses for 2020, 2021 and 2022 and extend Production Insurance enrollment deadlines.
- Continuing to engage the Sector Leadership Working Group and further established the Supply Chain Round Table to help identify issues and opportunities to proactively and collaboratively address concerns.

Strong agriculture, food and bio-product sectors

- In 2022, agri-food exports rose to \$23.8 billion, up 20.9% from \$19.7 billion in 2021. Ontario is the top agri-food exporting Canadian province, followed by Saskatchewan.
 - In 2022, Ontario's major export partners were the United States (80%), followed by Asia (6%) and the European Union (5%).
 - Top exports include grain products (26%), vegetables (11%), other edible preparations (9%), red meats (7%), and sugar and confectionary (6%).
 - Ontario exports are dominated by value-added or consumer-oriented goods (73%), followed by minimally processed or intermediate goods (13%) with bulk goods comprising (14%) of agri-food exports in 2022.
- In 2022–23, the ministry influenced \$565 million in investments and the creation/retention of 1,823 jobs by Ontario food and beverage manufacturers.
- Through the Feeder Cattle and Commodity Loan Guarantee Programs, the government backed over \$260 million in operational loans, benefiting more than 1,000 farmers across the province. Emergency Preparedness Planning and Response:
 - In 2022 highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) was diagnosed in Ontario poultry which required ministry response to support federal government and industry actions to mitigate the effects from this disease.
 - To enhance preparedness for an animal health event, the ministry brought forward amendments to the *Animal Health Act, 2009*, to add to the current suite of response powers to expressly enable initial response action to be taken by the Minister on a temporary basis when necessary.
 - OMAFRA works closely with other governments partners and industry (for example, Spotted Lanternfly Technical Advisory Committee) on enhancing biosecurity and developing response plans to mitigate impacts and eradicate if possible.
- OMAFRA provided \$25 million through the Strategic Agri-Food Processing Fund Program to enhance processing capacity in Ontario through investments in major expansions and modernization of food processing facilities.
- IAWs are an important component of Ontario's agri-food sector that relies heavily on the federal government's Temporary Foreign Worker Program. IAWs account for approximately 28% of the workforce in primary agriculture.

- In 2022 OMAFRA dedicated resources to lead policy, programming, coordination and engagement with other governments and industry on challenges facing IAWs, such as worker health, safety and care, housing, and vulnerabilities. Provincial specialists led or participated in over 400 education events or seminars reaching 64,000 participants on topics such as production efficiency, pest and disease management, sustainability, emergency preparedness, nutrient management, animal husbandry
- Through the Ontario Fertilizer Challenge, OMAFRA is addressing the dependency of Ontario agriculture on imported fertilizers, as well as providing alternatives to traditional fertilizers to ensure a continuous and cost-effective supply of fertilizer products to Canadian agriculture.
 - The Challenge provided ten (10) organizations with up to \$200,000 (total investment of \$2M) in non-repayable acceleration funding to transition alternative fertilizer solutions from research and validation phases to successful commercialization and market entry. This funding supports made-in-Ontario solutions to increase the availability of fertilizer options, alternatives and technology, ensuring farmers have the tools they need so that Ontarians can rely on a safe and stable food supply.
 - Following consultations with farmers and the agri-food sector, Ontario launched the Challenge to address the ongoing supply chain challenges for fertilizer, while promoting innovation in the province's agri-food sector. This investment encourages both immediate and long-term innovative solutions to help meet Ontario farmers' fertilizer needs by accelerating the development of new and alternative products for the agri-food sector.

Mental health supports for farm families

- Ontario and Canada have committed over \$7 million for three programs to expand mental health supports for farmers, their families and the agricultural community.
- The Farmer Wellness Initiative, the Guardian Network and the expansion of the In the Know program offer farmers and farm families free counselling services, connections to tailored supports and resources and mental health training, regardless of farm organization membership.

