

Building Capacity for Northern Ontario Agriculture

Errol Caldwell, Research Director
Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre





Farming the North (2011 Census)

Northern Ontario

- **700,000 acres of farmed land with an estimated potential to increase by 20-50%**
- **2,800 farms that return \$190 million annually in farm receipts**
- **Half of all revenues are in the beef and dairy sectors**
- **Canola production doubled between 2006 and 2011**

Thunder Bay/Rainy River/Kenora

- 599 farms
- 281,000 acres (97,000 in crops; 101,000 in pasture)
- \$51.9 mil total sales

Temiskaming/Cochrane

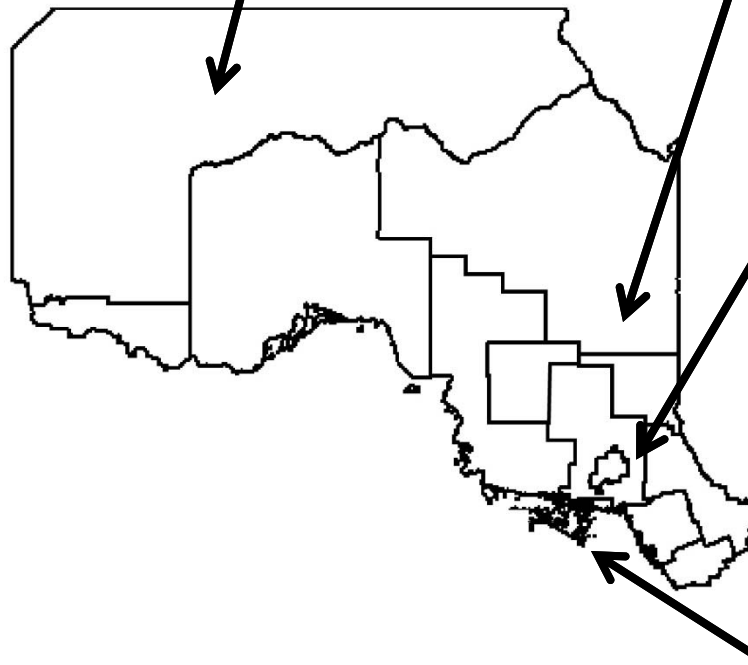
- 581 farms
- 261,000 acres (139,000 in crops; 57,000 in pasture)
- \$71.5 total sales

Sudbury/Nipissing /Parry Sound

- 855 farms
- 222,000 acres (82,000 in crops; 46,000 in pasture)
- \$42.3 total sales

Algoma/Manitoulin

- 552 farms
- 239,000 acres (65,000 in crops; 112,000 in pasture)
- \$26.1 mil total sales

