

# Agritourism in Peterborough & the Kawarthas



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Agritourism in Peterborough & the Kawarthas* is the outcome of a highly collaborative process that brought together diverse members of the agriculture and food tourism communities from across the region. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the process!



### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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We acknowledge that Peterborough & the Kawarthas sits on the traditional territory of the Mississauga Anishinaabeg. We offer our gratitude to our First Nations for their care for, and teachings about, our earth and our relations. May we honour those teachings.



This report was prepared by the Grow Food Tourism team at the Culinary Tourism Alliance, including Trevor Benson, Caroline Morrow, Camilo Montoya-Guevara, and Caroline Millar. Grow Food Tourism is a social enterprise consultancy that is working to bridge the gap between the food & drink and travel industries.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The people, places, products, and production techniques that define agritourism experiences are incredibly regional and diverse. As such, there is no standardized definition of agritourism. In fact, there are many definitions, some that are complementary and others that contrast, but all of which are relevant to the communities that subscribe to them. Despite this relativity, it is universally accepted that agritourism is a subset of rural tourism, and it brings together the tourism and agricultural sectors. It also cannot exist without a connection—whether direct or indirect—to agricultural production and to the people behind it. Agritourism is often presented as a development opportunity for rural areas and as an income diversification opportunity for farms. *Agritourism in Peterborough & the Kawarthas* explores agritourism as a growth opportunity for the region.

Part One of this report both identifies and contrasts the concepts, debates, and proposed definitions of agritourism at an international and provincial level. Insights from the research are presented as valuable background information for examining agritourism in Peterborough & the Kawarthas more specifically. Within this part, are key findings related to the general benefits and challenges of agritourism development as well as producer and visitor motivations for engaging with agritourism. Agritourism can include a range of activities, such as visiting a farmers' market, joining an educational tour of an operational farm, purchasing from a farm-stand, attending a harvest festival, picking produce at a u-pick, eating at a farm café, or staying at an on-farm bed & breakfast, among many others.

In Part Two, agritourism is assessed as a growth opportunity for Peterborough & the Kawarthas in relation to research into the current agricultural landscape, the land use planning context, and insights from the agricultural and tourism communities. This research helped to gauge the level of local interest in agritourism and potential for its development.

An important part of the research was to scope out what agritourism means within the context of Peterborough & the Kawarthas, and the results of this process are shared in Part Two of the report, which includes a concept map for agritourism in the region. The following definition of agritourism in Peterborough & the Kawarthas is proposed:

**“Diverse experiences that connect locals and visitors alike to where their food comes from, whether directly through an activity that happens at the place of production or indirectly through engaging with the people behind it.”**

The report wraps up with an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges to developing agritourism in Peterborough & the Kawarthas. The conclusions, which are informed by the research findings, collectively position agritourism as a real opportunity for growth for Peterborough & the Kawarthas. In order for Peterborough & the Kawarthas to capitalize on this opportunity some key recommendations for moving forward are made. Abbreviated versions of these follow below:

1. Host an agritourism development session focussed on overcoming perceived barriers to entry and challenges related to growing agritourism;
2. Establish criteria to inventory all agritourism experiences and businesses in Peterborough & the Kawarthas;
3. Develop an evaluation framework towards establishing and monitoring against a baseline of Peterborough & the Kawarthas agritourism offerings;
4. Engage “high potential” businesses in preliminary discussions around integrating agritourism into their operations;
5. Work in collaboration with local municipalities to co-design and develop resources to support agritourism; and



6. Build industry capacity through increased exposure to successful agritourism destinations and operations.

By implementing these short- to medium-term actions Peterborough & the Kawarthas, in collaboration with partners in the agritourism community, will be working towards achieving tangible outcomes, including but not limited to: increasing industry awareness around the potential to develop agritourism; increasing the number and quality of agritourism experiences; increasing the diversity of agritourism experiences, including more farm-based accommodations; aligning brand and marketing efforts with its agritourism offering; and becoming recognized as a place to experience agritourism.





# PART ONE





## INTRODUCTION

Peterborough & the Kawarthas Economic Development has come together in collaboration with Peterborough County and Kawarthas Northumberland to explore agritourism as a growth opportunity. This report is the outcome of a multi-phased research process that included mixed methods. More specifically, it is informed by a review of background documents and literature focussed on the concept of agritourism, an assessment of agritourism in Ontario, and several community engagement activities, including the dissemination of an industry questionnaire, key informant interviews, and a community forum on agritourism.

Through its name alone, it is clear that agritourism sits at the intersection of agriculture and tourism. However, the specifics around where agritourism takes place, who is involved, and what activities are included are topics of international debate, primarily because understandings agritourism vary considerably around the world. In some places, agritourism is known as agro-tourism or farm tourism but for the purposes of this report, the term agritourism is used throughout. There is no universal definition of agritourism. As such, a key research activity includes mapping out the concept for Peterborough & the Kawarthas.

In the broadest sense, agritourism is a form of “alternative tourism” (‘responsible tourism’ or ‘special interest tourism’) because of the educational opportunities that it provides to visitors and the connections that it makes between visitors, locals, and farmers.<sup>1</sup> This categorization is in contrast to “mass tourism”. There are many types of alternative



tourism including, cultural tourism, ecotourism, sports tourism etc. Agritourism usually falls under cultural or ecotourism depending on visitor motivations. Although agritourism happens in urban and rural settings, rural tourism is often the choice umbrella term.

Food tourism (“culinary tourism” or “gastronomy tourism”) is a subset of cultural tourism specifically. It includes any tourism experience in which a person learns about, appreciates, and consumes food and drink that reflects the local cuisine, heritage, or culture of a place. Depending on their personal interests, visitors may be more interested in the production side or consumption side of food tourism. Often the production side is of particular interest to the food-connected consumer, whereas the consumption side attracts the traditional “foodie” market.<sup>2</sup> That being said, interests in food tourism can be both incidental and deliberate.<sup>3</sup> At a more granular level, agritourism is therefore a subset of food tourism, one that is ingredient-based and focusses primarily on the production side of food and drink. Wine tourism and cheese tourism, for example, are both forms of agritourism. Agritourism experiences often focus on the people behind food production and usually take place where food is produced. Exceptions to this could include museums about agricultural production and farmers’ markets, for instance. To recap, agritourism is a form of alternative tourism that lives under cultural tourism. More specifically it is a production-focussed type of food tourism that can take place in both urban and rural tourism settings. Most commonly, however, agritourism is considered a sub-type of both rural tourism and food tourism.

Globally, there is a lot of interest around agritourism and agritourism development. It not only presents an opportunity for rural development, resilience, and innovation but has the potential to drive positive environmental, sociocultural, and economic impacts. Some consider agritourism to be the “commodification of rurality”,<sup>4</sup> while others position it as a less objectifying form of tourism since locals tend to shape and implement agritourism activities.<sup>5</sup> This being said, agritourism is a serious, time-intensive business expansion decision that is by no means a cure-all for the challenges facing tourism and agriculture businesses in rural areas. Agritourism may require significant skills development in areas that may not be familiar to all farmers, such as customer service, hospitality, and online marketing, to name a few.<sup>6</sup>



## WHAT IS AGRITOURISM?

Due to the region-specific nature of activities, landscapes, and agricultural production, agritourism looks different around the world. Nevertheless, it is clear that agritourism is an experience that brings together the tourism and agricultural sectors, along with the unique processes, people, and places involved. Importantly, agritourism cannot exist without a connection—whether direct or indirect—to agricultural production. It is widely agreed that agritourism presents an opportunity for the economic diversification of farms. Beyond this, however, there is much debate in terms of how agritourism is defined and understood by providers and visitors alike.

### CONCEPTS AND TYPES – THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Italy is considered by many to be the birthplace of agritourism and there have been rules around agritourism development in the country since 1985. In the Italian context, agritourism activities must take place on a working farm, heritage farm infrastructure must be utilized, the food and drink offering must be from the farm and/or local area, and there are also rules for accommodations around room numbers. In Italy, if these criteria are not met, the activity falls under the broader category of rural tourism.<sup>7</sup> There is no room in the Italian definition of agritourism for activities on non-working farms or experiential farms. This definition of agritourism reflects a primary focus on agriculture and it is closely tied to the production and consumption of food and drink products. This definition is typical of the European context, where agritourism is tied to working farms and emphasis is placed on the accommodation sector. This somewhat restrictive and context-specific definition



means that many potential agritourism activities, especially within North American context, do not fit into the Italian concept of agritourism.

In North America the market for agritourism consists primarily of domestic/regional visitors from urban and suburban areas seeking leisure and educational activities outside of the city.<sup>8</sup> In this general context, agritourism activities include a range of experiences. Some of these are visiting a farmers' markets, joining an educational tour of on-farm production, purchasing from a farm-stand, visiting a u-pick farm for the day, enjoying a meal at an on-farm café, or staying at an on-farm bed & breakfast etc. Meanwhile, in Asia, agritourism is often focussed on fruit-harvesting festivals and activities.<sup>9</sup> Depending on the local context, it is important to acknowledge that agritourism activities may also include non-farm activities such as mushroom foraging and aquatic harvesting, for example. A broader definition of agritourism also means that non-agricultural food production can also be included as agritourism. In Canada this is particularly relevant to the inclusion of the ongoing traditions of Indigenous communities and Indigenous tourism businesses.

