



# Acquiring Environmental Allies Increasing the Adoption of Environmental Stewardship Practices by Ontario Landowners

Final Report

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### OVERVIEW

As societal pressures around environmental stewardship increase and Canada has set ambitious targets for achieving its environmental outcomes, the agricultural sector will continue to come under the spotlight for its role in environmental sustainability. While environmental stewardship is practiced by



many primary producers and recognized as a necessity for the sustainability of the sector's natural capital, participation in environmental programs remains relatively low, especially in Ontario. Industry associations in various production sectors have created sustainability assessment frameworks for their members to measure and work towards desired environmental and social goals. Meanwhile, many agricultural retailers including McDonalds, Cargill and McCain are now requiring producers to prove they adhere to environmentally sustainable practices before buying their products, and recently, the Government of Canada announced plans for participation in the AgriInvest government-matching savings program to hinge on demonstrable environmental practices. There is not only an environmental, but also an economic incentive for producers. Now more than ever, environmental practices are inherently linked to more than just environmental outcomes.

Management experts and scholars view sustainability through the triple-bottom-line, recognizing there is a balance between achieving environmental, economic and societal or social goals. Government and Industry will benefit from recognizing and promoting the triple-bottom-line to primary producers to help increase the adoption of agri-environmental programming.

The research results captured in this report help identify opportunities and mark a path forward for the Ontario government and other industry stakeholders to support Ontario landowners who have not shown an interest in environmental stewardship programs.

#### OBJECTIVE

This research synthesis and literature review sought 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 by studying the adoption of environmental stewardship practices in other jurisdictions and farm business management best practices.

#### RESEARCH METHODS

To achieve the research objective, the research team used a variety of methods to gather information, including, but not limited to:

- Internet Keyword Search
- Grey Literature Research
- Industry Meetings and Event Participation
- Interviews with Environmental Program Specialists
- Review of Provincial/Territorial Environmental Farm Plans, and other Agri-Environmental Programs, and Support Programs



#### KEY FINDINGS

The research team discovered three (3) key focus areas for creating the path forward: Policy and Programming, Communications Strategies and Tactics, and Addressing Research Gaps.

Focus Area 1: Policy and Programming:

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's next agricultural policy framework, the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (SCAP) program, comes into effect on April 1, 2023, focusing on agri-

environmental practices as key to helping Canada meet the Government of Canada's goal of net-zero emissions by 2050.<sup>27</sup>

- The EFP program is Ontario's primary method for engaging producers in agricultural environmental stewardship,<sup>6</sup> however participation rates are much higher in other jurisdictions across Canada with Ontario ranking in the middle of the pack for farms with an EFP.<sup>50</sup>
- The Ontario-EFP (electronicefp.com) is being used by post-secondary institutions in food and agriculture courses.
- Producers report environmental benefits along with financial benefits as a result of implementing an EFP.<sup>8</sup>
- Cost-share programs are available to help implement action plans and increase adoption of environmental practices.
- The most common motivators for participating in EFP programming was funding (94% participated to access cost-share funding) and education.<sup>8</sup>
- Financial benefits were shown as a motivating factor for adopting environmental and business practices.
- Adoption of agri-environmental stewardship programs, such as the EFP, can have non-environmental benefits to the farm business as part of the triple-bottom-line approach to sustainability.
- The EFP and Growing Your Farm Profits (GYFP) program work in harmony to help producers assess and improve their environmental and business practices.
- Industry is demanding demonstrable sustainability practices resulting in an increase in industry-lead programs, and some are incorporating the EFP and other frameworks including outcomes beyond environmental benefits into their requirements.
- Confining sustainability policy and programming to environmental outcomes limit industry's capacity to reach sustainability goals.
- Cross compliance between the Government's business risk management (BRM) and agri-environmental programs would be burdensome to an already complicated suite of programs and ineffective as the level of payment would be the biggest leverage over the actual environmental benefit.<sup>24</sup>
- There is an opportunity to acknowledge and reward producers who have a comprehensive risk management or business plan that includes the triple-bottom-line components of sustainability.

#### Focus Area 2: Communications Strategies and Tactics:

- Environmental stewardship does not appear to be more prevalent in any one commodity over another - although certain industry groups (such as dairy, beef and potato) are requesting more formal adoption of best management practices to prove sustainability to consumers and buyers.<sup>8</sup>
- Ontario's EFP is marketed primarily as a tool for mitigating environmental risks<sup>9</sup>, and not as a proactive measure in ensuring continued business success and achieving societal or social outcomes.
- Sustainability can only be achieved when farms are successful in all three areas - environment, economic, and societal outcomes.
- Promoting the triple-bottom-line to sustainable farming is an approach that recognizes the connection between people, profit and the planning required to position the farm for continued success.
- Communicating the linkage between the three (3) pillars of sustainability (the triple-bottom-line) to Ontario landowners could increase adoption of environmental practices as economic and societal benefits are acknowledged and realized.

- A number of other provinces and territories are promoting the benefits of adopting an EFP beyond environmental outcomes to entice producers to complete the program.
- Farmers who implement farm business practices to proactively mitigate risk and uncertainty for their operation are less likely to feel stressed by the unpredictability of the agricultural sector.<sup>43</sup>
- There is a positive correlation between the adoption of business management practices to environmental stewardship and societal wellbeing.
- Producers under the age of 40 were more likely to use social media sites at least weekly, and more producers are visiting websites from their phones. Several reports indicate social settings (agri-environment clubs, friends, or family), are also effective means for farmers to learn about and implement EFPs.<sup>8,49</sup>

#### Focus Area 3: Addressing Research Gaps:

- Information relating to Ontario landowners (and landowners in other jurisdictions) who have not or have only occasionally participated in government or other agri-environmental programs to determine the tools, information and communication tactics and strategies to encourage participation could not be obtained through the course of this research.
- Research relating to landowners including producers who have participated in EFP programming to measure the impact of the program and opportunities for improvement could not be obtained through the course of this research.
- Research investigating environmental, economic and societal impacts of EFP best practices could not be obtained through the course of this research.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The research reveals a number of opportunities for Ontario to increase the participation of landowners in agri-environmental programming. The recommendations derived from this research are presented in three (3) distinct categories: Policy and Programming, Communication Tactics and Strategies, and Future Research.

### Policy and Programming Recommendations

The EFP as a free workshop and tool for farmers is an excellent starting point for Ontario's landowners to evaluate their environmental stewardship. It can be difficult to change behaviour, especially when asking landowners to go above and beyond established management practices. Provide evidence of measurable impacts including environmental and non-environmental results. Incentives matter and removing barriers to participation is essential to increase adoption of environmental stewardship practices.