Cutting red tape and reducing regulatory burden

- Ontario has targeted unduly costly and burdensome regulations to help businesses grow while maintaining its standards to keep Ontarians safe and healthy, such as:
 - Regulatory amendments under the *Veterinarians Act* came into effect July 1, 2022, to implement a new streamlined model for how veterinary facilities are accredited.
 - Launched a broad public consultation on modernizing the *Veterinarians Act, 1990* in November 2022. In addition to incorporating more contemporary approaches to professional regulation and governance, the ministry is seeking to identify opportunities for streamlining requirements or reducing compliance burden for veterinarians and practice owners where appropriate.
 - Proposed amendments to the *Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Act* and *Innkeepers Act* to provide co-op members under the Feeder Cattle Loan Guarantee Program the option to custom-feed each other's cattle, giving them more flexibility and improving the competitiveness and profitability of their businesses.
 - Amended the regulation under the *Agricultural and Horticultural Organizations Act* to reduce the minimum member thresholds required to receive ministry support grants to help ensure the financial stability of agricultural and horticultural societies, particularly in smaller centres where the societies are an important part of their local communities.
- The ministry continues to modernize its licensing and regulatory compliance services. In 2022 the ministry partnered with the Lands and Resources Cluster (LRC), Ministry of Public and Businesses Service Delivery (MPBSD) and the Ontario Lean Office to develop a licensing portal that uses a lean, user-focused, digital approach for those who require licenses under OMAFRA legislation. The portal was launched in 2022 and the licensing and payment process is nearly 100% digitized through online forms, e-pay services, and digital delivery of documents, with total soft saving per year of \$3,082,625 and 1,251 hours saved across business owners and government.

Supporting local food

- As the province's domestic marketing program for Ontario food, Foodland Ontario continues to enjoy almost 90% recognition by consumers that fosters

strong public trust. 81% of Ontarians feel the program is a worthwhile effort on the part of government. The program's key performance measures include:

- Over 1,800 businesses and organizations utilize the logo on their packaging resulting in hundreds of millions of consumer impressions per month in the domestic market, helping consumers to identify and purchase Ontario foods when shopping.
- The program's 2022 Advertising Campaign surpassed past campaign benchmarks, achieving over 170 million consumer impressions across social, digital, radio and TV channels. For social media alone, the program achieved over 120 million consumer impressions ensuring the program continues to be an OPS leader.

- The program's public relations activities continue to provide resources, such as recipe releases, to over 450 food media outlets in Ontario that resulted in television and print media stories returning an estimated value of \$15 million in earned media (free advertising). The program's retail services' activities included 11,000 store visits and the distribution of over 3.5 million pieces of point-of-sale signage to grocery stores.
- The Ontario government continues to support the growth and success of the province's wine and grape industry.
 - Under the VQA Wine Support Program, 98 wineries received payments totaling \$7.5 million in 2022. In 2022–23, the government also provided \$5.3 million to 70 Ontario cideries and 44 distilleries under the Small Cidery and Small Distillery Program.

 - Under the Winery Agri-Tourism COVID-19 Relief Initiative, up to \$10 million was committed to support agri-tourism businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Ontario wineries and cideries with on-site stores whose businesses were impacted by COVID-19 safety measures to stop the spread of the virus were eligible in 2022–23 for a second one-time grant.
 - As part of the 2022 Provincial Budget, a 2-year extension for the following programs was announced: \$10 million for the VQA Wine Support Program (increased from \$7.5 million), \$4.8 million for marketing paid to the Wine Marketing Association of Ontario, and \$250,000 each for benchmarking and research; \$3 million for small cidery support and \$2.3 million for small distillery support under the Small Cidery and Small Distillery Program.

Additionally, the budget included a second year of the Winery Agri-Tourism COVID Relief Initiative (\$10 million).

- To support the growth and development of the maple sector, the Ontario Maple Syrup Producer's Association received Grassroots Growth Initiative funding (from 2021 through 2023) to complete a sector development strategy. They continue to work with advisory staff on KTT projects to support producers.

Supporting Ontario's agri-food value chain

- The Farm Products Marketing Commission (FPMC) approved 11 regulation amendments to support the evolution of the province's regulated commodity sectors addressing key issues for dairy, grains and tobacco. The FPMC brought into legal force 31 negotiated agreements and three arbitrated awards. It also approved 25 processor licences and made 16 appointments to various Industry Advisory Committees, arbitration panels and local boards.

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. This agreement with the University of Guelph increased Ontario's GDP by \$1.4 billion and sustained more than 1,300 jobs.
- Ontario continues to invest in the renewal and modernization of the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario (ARIO) owned research stations. 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 14 research stations spread across all regions of the province.