### "AGRITOURISM" IN THE LITERATURE

Many studies have been carried out globally to investigate the attributes that make up agritourism, including its boundaries, the types of experiences involved, where it takes place, what is considered authentic, whether authenticity can be maintained, and the extent of visitor interactions with providers and farmers. The following section contextualizes the current state of agritourism research, noting that last year (November 2018) the 1<sup>st</sup> World Congress on Agritourism took place in Bolzano, Italy.

Three areas of debate surround the term agritourism. The first area concerns whether or not the tourism product or activity is based on a working farm. The second consideration is focussed on the type of contact between the visitor and the agricultural activity (direct or indirect). The third area of debate concerns the level of authenticity in the tourism experience; that is, the degree of staging the agricultural activity or setting.<sup>10</sup> Each of these points is essential to consider when developing agritourism offers into visitor demand generators, as each destination needs to take an honest account of its unique context and available assets before developing and offering authentic agritourism experiences.

An initial understanding of agritourism as a concept was presented by Sharon Phillip et al. whose research proposed five types of agritourism activity in 2010.<sup>11</sup> The five types, later updated in 2014, are listed below:

**1. Non-working farm agritourism, indirect interaction:** The “agritourism products are not physically based on working farm properties but make a connection to agriculture or agricultural heritage in terms of imagery or location rather than having direct connection to farm animals, crops, machinery, or process.”<sup>12</sup>

**2. Working farm, passive contact:** A working farm provides the context for tourism without any further connection to farm activities/agriculture beyond that. (e.g. A rental cottage on a farm)

**3. Working farm, indirect contact:** In this type, the “nature of contact is indirect in the sense that agricultural commodities, as opposed to the agricultural activities themselves, feature in the tourism product.” (e.g. Consumption of produce, sale to visitors through farm shops)

**4. Working farm, direct contact, staged:** A range of products that let visitors interact directly with aspects of farming in a working farm environment. It can be defined as ‘staged’ based on physical or temporal variations made to normal working agriculture, which let the visitor experience it in a safe and accessible manner.<sup>13</sup>

**5. Working farm, direct contact, authentic:** A niche form of tourism, based on working farms, it provides opportunities for visitors to interact directly with working agricultural practices. It is the only type of agritourism that allows visitors to experience agritourism ‘back regions’ in an authentic way. (e.g. WWOOFing [World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms]).<sup>14</sup>



Lisa C. Chase et al.'s 2018 study pushes the boundaries of agritourism further with a conceptual framework that is widely accepted in the U.S.<sup>15</sup> Chase and colleagues define agritourism as “farming-related activities carried out on a working farm or other agricultural settings for entertainment or educational purposes.” They advance the idea of an agritourism typology or framework by stating that all agritourism activities can be associated with one or more of the following five categories: direct sales; education; hospitality; outdoor recreation; or entertainment. Within these categories, Chase splits activities into “core” and “peripheral” experiences of agritourism. On the one hand, “core” activities take place on working farms and have visitors interacting with the agricultural product or on-site processes (e.g. farm tasting rooms, farm stays). On the other hand,

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“peripheral” activities take place off-site, such as visits to a museum or farmers’ market, but still connected to one or more of the five categories of activities.<sup>16</sup>

Agritourism is defined by Charline Dubois as a series of marketed products and activities through which the visitor has the opportunity to learn about features of both agriculture and rurality.<sup>17</sup> This

definition represents a more flexible understanding of agritourism as it allows for a range of activities to be considered as agritourism, depending on the region and context. This relates to the economic and sustainable development opportunities that agritourism activities can provide, both for small-scale farms and ancillary tourism products. By using a less restrictive definition of agritourism, diverse food systems can be integrated, including Indigenous food practices and traditions that are not always farm-based, such as fishing, hunting, and foraging. Using a similar perspective to Dubois’, Lisa Chase also looks at agritourism and culinary trails as inclusive concepts, where culinary trails include other tourism activities that feature food but are not necessarily tied to on-site agriculture. She presented this broader approach to understanding agritourism at the 1<sup>st</sup> World Congress on Agritourism.<sup>18</sup>

Local and regional context is an important consideration when defining agritourism and establishing authenticity. In other words, the concept of agritourism needs to be based on the agricultural and tourism assets of each region. When this takes place, agritourism development uses a more landscape-based approach. Such an approach facilitates the inclusion of regional cultures and assets that may not be part of on-farm agricultural production, such as Indigenous land management, food production, and harvesting in Ontario.<sup>19</sup> Through a landscape approach, a specific destination may also choose to include such things as foraging as part of the activities that form their agritourism offering. This can help to facilitate broader participation as well as the inclusion of diverse production methods and cultural traditions.

Therefore, to understand agritourism in Peterborough & the Kawarthas, it is important to take a more holistic approach that considers the region's agricultural landscape, local cultures, existing and prospective market segments, available infrastructure, activities, places, and local capacity for attracting and hosting tourists interested in connecting to food through the people and places of production. By tracing the models and definitions of agritourism presented above onto a map of the agricultural tourism landscape and related assets, Peterborough & the Kawarthas has an opportunity to move towards a definition of agritourism that fits its unique context.





## CONSIDERATIONS FOR AGRITOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Despite its various definitions across the world, agritourism has widely been positioned as a form of on-farm diversification and as a tool for rural economic development. It is regarded as a way to combat rural depopulation while preserving cultural heritage and promoting economic development.

It is important to note that existing literature focusses deeply on the proposed benefits of developing agritourism, which are subcategorized into “benefits of agri-tourism for farms”, “benefits of agri-tourism for host communities”, and “benefits of agri-tourism for tourism operators”.<sup>20</sup> Primary benefits across these categories include, income diversification of farm revenue, on-farm employment opportunities for community members and younger generations, and an increase in the number of tourists visiting the region.<sup>21</sup> More specifically, agritourism can bring a reduced dependence on volatile agricultural markets by shifting some farm revenue generation towards tourism. This shift also encourages the use of farm resources that may otherwise have gone unused (e.g. lower grade land or old/vacant farm buildings), increased direct marketing activities for farmers,<sup>22</sup> and interactions between farmers and tourists. Direct contact between farmers and visitors not only empowers farmers to tell their own stories<sup>23</sup> but helps to show off local agricultural products to a new market that may specifically seek these out once they return home.<sup>24</sup>

A further benefit of agritourism noted in the literature is the opportunity that it creates for women specifically. Studies from New Zealand, the USA, and Italy, among others, mention the particular role that women play in maintaining and managing agritourism businesses. For example, 35% of the agritourism farms in Italy are managed by women.<sup>25</sup> The opportunity to enhance agritourism offerings through on-farm accommodations or activities such as courses (e.g. cooking, gardening etc.) can present further opportunities for the participation of women.<sup>26</sup> Although the potential benefit of agritourism development to women was noted in the literature and discussed during the 1<sup>st</sup> World Agritourism Congress, few direct studies on the topic were found.

Along with the abovementioned incentives, there are also several disadvantages and associated challenges related to agritourism development that must be considered by all farmers and producers, regional development bodies, and tourism providers entertaining

the idea of growing the industry. Primary concerns include navigating health and safety liabilities around having visitors on working farms, the disruption of regular farming activities in order to cater to visitors, the impact of increased traffic on neighbours and the environment, increased costs in production and packaging as well as business taxes, and the need for increased time and resource commitment to developing, enhancing, and marketing new products for tourists.<sup>27</sup> Counteracting these disadvantages to yield the benefits of agritourism can be challenging for smaller producers that may have limited capacity and time to do so. From a management and regulation perspective, there is the additional challenge of bringing different agritourism providers under a common platform—such as a regional website and promotional scheme—to ensure authentic, quality, visitor experience that meets legal and safety standards and that delivers a broader narrative and image for the region.<sup>28</sup>

With these benefits, disadvantages, and challenges in mind, a number of considerations for the development of viable, sustainable, and inclusive agritourism were found in the review. To start, collaborating with and supporting farmers emerged as vital to agritourism development since farmers are the face of the region through their daily interactions with agritourists. Relatedly, programs that help agritourism businesses by building up the skills and capacity that farmers need to service visitors are important supports. One example is the “New and Beginning Farmer Program”, a public service program run by Clemson University in South Carolina. It assists farmers with expanding their agribusiness through entrepreneurial education and business training.<sup>29</sup> Another example is the Colorado Tourism CRAFT (Colorado Rural Academy for Tourism) program, which offers “training and support for rural economic development through [the] creation and branding of new or enhanced traveler experiences.”<sup>30</sup>

Another key consideration for agritourism development is creating common marketing platforms and brands that promote regional agritourism products and services. In doing so, the booking process for agritourism experiences or accommodations can be simplified for visitors and streamlined for providers. Similarly, the regional narrative around agricultural history, heritage, and culture of place can be featured through a common platform. The Red Rooster Certification Program implemented in South Tyrol, Italy is one



example that helps to maintain a high standard of agritourism offer while providing a one-stop shop for visitors interested in booking their agritourism experience, all under a clear and comprehensive brand that showcases the diversity of the region.<sup>31</sup>

Visitors come with expectations around the beauty of a place and pre-conceived notions around what they would like to see, experience, taste, learn, and gain from travel. As such, the reputation of a place has a big impact on visitor demand. Luckily, there are actions that local stakeholders and governments can take to improve or preserve the natural landscape, historical structures, and traditional farming methods in an area, including incentivizing sustainable production techniques and family-run business models.<sup>32</sup> Perceptions of place have and will always have a big impact on the success of any tourism venture or product; therefore, agritourism should develop in a way that is not only authentic but also of a sustainable high quality.