1. Continue to use the EFP as a flagship program for environmental stewardship in Ontario and encourage industry to integrate the EFP as the environmental module within sustainability frameworks and programs
2. Enhance the EFP to align with other compliance standards – ex. Farm Sustainability Assessment, Potato Sustainability Alliance, etc.
3. Enhance the EFP to include emergency preparedness and disaster response to respond to immediate threats while promoting proactive risk management.
4. Work with schools and training institutes to incorporate the EFP into academic curriculum at all levels
5. Consider EFP program eligibility requirements that may be preventing access to the program (ex. having Farm Status)
6. Create a version of the EFP for Ontario landowners who do not farm the land themselves

7. Integrate participation in the EFP program into Ministry sustainability and climate change action programming including funding and cost-share available for skills development, peer groups, advisory support, and implementation of environmental practices for individual producers and non-profit organizations
8. Instead of cross-compliance, pursue incentive and/or financial reward programs (access to funding, tax incentives, etc.) for producers demonstrating environmental stewardship through the EFP
9. Create a mechanism to better measure EFP program participation, implementation, and impacts (ex. implementation of action plans, benefits realized (environmental, economic, and social), and opportunities for improvement)
10. Address known barriers to EFP adoption in other jurisdictions including access to program information, awareness of funding and other support opportunities, concerns with compliance and follow-up responsibilities including time and implementation costs, and concerns with confidentiality and public disclosure
11. Include farmers and non-farming landowners in a review of the EFP and any associated environmental compliance requirements to understand and rectify barriers to participation – cost, time, infrastructure, etc. and preferred communication and delivery methods
12. Establish a link between the EFP and Growing Your Farm Profits to support a more comprehensive approach to managing risk and reaching sustainability goals (including environmental, economic and social outcomes)
  - a. Reinstate cost-share funding for skills development, advisory support and implementation of beneficial management practices beyond environmental practices
13. Create decision-support/investment tools to help producers and landowners assess the benefits and return on investment for adopting environmental practices
14. Revise the EFP to track and show improvements over time making it easier for farmers to review and revise as environmental practices are implemented.

### Communication Tactics and Strategies Recommendations

Sustainability means different things to different people. Likewise, success is defined in many ways and depends on many factors, not just environmental outcomes. People also have unique learning styles and rely on many different sources of information to assess risk and opportunity.

1. Communicate a holistic, comprehensive definition of sustainability including environmental, economic, and social/societal goals to promote the importance of the triple-bottom-line approach to a sustainable and resilient agricultural sector
2. Include economic and social/society benefits in agri-environmental program promotions
3. Customize the EFP and promotional materials to address the specific concerns of different production sectors and demographics
4. Align EFP promotions with emerging and real-time industry issues where the EFP can help mitigate or manage risk (be part of the solution), or be used to seize new opportunity
5. Use diverse communication channels including social media to promote the EFP program and its benefits to diverse audiences, including youth
6. Use diverse delivery methods for the EFP program including in-person and virtual workshops, self-paced courses, downloadable templates, how-to videos, audio casts and a mobile app
7. Use diverse promotional methods including video success stories, testimonials, workshops and presentations, in-person and virtual farm tours and demonstrations, photos and on-farm visits with technical experts



8. Create an ongoing dialogue between government, producers and landowners to inform how to increase EFP adoption and implementation
9. Create specific communications to address perceived barriers and motivators to implementing EFPs (ex. free training, cost-share funding available, regulatory compliance, peace of mind)

### Future Research Recommendations

With very little research available on farmers and landowners who do not participate in agri-environmental programs, Ontario has an opportunity to pursue future research focused on a better understanding of barriers to participation, the results achieved by participants, and areas for improvement.

1. Direct research with everyone who has participated in an EFP workshop and/or completed an EFP to:
  - a. Understand the reasons for their participation and any changes to participation
  - b. Understand any challenges they encountered in implementing their EFP Action Plan and opportunities for program improvement
  - c. Understand and measure the benefits they have realized (including environmental, economic, and social) from creating/implementing their EFP
  - d. Understand the other agri-environmental programs they participate in, including their reasons for participating, any challenges encountered or areas for improvement, and benefits realized (including environmental, economic, and social)
  - e. Understand preferred communication tactics and learning preferences
2. Direct research with farmers and landowners who have not or have only occasionally participated in government or other agri-environmental programs to:
  - a. Understand the challenges and barriers to participating in government or other agri-environmental programs to inform improvement measures
  - b. Understand their motivations to participating in government or other agri-environmental programs to inform improvement measures including communication tactics
  - c. Understand preferred communication channels, formats and learning preferences to inform program design, marketing and promotions
3. Direct research to understand the uptake, performance measures and outcomes achieved by other government or agri-environmental programs to compare with and inform how to enhance EFP program uptake and benefits realized in Ontario
4. Direct research to understand how the EFP can integrate and be integrated into existing sustainability frameworks and assessment tools to increase uptake and effectiveness (ex. Farm Sustainability Assessment, Growing Your Farm Profits, Verified Sustainable Beef Program)
5. Direct research to better 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



## INTRODUCTION

In an ever-changing and increasingly complex global marketplace, producers face intensifying volatility from markets and trade relations, weather, pests and disease and consumer trends, among other factors, and must manage the social, economic and environmental impacts of farming like never before.

Much of the solution to deal with these intensifying realities lies in applying proven management practices and fostering proactive planning to turn challenges and uncertainty into new opportunities. Proactive planning allows for risk mitigation, and in turn economic and societal benefits such as decreased costs, increased profit and greater confidence and peace of mind.

For over 30 years, Farm Management Canada has been dedicated to increasing the awareness, appreciation and adoption of sound management practices on the farm. As a national organization dedicated exclusively to the development and delivery of leading-edge resources, information and tools to support farm business success, we recognize the positive link between adoption of sustainable agricultural practices and farm business success.

Our role in creating and coordinating national farm business management projects and programs provides a unique lens to view environmental practices within the context of farm business management and the triple-bottom line, where environmental sustainability intersects with economic and social dynamics.

Within the Growing Your Farm Profits (GYFP) program<sup>7</sup> administered by the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association on behalf of the Ontario Ministry of Food and Rural Affairs, producers are asked if they have an Environmental Farm Plan (EFP). GYFP is a voluntary self-assessment tool designed to help producers assess their business practices, identify areas for improvement and create an action plan to achieve desired improvements. Likewise, the EFP is a voluntary self-assessment and planning tool, albeit focused solely on environmental practices. Although the EFP is not the only program or way in which to practice environmental stewardship in Ontario, it is the most comprehensive and the most prominent with over 40,000 participants since program inception<sup>6</sup>. It has been used for over 30 years and is also the only environmental planning program that is used across Canada and accessible to all producers. However, EFP development and completion is much higher in some jurisdictions across Canada.<sup>55</sup> Part of this research seeks to understand why.