Farm finance

- At the July 2022 Federal Provincial Territorial (FPT) Agriculture Ministers' Meeting, ministers agreed to increase the AgriStability compensation rate from 70% to 80%, as part of the next policy framework, the Sustainable CAP. Ontario has been providing the provincial portion of this compensation rate increase since the 2020 program year. The removal of the Reference Margin Limit (implemented in

2020) will also continue during the Sustainable CAP.

- Ministers also agreed to continue to work with and consult industry on a new AgriStability model that will be more responsive, simpler and more predictable.
- The Ginseng Storage Loan Guarantee Pilot Program was launched on April 1, 2022. This three-year pilot program will provide up to \$130 million for the ginseng sector in loans to enable growers the option to store their crop for up to three years and avoid selling during a depressed market. Individual growers can borrow against up to \$1 million of their ginseng inventory.

Supporting Ontario's land use planning system

- As part of OMAFRA's work to support the implementation of Ontario's land use planning system, ministry staff delivered technical advice and training on agricultural land use policies to municipal staff, economic development officials, building officials, consultants, and planners on:
 - Minimum Distance Separation Formulae (approximately 600 clients).
 - Agricultural System and the Agricultural System Portal (approximately 40 municipalities).
 - Agricultural Impact Assessments (approximately 25 municipalities).
- While numbers are not formally tracked, OMAFRA planning staff also interacted daily with many clients via email and phone, assisting with the implementation of land use planning policies across the province.
- OMAFRA staff provided outreach and education to nearly 1,350 participants on a variety of agricultural land use planning topics including on-farm permitted uses and farmland protection.
- The ministry worked with MMAH to update land use planning legislation and policies to create a new province-wide land use planning document combining the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020, and A Place to Grow 2020, to make housing a priority that still supports rural communities and the agri-food sector.
- Supporting the review of Ministerial Zoning Orders and Community Housing Infrastructure Accelerator Tool. The Agricultural System supports the long-term viability of the agri-food sector and helps protect farmland across the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

- OMAFRA is working with municipalities to implement the Agricultural System and has developed tools to support the implementation of the Agricultural System including: an Agricultural Land Base Map, an online Agricultural System Map Portal (<https://agriculture-systems-portal-ontarioca11.hub.arcgis.com/>) and Implementation Procedures.
- For the Growth Plan area, OMAFRA staff have worked with MMAH to support one window planning and provide technical advice and comments on municipal Official Plans and to support them to implement the Agricultural System.
- OMAFRA provided technical advice about the agri-food sector from a land use planning perspective, including Geographic Information System (GIS) and mapping support for partner ministries.

Environmental stewardship

- OMAFRA continued working with the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario on follow-up to their 2020 report on environmental reporting and 2021 report on Ontario's environment and the operation of the Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR). The ministry has updated EBR templates and training for staff to support documentation and timely reporting on consideration of OMAFRA's Statement of Environmental Values. The ministry appreciates the auditor's findings and will continue to work on implementation.
- OMAFRA supported sector efforts by investing in stewardship programs, supporting science and performance measurement to inform industry action, and reducing red tape for farmers and food processors.
- Through the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program, more than 279 EFP workshops have been held across the CAP framework, supporting more than 3,200 verified completed Actions Plans by Ontario farmers.
- Building on the EFP Action Plans, Ontario invested over \$24 million to assist farmers in completing over 2,500 cost-shared projects across the province, including within the Lake Erie watershed, to address environmental risks identified through the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) process.
- Lake Erie Agriculture Demonstrating Sustainability (<https://www.ontariosoilcrop.org/lake-erie-agriculture-demonstrating-sustainability/>) (LEADS) is a five-year, \$15.6-million commitment by the federal and provincial governments, that was available under CAP, to help farmers take

action to improve soil health and water quality in the Lake Erie and Lake St. Clair watershed areas.