Lastly, while collaboration between farmers, producers, and providers and regional tourism and government bodies is key to agritourism development, the business side of agritourism must be equally stressed. In other words, anyone considering agritourism should approach its development as an economic venture. From the literature, it is clear that agritourism should not be seen as an easy way to generate increased revenue. Rather, it is a business expansion decision that needs to complement existing agricultural activities. Agritourism decisions must be carefully assessed for any potential impacts on farm activities, coordination with existing resources, and the potential for economic gain.<sup>33</sup>

**Agritourism is a business expansion decision that needs to complement existing agricultural activities and must be carefully assessed for any potential impacts on farm activities.**

Some key motivations pushing North American farmers to find additional income through off-site work and farm diversification include:

- Decreasing demand as low production costs in other parts of the world allow fresh produce to be imported more cheaply than local growers can produce it.<sup>34</sup>
- Aging farmer population retiring at a faster rate than young people are entering the industry.<sup>35</sup>
- High cost of agricultural land and production.<sup>36</sup>
- Seasonal nature of agriculture means that irregular employment can equate to irregular income streams.<sup>37</sup>
- Ongoing and increasing global trend of rural to urban migration is pushing rural governments, development bodies, and residents to innovate around creative new opportunities to retain populations and labour forces.<sup>38</sup>
- The pursuit of personal or entrepreneurial goals, sometimes inspired by a desire to educate the public around food production.<sup>39</sup>

## MARKETS AND SEGMENTS

The research for markets and segments considered documents from Canada, the United States, Australia, and Western Europe. It focusses on identifying drivers of agritourism among visitors,<sup>40</sup> examining and evaluating the expectations of agritourism consumers versus agritourism providers, and on evaluating product development processes and innovations.<sup>41</sup> The common objective of the literature is to understand the market for agritourism, the customer segments for each region considered, and the viability of agritourism as both an economic development opportunity and income diversifier.

The 2019 Skift report, *The New Era of Food Tourism*, proposes a move to consider that “foodies” aren’t the only people interested in food tourism. Instead, acknowledging a shift toward the “food-connected consumer” who is increasingly interested in the processes that go into food and drink production. This shift amplifies the potential growth that food tourism and agritourism can bring by targeting broader markets.<sup>42</sup>

In her report entitled *Selling the Farm Experience*, Caroline Millar points to the market demand for agritourism from the public, a public that is willing to pay for a chance to



experience interaction with a farmer.<sup>43</sup> This point relates to a shift in consumption patterns; people are moving towards responsible consumption and they are keen to better understand where their food comes from. Simultaneously, there is a general shift toward environmentally-conscious and ‘authentic’ tourism experiences inspired by visitor desires to head outdoors and experience leisure in the country (soft adventures).<sup>44</sup> When it comes to the ‘agritourist’, there are strong links to responsible tourism. This is someone who seeks “experiential, life-enriching vacations that involve culture, nature, the outdoors and learning.”<sup>45</sup> These motivations fit well with the classification of agritourism as a viable sector for the growth of local economies, for the preservation of agricultural land, cultures and heritage, for sustainable tourism offers,<sup>46</sup> and for the continued demand and production of local food and drink. With all this in mind, agritourism presents to an opportunity for travel to become a “priority sector for sustainable development at all levels.”<sup>47</sup>

Canadian literature identifies primary agritourism markets segments as those that want to escape the city for family time, learning experiences, and relaxation.<sup>48</sup> Suzanne Ainley and Bryan Smale’s 2010 study considers five types of *rural tourists* in order to define and differentiate the *agritourist*. These include *rural heritage tourists*, *nature tourists*, *rural sports tourists*, *rural adventure tourists*, and *agritourists*. In their comparison they define the Canadian agritourist as being evenly split between males and females, as well as “somewhat older, less affluent, (...) less well educated, and particularly likely to live in Ontario or the Prairie provinces.”<sup>49</sup> However, it is important to note a limitation in the abovementioned study. Ainley and Smale use the UNWTO definition that describes a tourist as an overnight visitor.<sup>50</sup> This definition excludes same-day visitors (a key Ontario agritourism market), which significantly limits the scope of their market research and affects their findings. As a consequence, they conclude that “agritourism may be too small and not sufficiently distinct to make it efficient to reach with cost-effective marketing practices.”<sup>51</sup>

In contrast, the majority of literature found room for the further development of agritourism in connection to rural tourism. The rest of the literature identifies the profile of the agritourist in Canada as distinct and defined by the following characteristics:

- Mostly urban, residing close to the farm visited
- Highly educated
- In their early 40's, with a small family (average of 3 family members)
- Earning average national income
- Travelling independently instead of as part of a group
- Predominantly domestic travelers
- Cares about the environmental quality

Relatedly, some motivations for participating in agritourism include:

- Searching for authentic experiences (e.g. participation in farm activities, traditional setting)
- Wanting to explore their region<sup>52</sup>
- Seeking to engage with family, learning, and relaxing<sup>53</sup>
- Seeking experiential, life-enriching vacations that involve culture, nature, the outdoors, and learning<sup>54</sup>
- Valuing experiential travel (e.g. participation, eating, purchasing)<sup>55</sup>
- Looking to engage with tradition and receive a rural welcome<sup>56</sup>

Although eating and drinking were not listed above as primary motivations for participating in agritourism, rather as aspects of experiential travel, food and drink can still be used to enhance agritourism experiences and increase visitor interactions with agricultural spaces. For destinations that specialize in offering high quality and unique food tourism experiences, like Peterborough & the Kawarthas, this can be leveraged to make food and drink more prominent in agritourism.





## AGRITOURISM IN ONTARIO

Even within the province of Ontario, there are multiple definitions for agritourism. For instance, the 2014 Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) takes a land use focus and describes agritourism as “farm-related tourism uses, including limited accommodation such as a bed and breakfast, that promote the enjoyment, education or activities related to the farm operation.”<sup>57</sup> Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has used the University of California definition, describing agritourism as:

The act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education or personal involvement in the activities of the farm or operation. [...] Agri-tourism is a subset of a larger recreational industry called rural tourism that includes visits to rural settings or rural environment to participate in or experience activities, events, attractions not readily available in urbanized areas.<sup>58</sup>

These provincial definitions can help to guide the development of an agritourism definition for Peterborough & the Kawarthas (see Agritourism in Peterborough & the Kawarthas). It is widely accepted that visitors are increasingly looking for alternatives to sun destinations and mass tourism.<sup>59</sup> Agritourists in Canada are mainly domestic or regional urban/suburban families looking to escape the hustle of the city and pursue time shared with family, learning, and relaxing - seeking a mix of natural and cultural resources.<sup>60</sup>

More specifically, the primary markets for agritourism in Ontario are individuals or families who live in large urban centres, such as the Greater Toronto Area, Kingston, and Ottawa.

This is important to note considering that Ontario is home to approximately 14 million people, of which approximately 86% live in urban centres.<sup>61</sup> Around 12 million people in Ontario live in cities, which represents a potential domestic market for agritourism. The potential visitor market seeks farm stay experiences, participation in farm activities, to be exposed to idyllic countryside scenes (farm buildings, landscape), to enjoy traditional hospitality, to be near to and engage with farm animals, to taste food from the farm, and to expose themselves to living culture and the traditions of rural life.<sup>62</sup>

## REGIONAL COMPARATOR PROFILES

As part of a scan of agritourism in Ontario, the regions of the Ottawa, Norfolk County, and Temiskaming Shores were selected to represent the various landscapes and regional agritourism offers across the province. Through online research of destination websites, visitor guides, agricultural census, and additional materials, including blog posts and news articles, the following comparator profiles have been assembled.

Each profile presents information on the destinations' agricultural sectors relevant to agritourism, the types of agritourism experiences available, and the messages used to promote agritourism, along with any specific channels or programs that help to market the sector. For the purpose of this report, a small farm is defined as 10 acres or under, but larger farms should absolutely be considered as potential spaces to grow agritourism, noting that the space needed to deliver an agritourism experience can be a very small percentage of the total available land classified for agricultural use.

### National Capital Region

Ottawa is home to Canada's capital and is known for its rich history. Situated in eastern Ontario, Ottawa and Countryside has a census land area of 2,796 km<sup>2</sup>, of which just under half (approx. 1,390 km<sup>2</sup>) is used for agriculture. Within this area there are 1,045 farms, of which 95 are farms of 10 acres or under. Dairy is the area's most popular agricultural product, although the region also promotes its maple syrup production.<sup>63</sup> The area's landscape is marked by the Ottawa River and Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario's Highlands.