A comprehensive plan is required to ensure the farm remains positioned for sustainable growth and prosperity, fulfilling the environmental, economic and social goals of a sustainable, resilient farming system. A better understanding of the link between the adoption of environmental stewardship practices and business and societal outcomes will help us understand how we can increase the implementation of environmental practices on farms.

After completing their Environmental Farm Plan, a Manitoba cattle producer noted, "*I discovered that relocating my livestock and improving their wintering site could cut back on the cost of fuel, feed and cleaning, and benefit the health of my cattle as well.*"<sup>4</sup> This testimonial provides the main theme or focus of this literature review: environmental stewardship can provide unintentional additional benefits to farm business success, and promoting this link will increase participation in environmental programs and the implementation of beneficial practices.

Farm Management Canada's 2015 study, *Dollars and Sense: Measuring the Tangible Impacts of Farm Business Management Practices on Canadian Farms*<sup>15</sup> was the first national study to demonstrate a measurable link between the adoption of farm business practices and farm financial performance. Results revealed the rate of adoption for beneficial management practices on Canada's farms and the practices of Canada's top performing farms. An update to that study, *Dollars and Sense Study Update: Understanding the Drivers and Barriers to Adopting Farm Business Management Practices*<sup>46</sup>, revealed how to increase the implementation of beneficial business practices on farms and that profitability was not the only driver. From these studies and taking a look at how the Environmental Farm Plan is being promoted across Canada, a path forward for increasing participation in environmental planning and the adoption of environmental practices can be constructed.

Sustainable growth and prosperity, with the focus on the three pillars of sustainability; environment, economic and social or societal outcomes, needs to be communicated clearly to Ontario landowners to increase adoption of environmental stewardship practices.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

Can a case using 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 participation and the adoption of environmental stewardship practices?

## METHODOLOGY

Synthesis research was conducted to explore how to engage Ontario landowners in environmental stewardship programs and practices by investigating current barriers and challenges to adoption, the benefits of adoption, and by looking outside of Ontario and beyond environmental practices for further insights.

The research team used a variety of methods to gather information, including, but not limited to:

- Internet Keyword Search
- Grey Literature Research
- Industry Meetings and Event Participation
- Interviews with Environmental Program Specialists
- Review of Provincial/Territorial Environmental Farm Plans, and other Agri-Environmental Programs, and Support Programs

The research team used keywords such as, but not limited to, Environmental Stewardship, Environmental Farm Plan, Environmental Practices, Sustainable Farming, and Sustainable Agriculture in conjunction with Ontario Farmers, Ontario Producers, Ontario Landowners, Best Management Practices, Benefits, Social and Profitability to search Google and Google Scholar. Articles, academic journals, reports, policy briefs, survey results, websites and other grey literature were reviewed for information that led to increasing the adoption of agri-environmental practices, participation in programming, and benefits. Industry sustainability frameworks and schemes were also reviewed.

The research team also reviewed information derived from industry meetings and events, including the National Environmental Farm Plan Summit in Ottawa in November 2017, as well as more recent activities. A number of provincial Ministries of agriculture presented their EFP programs with emphasis on how their program is different from others, industry uptake, perceived gaps and the perceived benefits of the program. Farm Management Canada also gained knowledge of organizations working on sustainability initiatives including Dairy Farmers of Canada's ProAction program (the EFP as the environmental module within the program), Viresco Solutions' work on a Sustainable Beef Pilot Project for McDonalds, McCain Foods' Potato Sustainability Initiative (the EFP is included in all McCain purchasing contracts with producers), Ontario's Sustainable Farm and Food Initiative, which has now grown into the Canadian Agri-Food Sustainability Initiative, and the international Farm Sustainability Assessment (FSA) managed by the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI). Companies requiring environmental practices in place before purchasing from producers can signal benefits of market access and price premiums. Likewise, the Government of Canada has recently announced that participants in programs like AgriInvest will be required to demonstrate their environmental practices. The research team focused much of the literature

review on the Environmental Farm Plan program within and outside of Ontario, and Canadian agriculture sustainability frameworks. Other agri-environmental programs and resources were also reviewed.

Farm Management Canada was also able to tune into “The Future of the Environmental Farm Plan Program in Canada” webinar hosted on May 5, 2022 by the Canadian Agricultural Policy Institute (CAPI) and the Wilton Consulting Group. Dr. Bronwynne Wilton (moderator) and Principal and Lead Consultant with Wilton Consulting Group, Andrew Graham, Executive Director of Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association, Julia Buckingham, Advisor of the Sustainability Strategy with Dairy Farmers of Canada and Susie Miller, Executive Director of the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Crops discussed the Environmental Farm Plan including challenges and recommendations moving forward.

Farm Management Canada is also a member of the governance committee of the Canadian Agri-Food Sustainability Initiative (CASI), working to build leadership and co-operation for supply chain sustainability data, programs, tools, and collaboration opportunities. This connection allows Farm Management Canada to tap into experts focused on sustainability including personnel from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, Wilton Consulting Group, the Provision Coalition, and many other industry stakeholders across the supply chain.

Interviews were also conducted via phone and email with a number of representatives from other Provinces and Territories regarding their Environmental Farm Plan programs to discuss delivery, uptake, and challenges. These conversations provided the means to further explore the adoption of environmental programs and practices across Canada. Requirements of the EFP and other environment and sustainability programs used by industry associations and retailers were also reviewed.

The research team also focused on research and programming focused on the adoption, benefits, and challenges of farm business management practices in Ontario and other jurisdictions to understand where environmental and business practices intersect and how they relate to one another.



## FINDINGS

### ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMMING

The *Environmental Farm Plans: Measuring Performance, Improving Effectiveness, and Increasing Participation*<sup>8</sup> report (2011) confirms the EFP program as Ontario’s primary method for engaging producers in agricultural environmental stewardship with over 40,000 participants since program inception over 30 years ago<sup>6</sup>. It is also the only environmental planning program that is available and used across Canada and accessible to all producers. However, EFP development and completion is much higher in some jurisdictions across Canada<sup>50</sup>.



Figure 1: Percentage of Farms with and without an Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) across Canada (2019)

REGION	FARMS WITH AN EFP	FARMS WITH NO EFP
QUEBEC	81%	16%
NEW BRUNSWICK	74%	14%
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND	66%	26%
NOVA SCOTIA	63%	31%
<b>ONTARIO</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>48%</b>
BRITISH COLUMBIA	28%	62%
MANITOBA	28%	64%
SASKATCHEWAN	28%	64%
ALBERTA	25%	66%
CANADA-WIDE	40%	53%

The EFP is a voluntary self-assessment and planning tool, focused solely on environmental practices covering twenty-three (23) environmental assessment areas<sup>6</sup>.