- The LEADS initiative, delivered by the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association, continued to provide cost-shared technical support for field-specific risk assessment through:
 - the Farmland Health Check-up
 - access to cost-share funding over five years to help farmers act to reduce the risk of on-farm nutrient loss
- Since 2018, more than 1,200 projects have been approved under the LEADS initiative, with over \$12.5 million in cost-share funding paid out under CAP to support completion of targeted on-farm improvement projects. Soil drainage is vital for 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 continued to work with sector partners on implementation of new soil health initiatives to help grow and sustain the agri-food sector while protecting the environment and building resilience to climate change.
 - The Soil Action Group (SAG), a collaboration of over 20 stakeholder groups including OMAFRA, is focused on implementing the strategy.
- The ministry continues its soil mapping initiative that updates historical soil information and contributes to understanding the state of soil health and how soil properties can inform land management and stewardship. New data collected by the soil mapping pilot will help farmers adjust their soil management practices to improve soil health, productivity and environmental outcomes.
- In 2022, provincial Great Lakes funding was confirmed for OMAFRA's stewardship commitments under the Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health (COA) and Lake Simcoe Protection Plan (annually \$1.1 million and \$520,000, respectively).
- To deliver on COA and Lake Simcoe commitments, OMAFRA staff worked with key delivery partners to develop projects, resulting in 15 new agreements initiated in 2022 to March 2024.
 - The projects support science, on-the-ground action and measure progress toward agricultural stewardship for improved water quality, soil health and

resilience to a changing climate.

- Activities include promoting action in the agricultural sector towards phosphorus load reduction, building soil health, water conservation, climate resilience, and the reduction of harmful pollutants.
- Work continued on implementation of the Canada-Ontario Lake Erie Action Plan, which outlines Canada's and Ontario's proposed actions to meet commitments under the COA.
 - Of 128 actions in the Plan, 25 are directly related to agriculture. OMAFRA has the lead for 19 of those actions, and six actions are being led by the agri-food sector.
- The ministry has a KPI to report on the level of adoption of environmentally beneficial practices. In particular, the percentage of Ontario's farms reporting winter cover crop use as reported in the Agricultural Census of Canada:
 - Based on 2021 census data, Ontario farmers reported use of cover crops at 27% (12,902 of 48,346 farms reporting in Ontario), representing a slight increase from 2016.

Protecting food safety and animal health

- OMAFRA is building on its strong foundations of protecting food safety, animal health and welfare, and the environment through a multi-year Compliance Modernization project to maintain strong public trust in Ontario's agri-food sector, contributing to business growth and prosperity while protecting the public interest.
- OMAFRA is working with Federal-Provincial-Territorial partners to develop interprovincial trade pilot projects that are exploring opportunities to increase Ontario's food production capacity, reduce barriers to interprovincial trade of meat, boost competitiveness in the agri-food sector, and advance sector adoption of effective food safety protection systems.
- OMAFRA is working on a strategy that seeks to support long-term sustainability in the industry as a whole through the attraction and retention of talent to the agri-food workforce.
- Food Safety Inspections in 2022–23 included (data current as of March 10, 2023):
 - 116 provincially licensed slaughter plants. Inspectors are present in

provincially licensed abattoirs whenever slaughter operations occur to ensure food safety and animal welfare regulatory requirements are met. 8 new slaughter plants were licensed in 2022–23.

- 357 provincially licensed freestanding meat plants. Comprehensive inspections and sampling are based on a risk-based approach to ensure food safety requirements are met. 19 new freestanding meat plants were licensed in 2022–23.
- 57 provincially licensed dairy plants. Inspectors conduct comprehensive annual inspections and conduct finished product and environmental testing and sampling to ensure compliance with standards. 8 new dairy plants were licensed in 2022–23 with another 15 working through the application process with the ministry.
- 29 provincially licensed fish processing plants. Inspectors are present to ensure food safety requirements are met. 2 new fish plants were licensed in 2022–23.
- Over 204 on-farm dairy goat milk operations. Producers received an annual inspection as well as on-going and follow-up inspections to ensure regulatory compliance with the *Milk Act*.
- In addition to inspection services, the ministry completed sampling to support the Foods of Plant Origin regulation and monitoring program, which includes sampling, regulatory inspections and assessment of microbiological and chemical risks in produce, honey and maple products produced and distributed in Ontario.
 - In 2022–23, OMAFRA has to date conducted 236 Foods of Plant Origin related inspections and collected 1,288 samples and swabs for testing in produce, honey and maple products produced and distributed in Ontario. In the event of an adverse food safety test result, immediate action is taken to ensure that consumers are protected, and issues are addressed and prevented from reoccurring.
- OMAFRA's Meat Inspection Program:
 - Is exploring a long-term resource-sharing agreement with the CFIA to ensure regulated inspections can continue to be met during high need times or in emergency situations.