Much like Peterborough & the Kawarthas, Ottawa Tourism advertises its dual urban and rural offerings. The destination has put in place the “Directional Farm Signage Program”, which promotes distinct city-sanctioned signage that assists the public in locating rural farm-based businesses. The tourism tag is “Ontario’s Adventure Playground & Whitewater Capital of Canada”, and the unique selling points that it markets include:

- More farms in the Ottawa region than in Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver combined
- Country counties within a few minutes from a world-class urban experience
- Four Canadian Signature Experiences in the region
- More than 900 lakes and four major river systems

The destination’s easy-to-use website includes a section for “Farm and Agritourism” that highlights nine different businesses, including one sugar shack, two breweries, one vineyard, five farms, one apiary, and one rural retreat. These businesses are also featured on a “farm and agritourism” filter available on the website’s tourism map. The website lists six bed & breakfasts, one farm-stay, 33 campground and cottages, 15 lodges and resorts, and 16 hotels and motels. Specific visitor activities that are highlighted include farm and museum tours, rafting, kayaking, and canoeing, hiking, fishing, and surfing. Particular food and drink experiences are also promoted on the ‘Foodie’ section of the website, including ‘The Good Food Tour’. Finally, the site highlights the ‘Savour Ottawa’ initiative, which celebrates restaurants, producers, retailers, and microprocessors as key culinary assets of the region.

### Norfolk County

Over the last two decades, Norfolk County has become a champion of rural regeneration through its success in agritourism after the sharp decline of the tobacco industry. The region’s landscape is characterized by rolling hills, Carolinian forest, beaches, and farmland. Its total census area is 1,600 km<sup>2</sup>, which spans the north shore of Lake Erie in southwestern Ontario. There are 1,307 farms in Norfolk County, of which 82 are under 10 acres.<sup>64</sup> The area celebrates its role as the No. 1 grower of asparagus, cabbage, tart cherries, ginseng, peppers, pumpkins, rye, squash and zucchini, strawberries in Ontario, among other vegetables. Fittingly, Norfolk County markets itself as “Ontario’s Garden”.



The region underwent a drastic shift from producing 90% of Canada's tobacco in the 1990s to the struggling in the 2000s with decreasing demand for tobacco products. Norfolk County celebrates the success of local producers in transitioning from tobacco to other crops and agritourism. Part of the region's success as an agritourism destination stems from the Norfolk County Tourism Marketing initiative, a program where participants pay a \$175 fee to guarantee that their farms and other tourism businesses will be featured in the tourism board's promotional materials from printed brochures to social media posts. Additionally, to support growers, producers, and residents, Norfolk County Planning shares "Planning 101" videos to explain planning and zoning regulations, making land use planning processes more accessible.

There is a "Farms Retail" section on the Norfolk Tourism website that lists 40 farms. The website also features four wineries, one distillery, one farm/microbrewery, and four farmers' markets. The accommodations listed include 12 bed & breakfasts, seven camp sites, six cottage rentals, nine hotels and motels, in addition to four accommodation and experience packages. Activities that are highlighted as part of the tourism offer include tours focussed on local food, wine, beer and cider, cycling between farms, glamping and camping, fishing, and birding.

Most importantly, Norfolk County stands as an example of growing agritourism to promote rural regeneration and resilience. A benefit of growing tourism in Norfolk County is that young people have more of an incentive to stay or returning to the area. Norfolk County is also a leader in Ontario in the use of technology by farmers (including computers, laptops, smartphones, tablets, GPS technology and GIS mapping in all of Canada).<sup>65</sup> This helps to position the destination as a forward-looking rural destination.

### Temiskaming Shores

Temiskaming Shores, located in northeastern Ontario, is characterized by its location along the provincial and cultural borders of both Ontario and Quebec. Lake Temiskaming is a clear focal point, with the destination using the slogan "One Lake, Two Provinces, Three Cultures" to promote the Lake Temiskaming Tour. The census area encompasses

720 km<sup>2</sup> and its flat landscape is affectionately referred to as the “Little Clay Belt”. There are 356 farms in the region, of which 6 are under 10 acres.<sup>66</sup>

Although Temiskaming Shores does not have a website dedicated to tourism, its City website lists activities, attractions, and other visitor information. The area’s tourism tags include “A Whole New Ontario” and the “Hidden Treasure of Northern Ontario”, and it has four unique selling points:

- Unique geography
- Ancient geological formations
- Dramatic lookouts
- Thriving artistic and cultural community

In addition to these points of differentiation, Temiskaming Shores highlights the fresh air, wide open spaces, breathtaking scenery, an abundance of lakes, rivers and friendly northern hospitality. As part of its tourism offering, the destination also promotes its farmers’ market, farm visits, and a farm-tasting tour that takes visitors to a bison ranch, cheese producer, vegetable farm, and local restaurant. Additional promoted activities include, hiking, biking, horseback riding, skiing, and numerous festivals. Regarding accommodations, the website features four bed & breakfasts, eight motels and hotels, four lodges, cottages, and cabins, and three campground & RV parks.

Although there are no specific programs or assistance listed on the website for growing agritourism, the destination is one of many actively pursuing the development of food tourism, and it is currently revamping its Lake Temiskaming Tour to feature more food and drink assets, including agricultural places and experiences. The Lake Temiskaming Tour is a self-guided route that connects various businesses located on and nearby the lake, in both Ontario and Quebec. Through these efforts, the tour succeeds in connecting the two provinces and three cultures (Indigenous, Francophone, Anglophone) of the region.

## SELECT PROVINCIAL DOCUMENTS GUIDING AGRITOURISM DEVELOPMENT

### Developing an Agri-tourism Operation in Ontario (2016)

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs released an online guide for farmers considering diversifying into agritourism. The guide covers a range of topics including information about the agritourism visitor market, a self-assessment for determining suitability, checklists, marketing tips and more.

### Rural Ontario Guide to the PPS (2014)

To accompany the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs released a companion document for rural communities to help with interpretation of and alignment with the PPS. The guide recognizes the unique characteristics of rural Ontario based on “economy, geography, population density, culture and society.”<sup>67</sup> This document provides useful insights around agritourism development in Ontario.

### Guidelines for Permitted Uses of Prime Agricultural Areas (2016)

Published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs, the Guidelines for Permitted Uses of Prime Agricultural Areas (2016), were designed to “help municipalities, decision-makers, farmers and others interpret the policies in the Provincial Policy Statement, 2014 (PPS) on the uses that are permitted in *prime agricultural areas*.” (p.1)

More specifically, the guidelines provide guidance on the following:

- Agricultural, agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses
- Removal of land for new and expanding settlement areas and limited non-agricultural uses in prime agricultural areas
- Mitigation of impacts from new or expanding non-agricultural uses



# PART TWO







## AGRITOURISM IN PETERBOROUGH & THE KAWARTHAS

Peterborough & the Kawarthas encompasses an area of 3,848 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 216,107 residents spread across the City of Peterborough and the eight townships of Peterborough County.<sup>68</sup> The region is also home to two First Nations: Curve Lake First Nation and Hiawatha First Nation.

Between 2011 and 2016, there was a general decrease in the number of farms in Peterborough County, dropping from 1053 to 941. Similarly, the total land area dedicated

Through consultations with the agricultural community it was found that 72% of respondents consider themselves to be in the tourism sector already.

to farming decreased by 26,696 acres during that time period. However, there was a simultaneous increase in the number of small farms (under 10 acres), which went from 26 in 2011 to 38 in 2016. This increase in small farms aligns with general trends in the province- small and large farms are growing whereas, medium sized farms are decreasing. Large farms are increasing at a faster rate, often through the consolidation. Within the Canadian agricultural context, growth of farm receipts was concentrated on larger farms.<sup>69</sup> In 2016, total gross farm receipts for Peterborough County were \$94,282,602. At the same time, 285 farms reported gross farm receipts of under \$10,000, a decrease compared 402 farms in 2011.<sup>70</sup> Although there are more small farms, there are fewer farms making less than \$10,000 a year.

Although this growth is promising, small farms can still face challenges, including those related to limited capital, managerial capacity, skilled labour, accessing scale efficiencies and big markets, and around adopting new technologies.<sup>71</sup> All this contributes to one of the primary challenges faced by small farms – generating enough of income. On-farm diversification through agritourism is one solution for increasing the revenue generating potential for small farms.

The region's existing tourism offer is made up of a strong culinary sector, local food, culture, nature, lifestyle, along with authentic experiences in a rural setting. In terms of agritourism, through consultations with the agricultural community it was found that 72% of respondents consider themselves to be in the tourism sector already. Meanwhile nearly 60% consider agricultural experiences and activities to be a part of Peterborough & the Kawarthas current tourism offering. These results demonstrate a positive recognition and drive from community members to explore the growth potential of agritourism.

Peterborough & the Kawarthas received almost 2.9 million visitors in 2015. Of this, 98.9% of visitors came from Ontario.<sup>72</sup> The primary motivations for visitation to the region were pleasure as well as visiting friends and family. There is an almost equal split between day visitors and over-night visitors, meaning there is potential to adapt the tourism offer in a way that encourages visitors to stay longer (and spend more). Since the majority of overnight visitors stay at private homes and cottages (76%) there is for growth by moving more visitors into paid accommodations. One way to do this, is to diversify the types of accommodations available for visitors. There is a potential role for agritourism in this, through the development of on-farm B&Bs, camping, glamping etc. as well as high-end luxury accommodations.