#### Environmental Farm Plan Assessment Areas (Ontario)

1. Soil and site evaluation
2. Water wells
3. Pesticide handling and storage
4. Fertilizer handling and storage
5. Storage of Petroleum products
6. Disposal of farm wastes
7. Treatment of household wastewater
8. On-farm storage, treatment, and management of manure and other prescribed materials
9. Disposal of livestock mortalities
10. Storage and feeding of ensilage
11. Milking centre wastewater
12. Nuisances and normal farm practices
13. Water efficiency
14. Energy efficiency
15. Soil management
16. Managing nutrients in growing crops
17. Use and management of manure and other organic and/or prescribed materials
18. Horticultural production
19. Field crop management
20. Pest management
21. Stream, ditch, and floodplain management
22. Wetlands and wildlife ponds
23. Woodlands and wildlife

In most jurisdictions, upon completion of the EFP program, farmers have access to cost-shared funding to help them implement the activities identified in their Action Plans.

The 2011 report confirmed that producers reported environmental benefits along with financial benefits as a result of implementing an EFP. Other producers confirmed that they used their EFP to achieve a favourable loan rate or insurance premium.<sup>8</sup>

From an initial review of Environmental Farm Plans across Canada, many provinces were actively communicating the non-environmental results of the program to encourage participation. The research team reviewed Ministry websites and recorded a number that included sections such as “Benefits of Completing an EFP”<sup>1</sup>, “Why is it important to have an EFP”<sup>5</sup> or “The Business Case for Sustainable Sourcing”<sup>2</sup>. While these sections cited environmental benefits, they also included economic or business benefits as well as societal and social benefits.

Some of the business and social benefits stated on Ministry websites encouraging participation in the EFP program included increased efficiency, profitability, new customers, access to markets, viability of the business, access to funding, improved mental health and time management.<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup> Apart from access to funding, Ontario’s EFP is marketed primarily as a tool for mitigating environmental risks<sup>6</sup>, and not as a proactive measure in ensuring continued business success or supporting social or societal outcomes.

At the National Environmental Farm Plan Summit (2017), JoAnn Pineau with the Prince Edward Island Federation of Agriculture referenced the need to prove monetary benefits of the EFP program through possible data collection of Cost of Production improvements to encourage non-participating farmers to adopt the program.

Many industry organizations are working on sustainability initiatives including Dairy Farmers of Canada’s (DFC) proAction, the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef’s Verified Sustainable Beef, the Potato Sustainability Alliance, and the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Crops Sustainable Metrics Platform.

Dairy Farmers of Canada (DFC)’s proAction initiative has six distinct areas: Milk Quality, Food Safety, Animal Care, Traceability, Biosecurity and Environment.<sup>36</sup> The environment module is supported by provincial environmental farm plans and an environmental questionnaire. About 50% of Canada’s dairy farms (roughly 5000 farms) had completed validations on the environment module between May 2021 and August 2022. DFC has also committed to reduce emissions and sequester carbon at the farm level to bring total emissions to net-zero by 2050 which links to proAction as it supports sustainability. proAction linked to the Net-Zero goal ensures Canadian dairy farmers are in tune with consumer concerns related to the environment and has the potential for producers to realize economic gains and be a sustainable industry for future generations.<sup>37</sup> Farms are validated by the national and provincial bodies to ensure proAction is consistent and credible. DFC is creating podcasts as part of a new communication initiative for the environmental module of proAction.

The Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB) defines sustainable beef as a socially responsible, economically viable and environmentally sound product that prioritizes the Planet, People, Animals and Progress.<sup>37</sup> CRSB follows the three-pronged approach to sustainability acknowledging environment, economic and social pillars all work together for the success of the industry (as seen below in Figure 2). Environment being one of the three main focuses of sustainability, the CRSB recognizes that the agriculture sector needs to be sustainable for future generations. 2030 Canadian Beef Industry Goals focus on topics directly related to the environment, but also Animal Health, Beef Quality and Food Safety, People Healthy and Safety, and Technology and Innovation. The Canadian beef industry has adopted 5 principles for sustainability: Natural Resources, People & Community, Animal Health and Welfare, Food, and Efficiency and Innovation.

Figure 2: Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef’s Impact

## Environment

Preserving a healthy and thriving ecosystem

### Carbon Storage

**1.5 Billion**

tonnes of carbon stored in land used for beef production in Canada.



## Social

Supporting healthy animals, people and communities

### Farmer Mental Health

**88%**

of farmers say following a business plan contributes to their peace of mind.



## Economics

Building a strong foundation for future generations

### Economic Contribution

**\$21.8 Billion**

contribution to Canada's GDP by Canadian beef production.



### Biodiversity

**68%**

of the wildlife habitat capacity is found on only 1/3 of the agricultural land in Canada, much of it managed by beef farmers and ranchers.



### Diversity

**>80**

languages spoken in beef processing facilities in Canada



### Growing the Economy

**\$1 = \$6.22**

For every dollar spent by beef farms & ranches, \$6.22 is generated in the Cdn. economy.



Source: [crsb.ca/our-impact](https://crsb.ca/our-impact)

For a Canadian beef producer to become a Certified Sustainable Farm or Ranch, they can work with one of three CRSB-approved Certification Bodies: Verified Beef Production Plus (VBP+), Where Food Comes From Inc., or Ontario Corn Fed Beef Quality Assurance Program. Training and auditing of environmental stewardship practices was added to the Verified Beef Production Plus program which launched in 2016.<sup>38</sup> Certification proves a farmer's commitment to responsible stewardship of the environment to their customers, retailers, and consumers. Although environment is one of the main focuses of the VBP+, economic benefits are readily communicated with producers on their webpage. As of September 1, 2022, there are 1385 certified VBP+ operations across Canada that have agreed to information sharing.