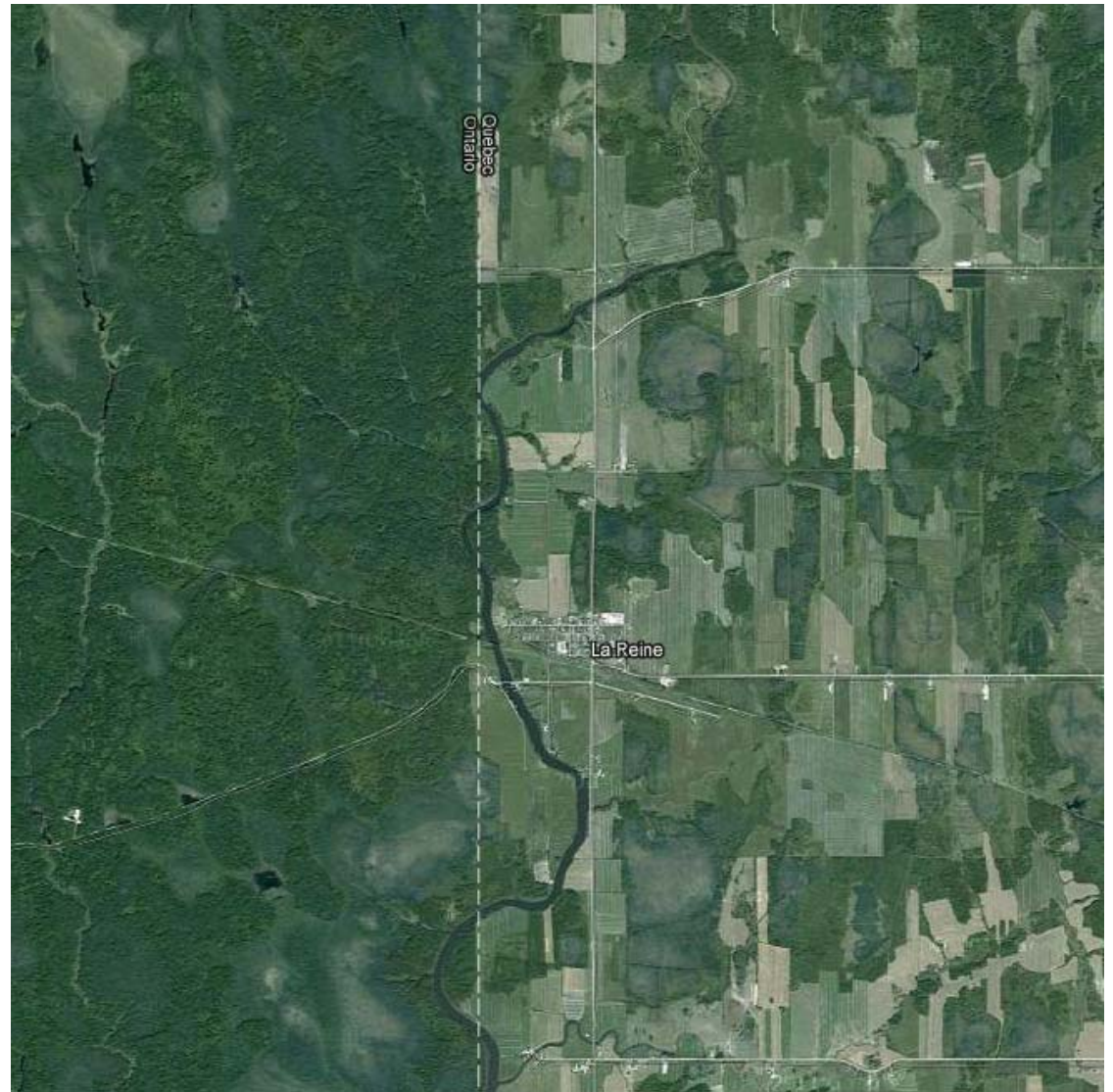




Cochrane at a Glance

Northern Claybelt Study (2009) –

- 1.07 million acres of private lands available for agriculture
- 762,000 acres of class 3 soils and 506,000 of class 4 soils could be added to the current farmland base.