The community's perceptions of what makes an exceptional agritourism experience include something that is "experiential", includes "food & drink", and is "educational".

According to the agricultural community, the top three experiences that a visitor should have in Peterborough & the Kawarthas include "tasting of local products", "on-farm experiences and education", and "history and heritage."<sup>73</sup> Interesting, these experiences



align with the community's perceptions of what makes an exceptional agritourism experience, being that is “experiential”, includes “food & drink”, and is “educational”.<sup>74</sup> This connection points to a strong understanding by the community of Peterborough & the Kawarthas unique value proposition and an awareness of the potential to manifest this value through agritourism experiences.

These findings have been compiled with others into a table of strengths, weaknesses, and challenges, which inform the section entitled *Agritourism as a Growth Opportunity*.

### **Strengths**

- Large percentage of visitors to Peterborough & the Kawarthas come from Ontario
- Strategic location near urban/ suburban population centres
- Location on transportation corridors makes for easy access to destination
- Outdoor and culinary tourism are already part of Peterborough & Kawarthas tourism offer
- Strong interest amongst agricultural community in exploring agritourism as a business opportunity
- Many agricultural businesses already consider themselves to be part of the tourism sector
- Growing number of small farms in Peterborough & the Kawarthas
- Attractive and varied rural landscape
- Peterborough & the Kawarthas has a strong visitor base in the summer, coinciding with the agricultural season
- Region has strong agricultural heritage
- Newcomers and younger generations looking for opportunities in rural areas and/or agricultural sector
- Region known for creative and hands-on tourism experiences
- Region has had a number of unique and successful marketing campaigns
- Some local municipal zoning bylaws specifically list agritourism as a permitted use, other municipalities are exploring agritourism through research

### **Weaknesses**

- Number of farms in Peterborough & the Kawarthas is decreasing
- Most visitors stay in cottages or private homes
- Lack of on-farm accommodations
- Lack of luxury accommodations
- Current agritourism offering not diverse
- Limited market-readiness amongst existing agritourism businesses
- Lack of collaboration between the tourism and agricultural sectors
- Varied definitions of agritourism across municipalities in Peterborough & the Kawarthas
- Municipal zoning bylaws not consistent across the Peterborough & the Kawarthas region around agritourism
- Lack of collaboration between government departments around agritourism development
- The region is not currently marketing agritourism as part of the tourism offer

## Challenges

- Limited Peterborough & the Kawarthas specific agritourism data
- Local businesses have limited access to information about agritourism development (incl. potential opportunities, how agritourism could affect farm production etc.)
- Limited understanding amongst industry about the rules for setting up an agritourism business (e.g. land use planning, health and safety etc.)
- Peterborough & the Kawarthas is not already known as an agritourism destination
- Ensuring quality and authenticity of agritourism experiences across destination
- Not all businesses have the time, capacity, and skills to develop agritourism
- Pursuing an agritourism venture is a real business decision, and the risk can be too high for some business owners
- The future of provincial and federal funding opportunities for agritourism development are in a time of transition
- Some visitors have existing and unrealistic perceptions of what a farm should be like
- Harnessing momentum around agritourism to move from talking to doing

Since the definition of agritourism in Canada is broad, Peterborough & the Kawarthas is presented with a unique opportunity to consider the many examples and models of agritourism, especially the North American ones, and work to define what agritourism means for the region. This exercise in self-reflection to determine a definition key for accurately scoping the growth opportunity. Since agritourism spans across natural, cultural, and industrial assets, consensus-building around a definition of agritourism for Peterborough & the Kawarthas will help to shed light on which assets are available to agritourism development, confirm target markets, and increase awareness around the potential benefits and challenges associated with agritourism. The following definition is being proposed as a way to continue this important conversation:

**“Diverse experiences that connect locals and visitors alike to where their food comes from, whether directly through an activity that happens at the place of production, or indirectly by engaging with the people behind it.”**

The above working definition is supported by a visualization of agritourism as it relates to Peterborough & the Kawarthas. This concept map is informed by the research and features elements that are directly tied to the region. It can be read from left-to-right. In other words, from the regional environment that contextualizes agritourism through to the people that will bring agritourism to life.



# Agritourism in Peterborough & the Kawarthas





## AGRITOURISM AS A GROWTH OPPORTUNITY

Agritourism is generally presented as an opportunity stemming from the demand for rural experiences and escapes, and a willingness from visitors to pay for “authentic” agricultural and rural experiences. Location is highlighted as a key determinant for the success of agritourism businesses.<sup>75</sup> Peterborough & the Kawarthas is strategically located along several major travel corridors, namely, highways 401, 7, 28, and the upcoming eastern extension of the 407. Knowing that the main tourism market for agritourism is individuals or families that live in large urban centres, such as the GTA, the destination’s central location points to potential successes in attracting visitors because of easy access and proximity to population centres.

In the context of Peterborough & the Kawarthas, 100% of the agricultural community members consulted agreed that agricultural experiences and activities should be a part of Peterborough & the Kawarthas’ future tourism offering.<sup>76</sup> It is worth noting that the township of Otonabee-South Monaghan is carrying out an “agricultural diversification study” due for completion in 2019.<sup>77</sup> As such, there is an interest on the part of industry and local government to develop agritourism in the region, along with recognition from industry around the types of activities and experiences needed for an excellent agritourism offering. That being said many industry members felt that agritourism remains at a nascent stage of development. Some of the reasons shared by the community for describing agritourism in Peterborough & the Kawarthas as “emerging” include the following:

- There is relatively little experience and few companies providing market-ready on-farm diversified uses;
- Agritourism primarily exists as a curiosity and conversation;
- Inconsistent or lack of understanding of the potential impacts of food and agritourism on agricultural businesses; and
- Confusion around the rules and regulations surrounding agritourism enterprise development.

The above reasons highlight a need to facilitate connections between the tourism and agricultural industries in Peterborough & the Kawarthas. There is also a need to increase communication and information-sharing around the impact of tourism on agricultural businesses, along with possible areas for innovation and collaboration. Meanwhile, community members provided the following reasons to support developing agritourism in Peterborough & the Kawarthas:

- Strong and involved agricultural and food community (grass roots initiatives);
- New and younger populations looking for opportunities in rural settings/agricultural sector;
- Need to diversify on-farm activities, look past traditional farming for sources of revenue.

Another important reason for developing agritourism in Peterborough & the Kawarthas is that it promotes increased interactions between farmers and visitors and better informs visitors about the realities of on-farm and rural life. This presents an opportunity to help visitors move past stereotypes and misinformed perceptions of what agricultural and rural life is like.

All in all, the abovementioned justifications for developing agritourism in the region, industry interest in agritourism development, and the many community members that consider agritourism part of Peterborough & the Kawarthas' existing and future tourism offer, show strong industry support for agritourism development.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR MOVING FORWARD

Business-owners considering branching into agritourism need the entrepreneurial skills to pursue its development. Relatedly, they must approach agritourism as a new business enterprise, being conscious of the differences between running a farming business and a tourism business. This is especially important for small and medium sized farms, where the potential economic benefits and risks of agritourism are stronger compared to large farms. Decisions around moving into agritourism should consider the additional strain it places on labour, time and other farm resources. Oftentimes, in an agritourism venture a farmer in a small to medium sized farm needs to have the capacity and ability to personally provide on farm guidance and supervision for visitors. Again, it is a business decision that requires an assessment of feasibility, commitment, and resources. That

being said, if these considerations prove positive, there is strong potential for agritourism to contribute to the economic viability of the farm.

The value that visitors place on experiences and authenticity makes it important for the quality of services and products to be assured across agritourism offerings.<sup>78</sup> In determining the regional agritourism offering, this means carefully scoping out existing and potential high quality agritourism experiences in Peterborough & the Kawarthas, particularly those that represent the region in an authentic way. As per the community consultations, the most commonly mentioned challenges to developing agritourism in Peterborough & the Kawarthas included the following:

- Negative attitudes of some farmers and planners towards developing agritourism (perception being that tourism brings few benefits to rural residents/communities);
- Constraints (real and perceived) to farm diversification set by zoning-bylaws;
- Perceived disruption/corruption of agricultural and rural lifestyle and landscape;
- Biosecurity of animals and guests on farms that are open to public; and
- Coordinating regional cooperation in the marketing and promotion of agritourism.

Additional questions and considerations shared by community members include the following:

- How are educational institutions embedded in the process of agritourism development? (note: Fleming College has both culinary and tourism programs, and Trent University has culinary, tourism, and sustainable agriculture programs)
- Need to encourage increased communication between the agricultural and food industries, education, economic development, and tourism sectors.
- Need to feature innovative farming processes as part of the agritourism offer, to control for stereotypical images of the on-farm life while providing an opportunity to give a more realistic and progressive view of agricultural life.

## FUNDING AND SUPPORTS

To grow agritourism as an opportunity for farmers, a contributor to local economies, and an attractive and sustainable rural tourism option, agritourism must foster bottom-up initiatives and encourage collaboration between diverse stakeholders and all levels of government. Inclusive decision making is also key to the success of agritourism development, not to mention an effective way to incorporate intangible local assets into the development process, such as community and social networks.<sup>79</sup> In Canada, a particular challenge identified is the lack of support for agritourism ventures by the federal government.<sup>80</sup> However, things may be changing.