Table 1: Verified Beef Production Plus (VBP+) Communicated Benefits

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce greenhouse gas footprint of Canadian beef per unit of beef produced</li> <li>Enhance ecosystem services and biodiversity on lands managed by beef producers</li> <li>Enhance riparian health and reduce the water footprint of beef production</li> <li>Reduce post-harvest meat waste</li> </ul>
ECONOMIC BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the financial viability of beef production</li> <li>Help your operation meet specific value chain protocols to secure markets</li> <li>Eligible for per head financial credits through the Canadian Beef Sustainability Acceleration pilot (CBSApilot.ca)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved use and efficacy of veterinary products</li> <li>▪ A tool to manage risk (e.g., antimicrobial resistance)</li> <li>▪ Create opportunities for differentiated beef production or add to brand protocols</li> <li>▪ Increase demand for Canadian beef through consumer awareness of sustainable practices</li> <li>▪ Increase market share</li> </ul>
<b>SOCIETAL BENEFITS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote farm safety and responsible working conditions</li> <li>▪ Promote excellence in animal care</li> <li>▪ Support the further development, monitoring and dissemination of beef practices regarding microbial use</li> <li>▪ Build consumer confidence in the sustainability of Canadian beef by providing 3rd party-certified assurances, backed by science</li> <li>▪ Documentation (proof) of environmental stewardship</li> <li>▪ Providing the most healthy, safe, nutritious and sustainable food</li> </ul>

The Potato Sustainability Alliance (PSA) consists of growers, supply chain partners, non-profit organizations and advisors working together to improve the economic, environmental, and social aspects of potato production in the United States and Canada.<sup>39</sup> The Potato Growers of Alberta made it mandatory for members to complete an EFP to align with McCain's Regenerative Agriculture Framework. Manitoba also worked to meet requirements of the PSA through the creation of an additional chapter to their EFP.

The Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Crops (CRSC) is a member-based organization that facilitates cross-commodity collaboration on sustainable agriculture issues and opportunities facing grains sector participants.<sup>41</sup> CRSC works to consider environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and economic viability of the Canadian grain industry. Environment sustainability is addressed through reports on Greenhouse Gas Emissions & Air Quality, Agrochemical management, Nutrient Management, Water quality & Quantity, Waste & Pollution, Soil Health & Productivity, and Land Use and Biodiversity.

Figure 3: Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Crops (CRSC) Impact



Source: [metrics.sustainablecrops.ca](https://metrics.sustainablecrops.ca)

New in 2022, Farm Credit Canada has created a Sustainability Incentive Program, allowing clients that hold certain certifications to receive incentive payments. Applicable programs include McCain's

## Regenerative Agriculture Framework, Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef and Cargill RegenConnect™.<sup>40</sup>

Canada's National Index on Agri-Food Performance is a growing coalition of private-public partners working pre-competitively to develop an integrated picture of sustainability for Canada's agri-food sector from food production to retail.<sup>44</sup> The Index has 4 sustainability indicators: environment, economic, food integrity and societal well-being.

The Sustainable Agricultural Initiative (SAI) was established in 2002 as an international initiative to address sustainability throughout the agricultural supply chain. It adheres to the triple-bottom-line as evidenced in its definition of sustainable agriculture: "The efficient production of safe, high quality agricultural products, in a way that protects and improves the natural environment, the social and economic conditions of farmers, their employees and local communities, and safeguards the health and welfare of all farmed species."<sup>51</sup> Over 170 companies have signed onto the SAI platform including processors and retailers like Danone, Kellogg's, PepsiCo and McCain's to help support a global approach to sustainability across the supply chain.

In 2014, the Farm Sustainability Assessment (FSA) was created to provide a standard for assessing farm sustainability practices. The FSA helps farmers assess, improve and demonstrate their sustainability practices to their supply chain. The FSA consists of over 100 questions covering 11 sustainability areas.<sup>52</sup>

### Farm Sustainability Assessment (FSA) Areas

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Farm Management & Community            | 7. Water Management                       |
| 2. Plant Material Selection & Propagation | 8. Biodiversity                           |
| 3. Soil Management                        | 9. Air Quality & Greenhouse Gas Emissions |
| 4. Nutrient Management                    | 10. Labour Conditions                     |
| 5. Crop Protection                        | 11. Integrated Pest Management            |
| 6. Waste Management                       |   |

The FSA is currently being used by over 100 companies including Canada to drive sustainable farming practices. There are over 200,000 farmers using the FSA in over 40 countries.

Observations across Canada on the EFP and other environmental program stated benefits, funding incentives, compliance requirements, and delivery methods are outlined below. A more detailed chart contained in the Appendix compares the EFPs across Canada with program descriptions, intake times, funding availability, promotions, benefits communicated, compliance and delivery methods.

Table 2: Agri-Environmental Programs in Canada – Stated Benefits and EFP Links

AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM	PROVINCE/TERRITORY	COMMODITY	ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS	ECONOMIC BENEFITS	SOCIAL BENEFITS	3RD PARTY CERTIFICATION OR DELIVERY
ONTARIO'S ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN	ONTARIO	GENERAL	X			X
BC'S ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN	BRITISH COLUMBIA	GENERAL	X	X		X
ALBERTA'S ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN	ALBERTA	GENERAL	X	X	X	COMPLIANT WITH SAI'S FSA



						– VALIDATION REQUIRED
SASKATCHEWAN'S ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN	SASKATCHEWAN	GENERAL				
MANITOBA'S ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN	MANITOBA	GENERAL	X	X	X	X COMPLIANT WITH SAI'S FSA – VALIDATION REQUIRED
NEWFOUNDLAND'S ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN	NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR	GENERAL	X	X	X	
NEW BRUNSWICK'S ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN	NEW BRUNSWICK	GENERAL	X	X	X	X
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND'S ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN	PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND	GENERAL	X	X	X	X
NOVA SCOTIA'S ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN	NOVA SCOTIA	GENERAL				X
YUKON'S ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN	YUKON TERRITORY	GENERAL				
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES' ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN	NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	GENERAL				
QUEBEC'S PLAN D'ACCOMPAGNEMENT AGROENVIRONNEMENTAL (PAA)	QUEBEC	GENERAL				X
PROACTION	NATIONAL	DAIRY	X	X	X	VALID EFP OR PAA REQUIRED
CARGILL'S SUSTAINABLE BEEF PROGRAM	NATIONAL	BEEF	X	X	X	
CANADIAN ROUNDTABLE FOR SUSTAINABLE BEEF (CRSB)	NATIONAL VERIFIED BEEF PRODUCTION PLUS ONTARIO CORN FED BEEF QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM WHERE FOOD COMES FROM INC	BEEF	X	X	X	MAJOR COMPONENT IS EFP, BUT NOT REQUIRED
POTATO SUSTAINABILITY ALLIANCE (PSA)	CANADA + UNITED STATES NATIONAL POTATO COUNCIL MCDONALD'S CORPORATION MCCAIN FOODS LIMITED J.R. SIMPLOT CANADIAN HORTICULTURAL COUNCIL IPM INSTITUTE OF NORTH AMERICA LAMB WESTON KRAFT HEINZ COMPANY CAVENDISH FARMS BASIC AMERICAN FOODS LITTLE POTATO COMPANY HZPC AMERICAS SYSCO	POTATO	X	X	X	
CANADIAN AGRI-FOOD SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE	NATIONAL	GENERAL	X	X	X	
FARM SUSTAINABILITY READINESS TOOL	ALBERTA NATIONAL	CROPS GENERAL	X	X	X	
CANADIAN ROUNDTABLE FOR SUSTAINABLE CROPS	NATIONAL	CROPS	X	X	X	

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL INITIATIVE – FARM SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT	INTERNATIONAL	CROPS	X	X	X	X
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The Ontario-EFP ([electronicefp.com](http://electronicefp.com)) is also being used by Durham College in their Food and Ag Regulations and Policies course, and Algonquin College in their Sustainable Agriculture Course.

