

# ACQUIRING ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIES: INCREASING THE ADOPTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP PRACTICES BY ONTARIO LANDOWNERS

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PREPARED BY:



FARM MANAGEMENT CANADA  
GESTION AGRICOLE DU CANADA



FARM MANAGEMENT CANADA  

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GESTION AGRICOLE DU CANADA

The only national organization dedicated exclusively to the development and delivery of leading-edge farm business management resources, information and tools to support sustainable growth and prosperity on Canada's farms.

# Objective

A research synthesis and literature review to improve our understanding of how landowners in Ontario, who do not participate in environmental stewardship programs, could be engaged to participate, and improve the environmental stewardship of their lands.



# Research Question

Can using insights into the adoption of farm business management best practices and environmental stewardship practices in other jurisdictions be an effective entry point for Ontario landowners not currently participating in environmental programs to increase their participation and the adoption of environmental stewardship practices?



# Research Scope

- Environmental Farm Plan Programming across Canada
- Other Agri-Environmental Programming across Canada
- Industry-Led Sustainability Frameworks (ex. proAction)
- Farm Business Management Programming across Canada (ex. Growing Your Farm Profits)
- Barriers and Motivators to adopting agri-environmental practices
- Barriers and Motivators to adopting farm business practices



# Research Methodology

- Internet Keyword Search
- Grey Literature Review
- Industry Meetings and Event Participation
- Interviews with Environmental Program Specialists
- Review Provincial/Territorial Environmental Farm Plan Programming and other Agri-Environmental Programs



# Key Findings

1. The Environmental Farm Plan is the most utilized agri-environmental tool in Ontario and across Canada, used within:

- Every Provincial/Territorial Ministry of Agriculture
- Select Agricultural Diploma Programs
- Select Industry-Led Sustainability Frameworks

(Note: Quebec and the Atlantic provinces have the highest participation in the EFP program)



# Key Findings

2. The impacts of the Environmental Farm Plan and other agri-environmental programs extend beyond environmental outcomes to economic and social or societal benefits

- These additional benefits are actively promoted in other regions and as a crucial part of other agri-environmental programming
- Programs participants are also recognizing and reporting these benefits





# Key Findings

3. Industry-led Sustainability Frameworks embrace The Triple Bottom Line (3-Pillar) concept, acknowledging and promoting the connectedness and balance that exists between environmental, economic and societal sustainability

- Programs participants are also recognizing and reporting these benefits



# The Triple Bottom Line

## Environmental Factors:

- Soil, Water, Air Quality
- Biodiversity and Conservation

## Economic Factors:

- Profitability
- Operational efficiency

## Social or Societal Factors:

- Public trust
- Health and safety of farm families, workers, consumers



# Key Findings

4. The Environmental Farm Plan has been enhanced in some jurisdictions (ex. Manitoba) to align with Industry-led Sustainability Frameworks such as the Sustainable Agricultural Initiative's Farm Sustainability Assessment used by over 170 agri-food companies and in over 40 countries.



# Key Findings

5. The vast majority of farmers are stressed; feeling a loss of control due to the unpredictable nature of the ag industry. This affects their confidence and capacity to make sound decisions. Planning ahead creates greater confidence and peace of mind. A comprehensive approach to planning will help producers tackle The Triple Bottom Line of sustainability.



# Key Findings

6. The most prevalent motivator for participating in EFP programming is access to funding

- Cost-share funding is available in all regions to support Action Plan implementation
- Some regions also support hiring advisors to help complete the EFP



# Key Findings

## 7. There is a lack of research available

- To measure the impact and tangible benefits of the EFP and other agri-environmental programming, in particular the cost-benefit in relation to economic and social or societal benefits
- To understand Ontario landowners and their awareness, perception of and interest in participating in agri-environmental programs



# Key Considerations

- Policy and Programming
- Communications Tactics and Strategies
- Future Research



# Recommendations

## Policy and Programming

- ✓ Enhance the EFP to:
  - ✓ align with other sustainability/compliance standards
  - ✓ link to Growing Your Farm Profits to support a more comprehensive approach to managing risk and reaching Triple Bottom Line sustainability goals
- ✓ Encourage industry to integrate the EFP into other sustainability frameworks and curriculum
- ✓ Create a mechanism to better measure EFP program use, impact, and opportunities for improvement; include farmers and agricultural landowners in the process
- ✓ Address known barriers to EFP adoption in other jurisdictions (ex. having Farm Status, concerns with confidentiality, etc.)





# Recommendations

## Communication Tactics and Strategies

- ✓ Create specific communications to address perceived barriers and motivators to implementing EFPs (ex. free training, cost-share funding available, economic and social benefits, peace of mind)
- ✓ Align EFP promotions with emerging industry issues and priorities where the EFP can help mitigate or manage risk (be part of the solution)
- ✓ Use diverse promotional channels including social media
- ✓ Use diverse promotional methods including testimonials, industry presentations, in-person and virtual farm tours and demonstrations, photos and on-farm visits with technical experts
- ✓ Use diverse delivery methods including virtual workshops, self-paced courses, audio casts and a mobile app

# Recommendations

## Future Research

- ✓ To measure EFP program use, challenges, impact, and opportunities for improvement for:
  - ✓ Farmers who have participated in an EFP workshop and/or completed an EFP
  - ✓ Farmers and landowners who have not or have only occasionally participated in the EFP
- ✓ To understand the uptake, performance measures and outcomes achieved by other agri-environmental programs to inform how to enhance EFP uptake and benefits realized in Ontario
- ✓ To understand how the EFP can integrate and be integrated into existing sustainability frameworks and assessment tools
- ✓ To understand how environmental, economic and social sustainability measures and goals intersect to help communicate and promote the triple-bottom-line (3 pillars) of sustainability on farms
- ✓ To assess the benefits and return on investment for adopting environmental practices



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**FARM MANAGEMENT CANADA**  
**GESTION AGRICOLE DU CANADA**

21 FLORENCE ST.  
OTTAWA, ON  
[www.FMC-GAC.com](http://www.FMC-GAC.com)  
[info@fmc-gac.com](mailto:info@fmc-gac.com)

# Thank you. Questions?

HEATHER WATSON  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
[HEATHER.WATSON@FMC-GAC.COM](mailto:HEATHER.WATSON@FMC-GAC.COM)

HEATHER OAKLEY  
PROJECT MANAGER  
[HEATHER.OAKLEY@FMC-GAC.COM](mailto:HEATHER.OAKLEY@FMC-GAC.COM)



@FMC.GAC



@FMC\_GAC



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