Action item 15 ‘Growing Culinary Tourism’, from *Canada’s Tourism Vision*, is particularly relevant.<sup>81</sup> It reflects the possibility of joining the growth of food tourism and agritourism. In fact, the federal government has announced the potential to develop a national culinary tourism strategy. If this moves forward, it could be an exciting opportunity for agritourism development in Canada.

Similarly, the 2019 Federal Budget recognizes the tourism sector as an important source of jobs and economic growth for Canada. As a way to help the sector grow in an innovative way, Budget 2019 proposes “to provide \$58.5 million over two years, starting in 2019–20, to the Regional Development Agencies for the creation of a Canadian Experiences Fund.”<sup>82</sup> This fund would support Canadian businesses and organizations looking to create, improve or expand tourism-related infrastructure or new tourism products or experiences. Furthermore, three of the five focus areas have a high potential for corresponding with agritourism development, including *tourism in rural and remote communities*, *Indigenous tourism*, and *farm-to-table tourism*.<sup>83</sup> Budget 2019’s proposal for developing a Food Policy for Canada also has important implications for the agricultural processes that are part of agritourism and their role in educating populations around the value of local food.<sup>84</sup>

The following list includes provincial and federal resources and funding programs that could support agritourism growth, noting that all program descriptions have been taken directly from the source and these are indicated in *italics*.



## Ontario Provincial Programs:

### 1. Celebrate Ontario

- *Celebrate Ontario supports programming improvements at new and existing festivals and events that attract tourists for longer stays, create great experiences for visitors and support communities across Ontario.*
- **Deadline:** January 9, 2019 – currently closed for 2019

### 2. Rural Economic Development Fund

- *The Rural Economic Development (RED) program funds projects that stimulate economic growth in Ontario's rural and Indigenous communities."*
- *"You can get up to 50% of your project costs or a maximum \$100,000. We fund activities that grow your local economy and remove barriers to economic development.*
- **Deadline:** Applications currently closed.

### 3. Indigenous Economic Development Fund

- *The Indigenous Economic Development Fund (IEDF) provides grants and financing to Aboriginal businesses and Indigenous communities and organizations. The fund helps promote economic development and improve socio-economic outcomes for Indigenous people.*
- *The fund supports projects that:*
  - *diversify Indigenous economies*
  - *increase access to employment and training opportunities for Indigenous people*
  - *provide start-up and expansion financing for small and medium-sized Aboriginal businesses*
  - *support collaboration between Indigenous communities and the private sector on regional and province-wide economic development initiatives, particularly financing and skills training projects.*
- **Deadline:** Applications currently closed.

### 4. Prosperous Greenbelt

- *The goal of the Prosperous Greenbelt funding program is to:*
  - *Support agricultural priorities, including climate mitigation and adaptation activities*
  - *Enhance agricultural, natural and cultural-based recreation and tourism in the Greenbelt and along its river valleys*
    - *Support planning for low-carbon and climate resilient communities and economies*
    - *Engage the public to support the Greenbelt's agricultural and natural systems, cultural heritage and rural economy.*
- **Deadline:** Spring and Fall funding rounds

### 5. Communities in Transition

- *Get help from the Communities in Transition program to develop an economic growth strategy for communities or industries.*
- *The program funds innovative projects that are not covered under other provincial programs. It is flexible and tailored to individual communities and industries. There is no application deadline.*
- **Deadline:** The program has continuous intake.

### 6. Eastern Ontario Development Fund

- *The Eastern Ontario Development Fund provides funding to businesses, municipalities and not-for-profit organizations for economic development in eastern Ontario.*
- *The fund supports projects that:*
  - *create jobs*

- encourage innovation, collaboration and cluster development
- attract private sector investment
- (Peterborough & the Kawarthas is within the area of eligibility)
- **Deadline:** Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis.

#### 7. Food and Beverage Growth Fund

- *The Food and Beverage Growth Fund provides funding for strategic investments that:*
  - help create sustainable jobs
  - enhance innovation, productivity and market access
  - strengthen supply chains in the food, beverage and bioproduct processing sectors
- *This fund is available for food, beverage and bioproduct processing projects across the province with more than \$5 million in eligible costs.*
- **Deadline:** Interested proponents need to communicate with a representative to discuss eligibility of their organization and project.

#### 8. Provincial Heritage Organization Operating Grant

- *This ministry provides annual operating support to the 12 Ontario Provincial Heritage Organizations listed below. They are umbrella organizations for the major types of heritage activities across the province, representing disciplines such as archaeology, genealogy, architecture, history, archives, and museums. The programs and services they deliver promote wide public access to Ontario's heritage and encourage public participation in heritage conservation activities. The Provincial Heritage Organization operating grant is a non-statutory program.*
- **Deadline:** Applications for 2018-2019 closed.

#### 9. Heritage Organization Development Grant

- *The Heritage Organization Development Grant (HODG) is an annual, statutory-based operating grant designed to promote public awareness of Ontario's rich and diverse heritage. The program provides historical societies, museums and other heritage associations, located throughout the province, with a portion of their annual operating support.*
- **Deadline:** Applications for 2018-2019 closed.

#### 10. Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program: Rural & Northern Stream

- *This stream will support projects that improve the quality of life in rural and northern communities by responding to specific needs.*
- **Deadline:** The application will be available in the Grants Ontario System on March 18. The completed application and supporting documentation must be submitted by 11:59:59 p.m. EDT on May 14, 2019. Late applications will not be accepted.

#### 11. Tourism Industry Partners Program

- *If you have a marketing campaign for which financial assistance for tourism marketing activities are required you may be interested in the Tourism Industry Partners Program. Destination Ontario assists stakeholders with marketing assistance to promote Ontario destinations and/or experiences outside Ontario, across Canada and internationally. The program encourages increased visitation and expenditures from overnight and out-of-province visitors.*
- **Deadline:** Details on the 2019 Tourism Industry Partners Program will be posted at a later date.

#### 12. Tourism Development Fund

- *The Tourism Development Fund supports projects that encourage three key streams: tourism investment, tourism product development and industry capacity building.*
- *The Tourism Development Fund program provides non-capital, project-based funding to:*

- *develop research-based innovative and emerging tourism sectors;*
- *support tourism organizations' capacity building;*
- *encourage new private sector tourism investment attraction; and*
- *enhance Ontario's overall economic competitiveness and opportunities for the Ontario tourism industry.*
- **Deadline:** Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis and should be submitted a minimum of four months prior to the start of the project.

### 13. Skills Catalyst Fund

- *The government is launching the Skills Catalyst Fund to support new and existing high-impact projects/pilots addressing Highly Skilled Workforce priorities for up to two years through an open, competitive Call for Proposals. The Fund will support initiatives that foster greater collaboration, innovation, and inclusion in Ontario's labour market— connecting the 'supply' of talent developed through education and training with the skills needs and 'demands' of employers.*
- **Deadline:** Applications currently closed.

## Federal Programs

### 1. AgrilInnovate Program

- *The AgrilInnovate program aims to accelerate the commercialization, adoption and/or demonstration of innovative products, technologies, processes or services that increase sector competitiveness and sustainability.*
- *In order to be eligible for funding, applicants must clearly illustrate how proposed projects will commercialize/adopt/demonstrate an innovation new to the sector or country.*
- **Deadline:** Applicants may apply at any point during the life of the program, until available funds have been fully allocated. Once all funds have been allocated, a notice will be posted on this website.

### 2. AgriCompetitiveness Program

- *The AgriCompetitiveness Program aims to help the agricultural sector to leverage, coordinate and build on existing capacity, enhance safety, adapt to changing commercial and regulatory environments, seize new opportunities, share best practices, and provide mentorship opportunities.*
- **Deadline:** Applications will be accepted from February 13, 2018 until September 30, 2022, or until funding has been fully committed or until otherwise announced by the program.

### 3. Matching Investment Fund (Canadian Dairy Commission)

- *The Canadian Dairy Commission (CDC) remains committed to supporting an environment that encourages growth and innovation in the manufacture and use of Canadian dairy products and ingredients. The Matching Investment Fund (MIF) provides non-repayable contributions for product development projects on a matching investment basis.*

### 4. Community Economic Development and Diversification Stream of FedDev

- *Enhance business attraction, investment, retention and employment opportunities in southern Ontario communities.*
- *Develop and expand collaborative efforts that strengthen regional competitiveness.*
- *Support regional businesses, hubs and communities with the goal of economic diversification, integration and transformation.*
- **Deadline:** Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis with no submission deadlines



5. **AgriMarketing Program: Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Component**

- *AgriMarketing Program: Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) Component provides targeted support to companies for international initiatives. Under this component, funding will be available to help implement international export plans, which include promotional and market development activities.*
- *If approved, support is available in the form of non-repayable contributions support from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.*
- **Deadline:** Applications will be accepted from February 13, 2018 until September 30, 2022, or until funding has been fully committed or until otherwise announced by the program.