Reviewing the *Environmental Farm Plans: Measuring Performance, Improving Effectiveness, and Increasing Participation*<sup>8</sup> report (2011), researchers determined that the adoption of environmental stewardship practices are being implemented equally by livestock and crop producers and more often by larger farms and farms with higher revenues. Environmental stewardship adoption does not appear to be more prevalent in any one commodity over another - although certain industry groups (dairy, beef and potato) are requesting more formal adoption of best management practices to prove sustainability to consumers and buyers. The report also noted that the most common motivators for participating in EFP programming was funding (94% participated to access cost-share funding) and education. *Canada's Environmental Farm Plan: Evaluating Implementation, Use of Services, and the Influence of Social Factors*<sup>48</sup> reports that socio-economic factors like farm size, farm revenue, farmer's age, experience or education do not have an impact on EFP implementation which could indicate that once a participant is engaged in the program, they are all equally likely to take action and adopt environmental stewardship practices.

In 2017, New Brunswick surveyed farmers, users and non-users, regarding their motivation to implement BMPs and barriers to participating in their EFP program. 74% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the EFP program assures the public that any negative impacts of farm operations on the environment are minimized while 79% agreed or strongly agreed that it is worthwhile for producers to complete an EFP.<sup>34</sup>

#### MOTIVATORS TO IMPLEMENT ENVIRONMENTAL BMPs OR THE EFP PROGRAM

- Conservation and protection of environment<sup>34, 49</sup>
- Funding<sup>34, 8, 48</sup>
- Education<sup>8, 48</sup>
- The EFP program<sup>34, 8</sup>
- Livestock and crop productivity, financial return<sup>34</sup>
- Common sense<sup>34</sup>
- Food safety<sup>34</sup>
- Insurance<sup>34</sup>
- Public perception and access to consumers (stakeholders)<sup>34, 49</sup>
- Meet regulations<sup>8</sup>
- Requests from others/Peer pressure<sup>8, 49</sup>
- Assessing farm risks<sup>48</sup>
- Receive recognition of the EFP program<sup>48</sup>
- Improving Management Practices<sup>49</sup>

#### BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL BMPs OR THE EFP PROGRAM

- Inaccurate perception of environmental problems<sup>34</sup>

- 82% of non-participants indicated this factor was important in their decision not to participate
- Not a priority<sup>48</sup>
- Lack of program accessibility<sup>34</sup>
- Concerns with follow-up responsibilities<sup>34</sup>
- Concerns with confidentiality and public disclosure<sup>34, 8</sup>
- Insufficient information about EFPs<sup>8, 49</sup>
- Time constraints<sup>8, 49</sup>
- Individual farm characteristics<sup>8</sup>
- Extension agents' qualifications<sup>8</sup>
- Financial constraints<sup>8, 48</sup>
- Social barriers<sup>8</sup>
- Technical skills shortages<sup>8</sup>

#### POSSIBLE WAYS TO IMPROVE EFP IMPLEMENTATION

- Tours of environmental practices used on other farms<sup>48</sup>
- One-to-one on-farm visits by technical specialists<sup>48</sup>
- On-farm demonstrations of specific practices or technologies<sup>48</sup>
- Discussions with other farmers about how to implement certain practices<sup>48, 49</sup>
- Supplemental workshops/presentations on specific topics or practices<sup>48</sup>
- Picture/slideshow/virtual tours<sup>48</sup>

In 2018, a *Review of Agri-Environmental Assessment Tools*<sup>53</sup> was conducted by Wilton Consulting Group. The report indicates general consensus around seven key criteria for effective agri-environmental assessment tools.

Agri-environment assessment tools should meet the following 7 criteria:

1. Engage producers in tool development
2. Be accessible and easy to use
3. Include a mobile app version
4. Include high quality baseline data
5. Include locally relevant data (scale dependent on the purpose of the tool)
6. Produce high quality decision-support outputs
7. Incorporate financial information in the decision-making model

And, in order to be successful in helping position producers for success, an overarching assessment and planning tool should ultimately:

- ✓ Include agri-environmental and sustainability initiatives
- ✓ Include business management platforms
- ✓ Include available funding programs
- ✓ Inform decision making by indicating priority issues and risks
- ✓ Propose beneficial management practices or mitigation strategies

#### FARM BUSINESS PROGRAMMING

Similar to the Environmental Farm Plan, the Growing Your Farm Profits (GYFP) program<sup>7</sup> provides Ontario's producers with a self-assessment tool for their farm business practices, covering seven (7) business assessment areas: Production, Marketing, Financial Management, Human Resources, Social

Responsibility, Succession Planning and Business Goals. Much like the EFP, GYFP helps producers assess various aspects of their farm operation, identify and prioritize improvement practices, create an Action Plan, and access support programming and resources. The EFP and GYFP program work in harmony to help producers assess and improve their environmental and business practices. Originating in Ontario as Growing Your Farm Profits, the business assessment tool was adapted and adopted by agricultural Ministries and departments across Canada. In Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, it was subsequently renamed *Taking Stock*, in Manitoba, *Gaining Ground*, and in PEI, *Planning for Business Success*.

AgriShield is a new tool developed by Farm Management Canada in 2019 that incorporates business and environmental practices assessment and planning. It uses the concept of enterprise risk management to provide producers and advisors with a comprehensive assessment of risks and opportunities to help producers adopt best management practices, covering six (6) risk families: People, Finance, Markets, Business Management, Business Environment and Production. The EFP was used as a model to incorporate environmental practices, while GYFP was used as a base for business practices. AgriShield was the first Canadian platform to align with the international Sustainable Agricultural Initiative's Farm Sustainability Assessment (FSA), achieving a gold standard. Producers can use AgriShield to become a certified sustainable farm under the FSA initiative.

A comparison of farm business assessment programs across Canada is provided below.