Growth Plan FOR NORTHERN ONTARIO 2011



Ministry of
Infrastructure

Ministry of Northern
Development, Mines and Forestry

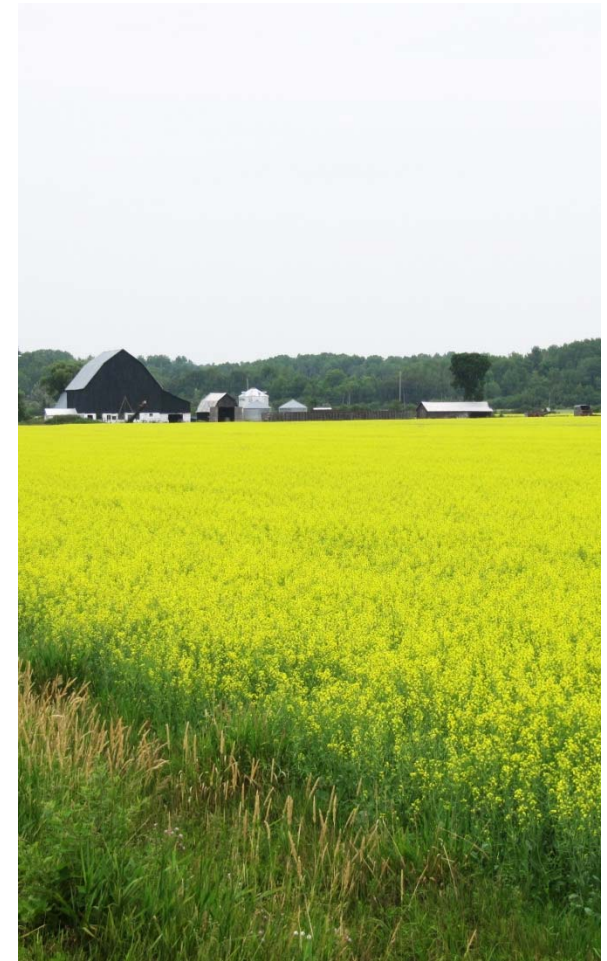
Agricultural Priorities

- Expand production in the North to contribute to a sustainable local food source for Northern Ontario residents
- Support buy-local initiatives that increase consumer awareness of Ontario-produced foods and encourage Ontarians to buy locally, including Northern Ontario products
- Support development of production, processing and distribution systems.



How can we expand food production?

- **Infrastructure development:** Tile drainage & land clearing program; storage; and transportation
- **Innovation & new technology:** Collaboration between farmers, private sector and Regional Innovation Centres to develop new opportunities
- **Farm succession and new farm startups:** Need for attracting new farmers to the area as well as assisting existing farmers with their succession plans





Buy local initiatives for the North and Ontario

- **Market development:** Need to expand farmers' markets/food co-ops
- **Building on brands:** Improving regional branding initiatives and producer-led branding initiatives
- **Scaling up:** Opportunities exist for farms to sell product to larger retailers, hospitals, schools, and government institutions. Food safety programs (Canada GAP) are necessary for farms who aim to reach this market.





Production, processing and distribution

- **Food hubs:** Need to investigate the viability of wholesalers for local food (co-packing, shipping and distribution).
- **Transportation & logistics:** Identifying opportunities and barriers to transport food products throughout the North
- **Processing:** Northern meat processors / abattoirs operate in a precarious climate





3-Year Pilot Project

- **Build relationships** through networking, collaboration and priority setting
- **Build capacity** of local producers and businesses in agriculture and food through practical workshops, sharing information, and assisting with market development
- **Undertake research**, tailored to the needs of local producers by conducting crop trials, fostering innovation and sharing research that improves the sector



Rural Agri-Innovation Network (RAIN)

Field Research

- Oilseed/biomass crop trials
- Pasture improvement project
- No-till cover crop project

Infrastructure Development

- Tile Drainage & Land Clearing
- Sustainable New Agri-Food Products Program

Market Development

- Consumer Research
- *Eat Algoma*. Local Food Festival on June 14, 2014 (Downtown Sault Ste. Marie)





RAIN Update – Tile Drainage & Storage Infrastructure

Agricultural Tile Drainage and Storage Study

RAIN, Conestoga Rovers & Associates (CRA) and C.G. Trivers Ltd.

- (90 properties) that requested tile drainage infrastructure for 4,983 acres

NOHFC Funding for Tile Drainage/Land Clearing

- NOHFC will fund 50% of land clearing and/or tile drainage contractor costs to a maximum of \$500/ acre
- RAIN is involved with two Algoma-Manitoulin Regional Land Clearing and Tile Drainage Projects at different stages of development with over 2,400 acres identified so far