6. **Canadian Agricultural Partnership Cost-share Funding Program**

- *Merit-based, cost-share funding target projects in three priority areas with research and innovation continuing to be important across all programs.*
- **Deadline:** May 6, 2019







## POLICY CONTEXT

### PROVINCIAL POLICY STATEMENT, 2014

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) is a keystone document guiding land use planning in Ontario. It is issued under Section 3 of the Planning Act and released by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. All municipal planning documents, such as official plans and associated zoning bylaws must be consistent with the PPS. The PPS sets minimum standards for planning and development in the province. It strives to support strong, sustainable communities, a healthy environment and a strong economy through sound policy direction. The most recent version of the PPS was released in 2014. The PPS provides valuable insights to understanding the policy context around agritourism development in Ontario.

Many PPS sections are relevant to agritourism development. For instance, the PPS considers sustainable tourism development as important to the long-term economic prosperity of the province (Section 1.7.1). In the PPS, agritourism is categorized as an on-farm diversified use. On farm diversified uses include, among other examples, agritourism and uses that produce value added agricultural products.<sup>85</sup> However, on-farm diversified uses only include uses “secondary to the principal agricultural use of the property, and (...) limited in area.” According to the PPS, agritourism uses are “farm-related tourism uses, including limited accommodation such as a bed and breakfast, that promote the enjoyment, education or activities related to the farm operation.”<sup>86</sup> Policy 2.3.3.1 states:

In *prime agricultural areas*, permitted uses and activities are: *agricultural uses*, *agriculture-related uses* and *on-farm diversified uses*.

Proposed *agriculture-related uses* and *on-farm diversified uses* shall be compatible with, and shall not hinder, surrounding agricultural operations. Criteria for these uses may be based on guidelines developed by the Province or municipal approaches, as set out in municipal planning documents, which achieve the same objective.<sup>87</sup>

It may come as a surprise to some, but prime agricultural land makes up less than 5% of Ontario's land base. These lands are designated based on soil composition and climate conditions. Prime agricultural lands are valuable, finite, non-renewable resources that must be protected for long term agricultural use. Once these lands are taken out of agricultural production, they are rarely reverted. As such, in order to protect food production, there are strict rules around the use of prime agricultural land. The PPS specifically calls for municipalities to map out prime agricultural land in their municipal plans (Section 2.3.2).

It may come as a surprise to some, but prime agricultural land makes up less than 5% of Ontario's land base.

Within the rural context, the PPS describes both *rural areas* and *rural lands*. 'Rural areas' is the broader category and includes "settlement areas, rural lands, prime agricultural areas, natural heritage features and areas, and resource areas" (p. 7 of the rural guide). Rural lands are a subset of rural areas and focus on areas beyond prime agricultural areas and settlement areas, such as forested areas and non-prime agricultural land. Compared to other kinds of agricultural land, there are stricter land use rules for prime agricultural land. A key intent of the PPS is to focus development in settlement areas, away from prime agricultural land. While the PPS is the baseline, municipal planning authorities have the power to implement stricter rules around the use of prime agricultural areas, as long as these rules do not conflict with any other PPS Policies (Policy 4.9). Interestingly, the criteria for permitted uses in prime agricultural areas draw on two key PPS objectives that may appear contradictory: maintain the

agricultural land base (Policy 2.3.1) and support a thriving rural economy (Policy 1.1.4). Stricter land use rules must be balanced with supporting economic development opportunities for farmers.

To accompany the PPS, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs released a companion document to help rural communities interpret and align their policies with the PPS. The guide recognizes the unique characteristics of rural Ontario based on “economy, geography, population density, culture and society.”<sup>88</sup> The guide provides insights around agritourism in Ontario and highlights how the revised PPS supports rural Ontario, through “expanded support and economic opportunities for agricultural uses in rural areas” (p.7) and promotes “healthy, integrated and viable rural areas by encouraging planning authorities to in part, promote diversification of the economic base and provide opportunities for sustainable and diversified tourism.”<sup>89</sup>

The guide also outlines policy highlights for rural lands—i.e. those that fall outside of prime agricultural areas and settlement areas—where land use policies are less strict. In these areas, development is allowed as long as it “is appropriate to the level of infrastructure” and does not conflict with other policies of the PPS.<sup>90</sup> In other words, rural lands are one of the few rural places that a purpose-built, primary use, agritourism business could be based. However, this would be considered agritourism by appearance only, not by policy. A primary use agritourism business does not meet the PPS definition of agritourism because it is not a diversified farm use. Permitted uses on rural lands should ensure that they do not negatively impact the viability of agricultural lands through such things as fragmenting or constraining farmland.<sup>91</sup> Planning authorities would also need to ensure that development is compatible with the rural landscape and rural service levels. Other uses that might take place on rural lands include resource-based recreational uses, such as recreational dwellings, country inns, hunting lodges, trails, marinas, etc.

## MUNICIPAL LAND USE POLICIES

The Peterborough & Kawarthas Region is governed by a two-tier municipal system. The County of Peterborough is an upper-tier municipality made up of eight lower-tier municipalities including: Municipality of Trent Lakes; Township of Selwyn; Township of Otonabee-South Monaghan; Township of North Kawartha; Township of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen; Township of Douro-Dummer; Township of Cavan Monaghan; and Township of Asphodel-Norwood. The upper-tier and lower tier governments share the municipal responsibilities afforded by the Municipal Act. The City of Peterborough is a separate, single-tier municipality. The municipal land use policies of Curve Lake First Nation and Hiawatha First Nation are distinct from those Peterborough County and the City of Peterborough have not been examined for the purposes of this report.

The lower-tier municipalities in Peterborough County can choose to either adopt the County of Peterborough Official Plan (County Plan) or develop their own, noting that all local plans must conform to the County Plan but can choose to add additional restrictions that reflect their local context. Section 1.3 of the County Plan states that “it is not the intention of the Peterborough County Official Plan to interfere with those planning matters which are considered to be the responsibility of the local municipalities. Local municipal official plans complement the Peterborough County Official Plan by providing detailed strategies, policies and land use designations for the planning and development at a local municipal level.” In addition to local official plans, the County Plan is also implemented through local zoning bylaws, plans of subdivision, consents and site-specific site plan agreements.

The Township of Selwyn, the Township of Asphodel-Norwood, the Township of Douro-Dummer and the Township of North Kawartha have incorporated their local municipal official plans into the County Plan. The other local municipalities in the County—the Township of Cavan Monaghan, the Municipality of Trent Lakes, the Township of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen, and the Township of Otonabee-South Monaghan—have their own official plans. As a single-tier municipality, the City of Peterborough also has its own official plan.



### County of Peterborough Official Plan and Agritourism

The County Plan recognizes the importance of preserving rural areas as cultural resources and agriculture as a key contributor to the local economy. The plan is generally supportive of agritourism development as long as it is a secondary use, stating in Section 4.6.3.4 that the County will “promote compatible on-farm, agri-tourism activities.” In judging compatibility for agritourism activities, the criteria for on-farm diversification are to be used. In Section 4.6.3.4, the County commits to protecting “prime agricultural areas from incompatible activities” and promoting “complementary on-farm activities that contribute to the ongoing financial viability of the farm operation”. These uses must support the rural character of the area and also adhere to environmental considerations laid out elsewhere in the plan.

### City of Peterborough Official Plan

The City of Peterborough is a single-tier municipality with its own official plan and zoning bylaws. Although the city’s official plan does not mention agritourism specifically, it is generally supportive. Its agricultural designation states that “the use of this land shall be primarily for agriculture, major open space or related operations” (Section 4.6.1). This means a prospective agritourism business would need to consider Section 7.4.1., which outlines special land use requirements around utilities in agricultural areas. More specifically, “full municipal services are not required in connection with agriculture and most major open space developments and accessory or service uses to agriculture and major open space.”

### Municipal Zoning Bylaws and Agritourism

As mentioned, municipal zoning bylaws must align with local official plans, which in turn align with the Provincial Policy Statement. Each of Peterborough County’s eight municipalities have their own zoning-bylaws, which specifically outline, in great detail, the permitted land uses for different parts of each community. As such, they determine whether or not agritourism development is deemed acceptable in a given area. In the bylaws, areas may be zoned as “residential”, “commercial”, “agricultural”, etc. The categories are then broken down further and mapped out onto schedules that show what

uses are and *are not* allowed. To understand whether or not local zoning-bylaws support agritourism development, it is important to look at the uses that are permitted in agricultural zones, or alternatively if these to not exist, in rural zones.

Through a scan of the local municipal bylaws, a few things are made clear. Two municipalities specifically list agritourism as a permitted use: Township of Cavan Monaghan and Township of Douro-Dummer, along with associated restrictions for sizing and ownership among other things. To start, Cavan Monaghan considers agritourism as a diversified farm use and farm business, defining agritourism as:

Farm-related tourism uses, including limited accommodation such as a bed and breakfast, that promote the enjoyment, education or activities related to the farm operation. The principal activity on the property must be an agricultural use. Such activities could include hay or corn maze, petting zoo, hay/sleigh rides, pumpkin chucking, farm tours, and processing demonstrations.

Douro-Drummer describes agritourism as “the practise of attracting travellers, visitors or guests for the purpose of experiencing rural or agricultural activities and lifestyle; and may or may not include overnight accommodations.”