Table 3: Farm Business Practices Assessment Programs in Canada:  
Topics Covered and EFP Links

FARM BUSINESS MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT PROGRAM	PROVINCE/TERRITORY	COMMODITY	ENVIRONMENTAL TOPICS	ECONOMIC TOPICS	SOCIAL TOPICS	LINKED TO EFP	3RD PARTY CERTIFICATION OR DELIVERY
GROWING YOUR FARM PROFITS	NATIONAL	GENERAL	(UNDER SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY)	X	X	X	
GROWING YOUR FARM PROFITS	ONTARIO, NOVA SCOTIA, NEW BRUNSWICK, NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR, YUKON TERRITORY	GENERAL	(UNDER SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY)	X	X	X	X
BC'S TAKING STOCK FOR ESTABLISHED FARMERS FOR THE BEGINNING FARMER FOR WILDFIRE RECOVERY FOR FLOOD RECOVERY FOR PROCESSORS	BRITISH COLUMBIA	GENERAL	(UNDER SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY)	X	X	X	X
SASKATCHEWAN'S TAKING STOCK	SASKATCHEWAN	GENERAL	(UNDER SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY)	X	X		
MANITOBA'S GAINING GROUND	MANITOBA	GENERAL	(UNDER SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY)	X	X	X	
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND'S PLANNING FOR BUSINESS SUCCESS	PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND	GENERAL	(UNDER SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY)	X	X	X	X
AGRI SHIELD	NATIONAL	GENERAL	(UNDER PRODUCTION)	X	X	X	X COMPLIANT WITH SAI'S FSA

Farm Management Canada's 2015 study, *Dollars and Sense: Measuring the Tangible Impacts of Farm Business Management Practices on Canadian Farms*<sup>15</sup> was the first national study to demonstrate a measurable link between the adoption of farm business practices and farm financial performance. Results revealed that farmers who adopt business management practices could increase their profitability by up to 525%. They are also 30% more likely to consult with business advisors, and 50% more likely to have and follow a formal business plan and assess and manage their risks. The study revealed the 7 practices of Canada's top financially performing farms:

1. A commitment to lifelong learning
2. Business decisions made using accurate financial data
3. Seeking the help of business advisors
4. Having a written business plan, reviewed annually
5. Monitoring your cost of production and profit
6. Assessing risks and having a plan to manage risk
7. Using a budget and financial plan to monitor your positions and options

An update to the study released in 2020, *Dollars and Sense Study Update: Understanding the Drivers and Barriers to Adopting Farm Business Management Practices*<sup>46</sup>, set out to measure the adoption of beneficial business management practices between 2015 and 2020 and how to increase the implementation of beneficial business practices on farms. Results revealed that over the past five years, the adoption of business practices on farms has decreased, and most notably, those practices related to planning.

Figure 4: Percentage of Farms With and Without Formal Planning in Canada (2015 v. 2020)

TYPE OF PLAN	2015	2020
BUSINESS PLAN	26%	21%
FINANCIAL PLAN	51%	43%
MARKETING PLAN	36%	35%
RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN	51%	42%
HR MANAGEMENT PLAN	20%	12%
TRANSITION/SUCCESSION PLAN	27%	26%
SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PLAN	49%	41%

Farmers also revealed the greatest motivators and barriers to implementing farm business practices.

#### THE GREATEST MOTIVATORS TO IMPLEMENTING FARM BUSINESS PRACTICES:

1. To increase profitability
2. To manage risk
3. To prepare for farm transfer/retirement
4. To reduce stress and anxiety and improve quality of life
5. To improve family/farm team harmony

Farmers who regularly work with farm business advisors were significantly more likely to have implemented farm business management practices.



Figure 5: Percentage of Farms Adopting Business Practices Using Business Advisors (2020)

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT PRACTICE	WORK WITH BUSINESS ADVISORS REGULARLY	DO NOT USE BUSINESS ADVISORS REGULARLY
CLEAR VISION & FUTURE GOALS	48%	25%
COMMUNICATION OF PLANS WITH FAMILY AND OTHERS	59%	39%
FORMAL BUSINESS PLAN	50%	11%
ABILITY TO READ & USE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS	79%	67%
FINANCIAL PLAN	55%	26%
DECISION-MAKING USING COST OF PRODUCTION	76%	42%
RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN	70%	39%
MARKET / PRICE RISK MANAGEMENT	60%	26%
USE OF SUPPLY CHAIN RELATIONSHIPS TO ADD VALUE	66%	37%
OVERALL RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN	48%	26%
FORMAL HR MANAGEMENT PLAN	24%	6%
FARM TRANSITION/SUCCESSION PLAN	54%	15%
COMMITMENT TO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	60%	39%

Farmer demographics also play a role in the adoption of farm business practices. Young farmers and farm women, farmers in Quebec, larger operations and horticultural operations were most likely to have adopted farm business practices. Farmers in regions with cost-share funding to support business assessment and planning practices were also more likely to implement farm business practices.




#### THE GREATEST BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTING FARM BUSINESS PRACTICES:

1. Farmers feel the farm is succeeding without them
2. Aging/retiring farmers feel it's too late to benefit
3. Farmers do not have the time
4. Farmers do not know where to start
5. Farmers lack communication skills and are struggling to get others on board with adopting more formal business practices

Looking at the social and societal benefits of farming, Farm Management Canada's *Healthy Minds, Healthy Farms: Exploring the Connection between Farmer Mental Health and Farm Business Management*<sup>43</sup> study conducted in 2020 reports that 3 out of every 4 farmers are experiencing moderate to high levels of stress. While there are several factors contributing to farm stress, the top three causes of stress were: the unpredictability of the ag sector (77% of producers), workload pressures and lack of time

(72% of producers), and financial pressures (73% of producers). Public trust was also reported by half of respondents (e.g., pressure from advocacy groups).

Figure 6: The Top 3 Causes of Farm Stress in Canada (2020)

	THE UNPREDICTABILITY OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR (77%)
	WORKLOAD PRESSURES AND LACK OF TIME (72%)
	FINANCIAL PRESSURE (73%)

Again, farmer demographics come into play in terms of stress levels and factors contributing to stress. Farm women, young farmers and growing operations reported higher levels of stress. In addition to the top three stressors outlined above, for farm women and young farmers, farm transition planning and maintaining family and farm team harmony were rated significant stress factors.

Farmers who implement farm business practices to proactively mitigate risk and uncertainty for their operation were less likely to feel stressed. In fact, 88% of farmers say having a written business plan has contributed to their peace of mind. These farmers were also more likely to adopt effective coping mechanisms to deal with stress such as crunching their numbers and revisiting their plans. Farmers with low adoption of business practices were more likely to adopt ineffective coping mechanisms such as social isolation, substance abuse, and emotional irregularities.



