



The Politics, Economics, And Culture Of Smaller-Scale, Family Farming In The Parry Sound District

PROJECT FACT SHEET: LIVESTOCK EXPANSION POTENTIALS

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ELIZABETH FINNIS, UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND GOALS

Project Funding: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the University of Guelph

Goals: To develop an in-depth understanding of food production in the Parry Sound District by collecting data on farmers' experiences, values and priorities, and farming challenges and innovations, in order to inform policy and public dialogues at local, provincial, and national levels.

Participants: Interviews with 82 participants from 52 households 2017-2018.

73% of Participants Raise Livestock:



POTENTIALS FOR LIVESTOCK FARM EXPANSION

59% of participating households see potential for expansion or a return to larger numbers of local farms:

Compared to Southern Ontario: Prices are more accessible to new farmers/farmers looking to expand

Land is ideal for grazing (i.e. cow-calf operations, sheep, grass-fed dairy cows, etc)

Illustrative Quotes:

There's a big push to open things up in Cochrane, but why go that far north? There's lots of farms that could be brought back around here. Our daughter and son-in-law might bring cattle up here to pasture, if we get rid of our cattle. There are too many cash crops where they are. (Beef farmer)

This is a cow-calf area. It's truly cow-calf land. Because of the bush areas, the hills, the soil types... It's ideal pasture land." (Beef farmer)

IDENTIFIED BARRIERS TO LIVESTOCK FARM EXPANSION

Land that has been let go from farming:

Implications:

Costs associated with clearing, tiling, fencing lands after many years

Distances between cleared and productive land

Restrictions on accessing enough hay for expansion:

"It's an ideal beef, goat, sheep farms area, but you need to cover a lot of ground for hay." (Beef farmer)

"People up here are very unwilling to sign a contract for their land [for haying] – so I have to be careful with how much money I invest in the land. If you could get contracts, there would be 1000s more acres that could be farmed, because right now they're just growing up." (Beef farmer)



In addition:

Increasing competition for land related to tourism and home building:

"There's a lot of potential, but the mindset for this area is tourism. There are inflated prices for property because somebody wants to get back to nature, and they don't care what they pay, and they're in competition with someone who wants to farm...So we've allowed farms to be subdivided." (Beef farmer)

"In the Toronto area, there's a political feeling that politicians these days are doing things to return farmland, but it's not happening. Even here, there's a field that will be a subdivision. But why? Marginal land could be used that way instead." (Beef farmer)

60% of livestock farmers identified inadequate numbers of large animal veterinarians

Implications:

Preventable animal and hive losses; inadequate emergency animal care; high costs of veterinarian care; frustration, stress.

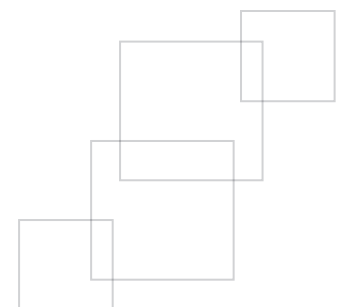
"One of the problems around here is that there are no vets. No one is taking over. We need to have more vets and we need access to medicines more freely because if we don't doctor them, they will end up dead...We need more vets on the road, available to us." (Beef farmer)

Loss of local infrastructure (no auction houses or local dairies; decreased numbers of abattoirs, fewer feed/supply stores to meet needs of larger farms)

Implications:

Increased costs to ship, process, sell livestock

"The biggest challenge, and I preach this, the biggest challenge I have is infrastructure. Because once we lost the beef farmers, we lost the co-op, and the sales barn. We have a couple of feed stores that can't meet my size demand." (Beef farmer)





PRIORITY ACTION AREAS

Development/growth of programs that encourage and support the expansion of infrastructure and veterinarian services

Development of processes for more consistent pricing and marketing options for livestock

Development of programs to ease the transitions of new farmers

Working with all levels of government to facilitate farm expansions and raise awareness of farming potentials in the Parry Sound District and to ensure preservation of land for farming

“This pocket (for farming) is ignored. There’s been expansion in Cochrane, but what about all the land between the south and there? There are great pockets around here and even in Huntsville...” (Dairy farmer)

“Land taxes – there’s a reduced rate for farmers, which is nice because we’re living off the land, and residing on it. But the assessments have gone crazy with MPAC. Residential rates have gone down, but ours have gone up by 70%, because rich people are buying farmland.” (Dairy farmer)

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

Elizabeth Finnis,
Dept of Sociology and Anthropology
University of Guelph

Email: efinnis@uoguelph.ca
Phone: 519-824-4120 ext. 56527

ADDITIONAL PROJECT FACT SHEETS INCLUDE:

- Sustainability;
- Values and Practices;
- Resources.

Documents with more in-depth information also available