- Continued to work with operators to improve hygienic slaughter and reduce the pathogen levels on beef and veal carcasses. New sampling programs were implemented to assist operators in their pathogen level monitoring.
- Managed honeybees 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 CAP, over \$1.85 million has been allocated since 2019, through two separate intakes, to help support and strengthen the health of managed honeybees and Ontario's beekeeping sector.
 - Over \$550,000 was invested in the first intake with over \$1,300,000 committed to projects during the second intake.

Plant health

- Plant health is a complex issue, which requires OMAFRA to work collaboratively with other levels of government, industry and academia in prevention, monitoring and mitigation of plant pest threats. Through this collaboration there has been a focus on biosecurity, emergency management and surveillance. As a result, the ministry has engaged in the following activities:
 - Surveillance and monitoring of economically damaging pests impacting plant health; for example, corn rootworm, vomitoxin, spotted lanternfly, anthracnose and neopestalotiopsis.
 - Investing in information technologies/digital tools that standardize data collection and reporting to ensure producers have timely information to manage pest threats during the growing season.
 - Working collaboratively with industry and researchers in developing and communicating integrated pest management strategies to address new, emerging and endemic threats to plant health.
 - Working collaboratively with industry and other governments in developing response plans to address new and emerging threats to plant health (for example, spotted lanternfly).
 - Advancing the sector's preparedness, coordination and ability to respond to plant health emergencies through CAP which supports projects and new

technologies that aim to prevent and mitigate plant pests.

Strong rural communities

- The Rural Economic Development program provides cost-share funding to rural communities, Indigenous communities and organizations, regions and not-for-profit organizations. The 2022–23 fiscal year resulted in 21 approved projects with a total commitment over \$2.0 million.
- In partnership with the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, OMAFRA delivered economic development training to over 450 municipal councillors and economic development volunteers in 2022 and 2023 to small communities through a series of summits.

Ministry administration

- OMAFRA's Information Management and Information Technology strategy, Digital OMAFRA 2.0, demonstrated a greater commitment to advancing the ministry's data management. OMAFRA is working to address internal audit recommendations to better manage, use and share data across the ministry.
- Following the recommendation outlined in the Agency Modernization Initiative, the OFPMC completed a review of its governance as a non-board governed agency of the ministry, its scope of work as related to its legislative authorities, operational effectiveness and relevant performance measurements. Recommendations of this review are being considered with implementation to take place over the upcoming fiscal year.

Strategic policy

- The ministry worked with FPT partners to develop the Sustainable CAP, which will provide critical supports to the agriculture and agri-food sector for 2023–2028.
- At the July 2022 FPT Agriculture Ministers' Meeting, ministers negotiated a 25% increase in new funding for Strategic Initiatives over the current Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP), from \$417 million to \$569 million over the life of the framework. The agreement also includes the launch of the new Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program, a funding initiative to mitigate climate change and support the agricultural sector in better addressing sustainability outcomes. The ministry worked with FPT partners to finalize and sign the Sustainable CAP

Multilateral Framework Agreement (MFA) and the Ontario — Canada Bilateral Agreement (BA), which will ensure continuity of programming for Ontario's agriculture and agri-food sector when CAP expires on March 31st, 2023.

Ministry interim actual expenditures 2022–23

Expenditure type	Ministry interim actual expenditures 2022–23 ^[4] \$M
COVID-19 approvals	29 . 5
Other operating	839 . 2
Other capital	5 . 5
Staff strength ^[5] (as of March 31, 2023)	848 . 2

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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 *2023 Ontario Budget*.
- [2] ^ Decrease from 2022–23 to 2023–24 Printed Estimates due to winding down of COVID-19 relief programming.

- [3] ^ Estimates and Actuals for prior fiscal years are re-stated to reflect any changes in ministry organization and/or program structure.
- [4] ^ Interim actuals reflect the numbers presented in the *2023 Ontario Budget*.
- [5] ^ Ontario Public Service full-time equivalent positions.