

# Muskoka Agriculture Opportunities

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By

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# “So what do you farm in Muskoka...?, Rocks?”

*question from an Area Municipal Councilor, 2001*



# Muskoka Agriculture is Something Special

- Retreating Glaciers left pockets of good soil
- High organic matter 4-5%
- Over 200 farms – number steady for past 20 years
- Small farm size- 40 ha average
- Open farmland totals 7000ha- only 0.25% of Muskoka's land area
- No big industrial farms
- Less fertilizers and pesticides used
- Environment protected/ enhanced

# Muskoka Agriculture – its more than you Think!

- Muskoka farm revenue increasing.
- \$6 million in 2006
- Economic impact approximately \$18 million
- Non economic benefits
  - Recreation
  - Tourism
  - Open space provides “balance”
  - Biodiversity

# Muskoka Agriculture- Small Scale and Diverse

- No large cash-cropping, or intensive animal operations
- Instead:
  - Grass fed cow- calf
  - Special pork breeds
  - Free range poultry
  - Lambs
  - Mushrooms
  - Green houses
  - Vegetables and berries
  - Cranberries
  - Honey
  - Maple syrup

# But there are Threats...

- Muskoka farmers are old
  - average age 57. Ontario average 52
  - How can farmland be protected?
- No soils map
  - where are the good soils?
- Young people want to farm
  - How can they be encouraged?