Zoning support for agritourism in the permitted uses varies community by community. Some municipalities describe secondary on-farm uses that may be considered agritouristic, such as a “bed and breakfast”, “farm produce retail outlet”, “farm business”, “greenhouse nursery” or a “home industry”. Due to the nature of land use decisions, it is absolutely necessary to consult local planning authorities before beginning any agritourism business venture, to ensure that the enterprise qualifies as a permitted use. Note, when considering whether an agritourism use is appropriate land use, decision-makers will also consider other relevant policies and regulations, such as the Ontario Building Code, health and safety requirements, and the Environmental Protection Act, to name a few.

## Additional Policies and Regulations

In addition to the abovementioned policy context for planning and zoning, specific agritourism activities or business types also need to consider and adhere to the Ontario Building Code, workplace health & safety regulations, on-farm bio-security policies, regulation and business development policies etc. The resources provided in this section are not exhaustive and should be no means be considered either business or planning advice. Anyone considering developing an agritourism business should contact their local planning authority and business development center for advice. Online toolkits to guide business owners in their business expansion considerations include the following:

- OMAFRA Factsheet: Managing Risk on Farms Open to the Public
- OMAFRA Factsheet: Developing an Agri-Tourism Operation in Ontario
- Government of Canada: Business Start-Up Checklist
- Government of Ontario: Small Business – advice, support services, regulations
- Ministry of Labour, Government of Ontario: Small Business Guides





## CONCLUSIONS

Agritourism is often presented as an exciting opportunity for rural innovation, regeneration, and resilience. Having no universal definition for agritourism is challenging but can also be seen as an opportunity to define the term by region, based on local context. For example, European definitions consider agritourism to be an on-farm tourism offer with a strong slant towards accommodation. Whereas in North America, definitions are often broader, and can include non-farm activities such as shopping at a local farmers' market, participating in an Indigenous-led berry-foraging experience, or harvesting seafood with a fisherman.

Drawing inspiration from the regional landscape, agricultural activities, existing tourism assets, and the people that bring these to life, the proposed working definition for agritourism in Peterborough & the Kawarthas is as follows: *Diverse experiences that connect locals and visitors alike to where their food comes from, whether directly through an activity that happens at the place of production, or indirectly by engaging with the people behind it.*

Through the research and with the above definition in mind, this report finds strong evidence for supporting the growth of agritourism in Peterborough & the Kawarthas. Between 2011 and 2016, there was a decrease in the number of farms in Peterborough County, dropping from 1053 to 941. The total land area dedicated to farming also decreased by 26,696 acres during that period. However, there was a simultaneous increase in the number of small farms, which went from 26 in 2011 to 38 in 2016. Although



this growth is promising, small farms can face challenges with generating enough revenue to be sustainable. While agritourism can take place on farms of all sizes, on-farm diversification through agritourism can be a particularly important tool for increasing the revenue generating potential of small farms.

Diversifying agricultural revenue streams, increasing on-farm employment, repurposing un- or under-utilized farm infrastructure, increasing public access to and education around food and drink production, and growing the demand for local agricultural products are some of the benefits to developing agritourism. Agritourism also presents opportunities for one-on-one contact between farmers, local, and visitors, allowing producers to tell their own stories and sell directly to their customer. Importantly, visitors may continue to seek these products when they return home or speak about them to family, friends, and others, and in doing so promote the farm specifically and destination more broadly.

Most agritourists in Canada are domestic or regional families seeking to escape the hustle of the city to pursue time with family, learning and relaxing. They are often looking to see idyllic countryside scenes (farm buildings, landscape), enjoy traditional hospitality, be near to and engage with farm animals, taste food from the farm, and expose themselves to living culture and the traditions of rural life.<sup>92</sup> 98.9% of visitors to Peterborough & the Kawarthas come from Ontario<sup>93</sup> and primary motivators for their visits are pleasure or visiting friends and family. Both of these motivations have the potential to be enhanced by agritourism. There is an almost equal split between day visitors and overnight visitors, meaning there is the potential to adapt the tourism offer in a way that encourages visitors to stay longer (and spend more). One way to do this, is to diversify the types of accommodations available for visitors. There is a role for agritourism in this, through offering on-farm B&Bs, camping, glamping and luxury accommodation options.

Concerns around agritourism development include, health and safety liabilities around having visitors on working farms, the disruption of regular farming activities to cater to visitors, the impact of increased traffic on neighbours and the environment, the market-readiness (or lack thereof) of smaller producers, increased costs in production and packaging as well as business taxes, and the necessity for increased time and resource commitment to developing and marketing new products for tourists.<sup>94</sup> From a regional

perspective, challenges also include bringing different agritourism providers under a common platform—such as a website and promotion scheme—to ensure an authentic, quality, and reliable experience for visitors that delivers a broader narrative and image for the region.<sup>95</sup>

### Collaboration and problem-solving with farmers, producers, planners, and tourism community members is crucial to developing agritourism into a viable tourism draw.

In Ontario, initial efforts have been made to support agritourism development, noting both OMAFRA's "Developing an Agri-tourism Operation in Ontario" (2016) and the "Guidelines for Permitted Uses of Prime Agricultural Areas" (2016). While accepting that work remains to be done to ensure a more supportive and easy-to-navigate policy environment for business owners, such developments point to a broader acceptance that agritourism is a real opportunity for rural economic development.

However, agritourism development does not benefit from a one-size-fits-all approach. Collaboration and problem-solving with farmers, producers, planners, and tourism community members is crucial to developing the sector into a viable tourism draw that builds upon the region's existing tourism offer and meets the needs of local business owners. The fact that the Peterborough & the Kawarthas community is interested in exploring agritourism as a growth opportunity is significant.

For individual businesses looking to diversify their activities through agritourism, be it a working-farm looking to open parts of its operation to the public, or a tour operator looking to organize farm tours, expansion into agritourism needs to be seen as a new business venture that requires particular skills (e.g. ability to interact with visitors) as well careful planning and procedural checks (e.g. adherence to land use policies and applying for necessary permits). This is equally true for business-owners considering developing a new agritourism business or thinking about enhancing an existing one. As much as possible, agritourism activities should complement existing on-farm production processes, and they most definitely require a quality control or brand guarantee if promoted as a regional offer.

Any agritourism expansion at the destination-level should also connect to existing and related tourism assets, such as the strong culinary sector that already attracts visitors to Peterborough & the Kawarthas. When this takes place the development of agritourism is done through a landscape-based approach and this facilitates the inclusion of regional culture- and nature-based assets that may not be part of on-farm agricultural production, for a fuller, more compelling agritourism offer.

There is no doubt that agritourism is an exciting opportunity for Peterborough & the Kawarthas to grow two of its most important industries: agriculture and tourism. In fact, through a collaborative effort, careful planning, and coordinated action, agritourism has the potential to grow into a significant driver of visitation to the region and stimulator of economic growth.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOVING FORWARD

1. Host an agritourism development session focussed on overcoming perceived barriers to entry and challenges related to leveraging agritourism as a tool for rural economic development, making sure to have representation from economic development (tourism and agriculture) and local land use planners.
2. Using the working definition of agritourism, develop criteria to inventory all agritourism experiences and businesses in Peterborough & the Kawarthas. As part of this process:
  - a. Identify existing “high value” experiences to market, i.e. market-ready experiences that could be categorized as an agritourism asset; and
  - b. Identify “high potential” businesses to support, i.e. a business that has the capacity and motivation to develop a high value agritourism experience.

3. Towards establishing a baseline of the Peterborough & the Kawarthas agritourism offer, develop an evaluation framework to:
  - a. Monitor high value experiences;
  - b. Identify areas for enhancement/improvement; and
  - c. Inform decision-making around how best to present agritourism in destination marketing efforts, including considering new product development.
4. Engage “high potential” businesses in preliminary discussions around integrating an agritourism offering into their operation or enhancing their existing offer in order to make it a “high value” experience. As part of this process:
  - a. Identify areas of opportunity in discussion with each business;
  - b. Work with each business to assess the feasibility for developing their agritourism offering; and
  - c. Provide ongoing support to businesses that pursue agritourism development.
5. Work in collaboration with local municipalities to co-design and develop resources to support agritourism growth in Peterborough & the Kawarthas, such as:
  - a. Agritourism development guidelines, with detailed information by municipality; and
  - b. A toolkit for businesses interested in developing agritourism.
6. Build industry capacity through increased exposure to successful agritourism destinations and operations, including but not limited to:
  - a. Organizing a best-practice mission to an agritourism destination that aligns with Peterborough & the Kawarthas’ primary visitor demand drivers; and
  - b. Attending relevant domestic and international conferences and events, such as the NAFDMA Agritourism Farm Tour in Minnesota (July 22-25, 2019).



## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, 39.
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- <sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, 10.
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- <sup>92</sup> Joppe (2014), 300.
- <sup>93</sup> Peterborough & the Kawarthas Economic Development (2015). *PKT stats CD 15* – Internal Document Not Published. (Peterborough, Ontario).
- <sup>94</sup> See, Southwestern Ontario Tourism Corporation (2011), 6, 11, 36; Vaugeois (2017), 13.
- <sup>95</sup> Chase, Lisa (2018). 'Agritourism and Culinary Trails'. In *1<sup>st</sup> World Congress on Agritourism* (Eurac Research, 2018 November 7-9). Bozen/Bolzano: Eurac Research.

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