Ontario

Northern Ontario Heritage
Fund Corporation

Société de gestion du Fonds
du patrimoine du Nord
de l'Ontario



RAIN Update – Sustainable New Agri-Food Products Program

Sustainable New Agri-Food Products (SNAP) Program

- Funded by Northern Ontario Development Program through FedNor & Industry Canada;
- Pilot for Northern Ontario agriculture & food producers, businesses and collaborations;
- Delivered by RAIN (Sault Ste. Marie), Northeast Community Network (Kapusksing), Eat Local Sudbury (Sudbury) & Clover Valley Farmers' Market (Fort Frances);
- **SNAP will provide up to \$5,000 at 80% cost-share toward the purchase of processing equipment that would result in the creation of a food or agriculture product NEW to the business;** for collaborations, a maximum of \$15,000 is available at 80% cost-share;
- PROJECTS: Related to the development of agriculture or food products grown, processed or manufactured in northern Ontario; and result in the creation of an agriculture or food product new to the business.
- ELIGIBLE COSTS: Limited to the purchase of equipment that results in production of an agriculture or food product new to the business. Examples of this include, but are not limited to: Food processing equipment; Fibre processing equipment; High-tunnels or greenhouse structures for season extension; Food packaging equipment.
- PROGRAM INTAKE: April 24th, 2014 to September 1st, 2014



RAIN Update – Field Research

Diversification

RAIN has identified crops that are relatively new to Algoma District, which are of interest to farmers that want to diversify their farming operations. In 2013, RAIN identified the following priorities and projects through consultation with the growing community:

Fruit Crops (Northern-hardy varieties)

Specialty Crops (Quinoa, amaranth, hemp)

Biomass Crops (Switchgrass, miscanthus)

Oilseed Crops (Canola, camelina, soybeans)





RAIN Update – Best Practices

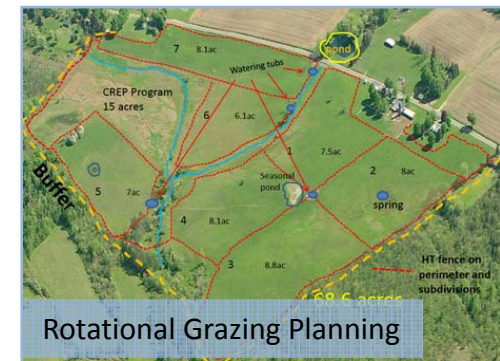
RAIN has identified useful agricultural practices that are used sporadically in Algoma. Intensive rotational grazing is one such practice that RAIN will feature through the Algoma Pasture Improvement Project. Other best practices include seeding cover crops and trying different varieties of forage and cereal crops for local producers.

Pasture Improvement Practices

Intensive Rotational Grazing

Cover Crops

No-till Seeding



Rotational Grazing Planning



Cover Crops (Tillage Radish)



Forage Crops



No-till Seeding



RAIN Update – Market Development

Consumer Research Project

- Erin Heeney, Local Food Researcher with RAIN
- Conducting survey research in grocery stores, farmers' markets, convenience stores
- Identify consumer preferences and challenges for purchasing locally-produced food
- Identify barriers/challenges for retailers in sourcing locally-produced food

Healthy Food For All Project

- Develop a strategic plan for Algoma's food system with stakeholders, markets and farmers

Eat Algoma. Local Food Festival – June 14th, 2014

- Celebrating local food & farming in the Downtown





Northern Agriculture Strategy

We request FONOM support for:

- Dedicated agricultural funding programs for farmer succession and recruitment, infrastructure projects like tile drainage, storage and processing, market expansion.
- Buy local and develop municipal approaches that assist producers and their customers in having a regional focus for developing their food system
- Support District agri-innovation networks such as RAIN and encourage them to interact and network towards meeting mutually beneficial pan-northern objectives.
- Ring of Fire and chromite deposits are an economic opportunity but so is agriculture. Northern Ontario represents Ontario's greatest opportunity for agricultural expansion (and we can't eat chromite!)

In short, we need a strategy and dedicated funding for developing the agricultural sector in the North.

Make this your FONOMinal vision!



Questions?

Thank you!



Ontario Trillium Foundation



Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario



Ontario

Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation
Société de gestion du Fonds du patrimoine du Nord de l'Ontario



Cooks Station Corporation

Algoma Community Pasture Association