## DISCUSSION

### SYNTHESIS OF RESEARCH LITERATURE

From the research findings, the question *“Can a case using 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 participation and the adoption of environmental stewardship practices?”* was confirmed as a positive approach to increasing environmental stewardship and participation in environmental programs such as the

Environmental Farm Plan with Ontario landowners. The research team discovered three (3) key focus areas for creating the path forward: Policy and Programming, Communications Strategies and Tactics, and Addressing Research Gaps.

Major players in the Canadian agriculture industry including producers, processors, retailers and government are striving to meet consumer demand by demonstrating they are conducting business in a sustainable manner. Within agriculture, sustainability is defined in many different ways. Often the focus is on environmental sustainability, but as evidenced in the research findings, environmental outcomes, economic viability and social responsibility are inherently linked. Environmental stewardship alone is not enough if farms are not economically viable or access to safe working conditions or healthy nutritious food is compromised. In addition to the sustainability goals of farmers themselves, the sustainability goals of agribusinesses and governments are trickling down to the farm level.

The research findings highlight the importance of understanding what motivates producers when it comes to improving or adopting new practices and participating in industry programs. Oftentimes, environmental stewardship is not the only reason producers participate in environmental programs such as the EFP. Financial benefits from cost savings, access to funding or market access were cited by producers as positively influencing their participation in these programs. However, financial benefits are not the only reason producers participate in farm business development programs and implement business practices on the farm. Social and societal benefits including reduced stress and anxiety were also cited as positive motivators. These additional benefits have been incorporated into program promotions across various platforms and in many jurisdictions.

Adoption of agri-environmental stewardship programs, such as the EFP, can have non-environmental benefits to the farm business as part of the triple-bottom-line approach to sustainability. Adoption of environmental best management practices can be paired with economic and societal outcomes, such as:

- To sustain production from renewable natural resources<sup>29</sup>
- To provide a healthy landscape for the next generation<sup>29</sup>
- To prepare for the future viability of your business<sup>30</sup>
- To increase peace of mind knowing that you are doing what you can to ensure the environmental safety of your family, farm and community<sup>28</sup>
- To maintain market access<sup>29</sup>
- To make the most of marketing advantages tied to a “greener product”<sup>28</sup>
- To address customer demand for products produced in an “environmentally sensitive” manner<sup>30,34</sup>
- To increase your understanding of your legal requirements related to environmental issues<sup>29</sup>
- To demonstrate to the public, government, lenders and/or investors that you are managing your environmental risks<sup>29</sup>
- To reduce the cost of production<sup>30</sup>
- To prevent environmental problems, rather than incur additional expense to correct them<sup>30, 34</sup>

We can group these outcomes into environmental, economic and societal benefits of implementing an EFP, and adopting environmental stewardship practices at large.

Table 4: Environmental, Economic and Societal Benefits of Implementing an EFP

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Build upon environmental strengths</li> <li>▪ Mitigate and/or overcome environmental risks and challenges</li> <li>▪ Improve soil quality</li> <li>▪ Improve water quality</li> <li>▪ Improve air quality</li> <li>▪ Improve waste management, reduce waste</li> <li>▪ Improve animal health and welfare</li> <li>▪ Improve biosecurity</li> <li>▪ Improve food quality and safety</li> <li>▪ Improve biodiversity</li> <li>▪ Increase the use of renewable energy</li> <li>▪ Support natural habitats and species at risk</li> <li>▪ Protect and conserve riparian areas</li> <li>▪ Improve nutrient use efficiency</li> <li>▪ Reduce greenhouse gas emissions</li> </ul>
ECONOMIC BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Retain and gain new customers including processors, retailers, general public</li> <li>▪ Access new markets, market share</li> <li>▪ Increase efficiency (ex. Crop protection products, veterinary products, use of technology)</li> <li>▪ Reduce input costs (ex. Fertilizer, pesticide, herbicide and fuel)</li> <li>▪ Access sustainability schemes and programs</li> <li>▪ Access funding and rewards programs</li> <li>▪ Increase profitability</li> <li>▪ Increase viability of the farm business for future generations</li> <li>▪ Increase viability of natural assets for future generations</li> <li>▪ Maintain, retain and attract new labour</li> <li>▪ Maintain positive relations with lenders and investors</li> <li>▪ Access favourable loan rates</li> <li>▪ Attract new investors</li> <li>▪ Maintain positive relations with insurance providers</li> <li>▪ Access favourable insurance premiums</li> <li>▪ Maintain positive relations with environmental regulators</li> <li>▪ Maintain productivity and seize new opportunities presented by changing production conditions and practices</li> <li>▪ Reduce waste and expenses associated with disposal</li> <li>▪ Reduce the risk of economic penalties for non-compliance with environmental regulations</li> <li>▪ Reduce the risk of economic consequences from environmental problems</li> <li>▪ Manage financial risk through contingency and disaster planning</li> </ul>
SOCIETAL BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase positive perception of farming</li> <li>▪ Increase social license and public trust for the agricultural sector</li> <li>▪ Increase positive relations with environmental agencies and groups</li> <li>▪ Increase peace of mind for farmers and consumers</li> <li>▪ Increase the interest of future generations in farming as a contributor to environmental outcomes</li> <li>▪ Increase the interest of future generations in farming as a profitable career</li> <li>▪ Increase health and safety of farm families, workers and consumers</li> <li>▪ Sustain production and productivity of food, fuel and fiber for domestic and global consumption</li> <li>▪ Provide healthy, safe, nutritious and sustainable food</li> <li>▪ Increase soil, air and water quality for future generations</li> <li>▪ Increase knowledge, skills and expertise in sustainable practices</li> </ul>

A number of other provinces and territories are promoting business management benefits of adopting an EFP to entice producers to complete the program. The Agricultural Alliance of New Brunswick promotes



the benefits of implementing an EFP into three main categories: For Your Industry, For Your Business, For Your Family and Workers.<sup>30</sup> A similar approach to marketing the EFP or other agri-environmental programs to Ontario landowners could be helpful in increasing uptake and adoption of BMPs.

The consistent message heard throughout the research is that sustainability should not focus on just environmental benefits. While some industry sustainability frameworks cover many different benefits, all can be categorized into the three (3) pillars of sustainability: environmental, economic and social outcomes. Consumers are demanding that agriculture proves it is operating in an environmentally friendly way, but industry realizes sustainability needs to link to economic outcomes and societal goals.

Promoting the triple-bottom-line to sustainable farming is an approach that recognizes the connection between people, profit and the planning required to position the farm for continued success.

#### FOCUS AREA 1: POLICY AND PROGRAMMING

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's next agricultural policy framework, the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (SCAP) program comes into effect on April 1, 2023, focusing on agri-environmental practices as key to helping Canada meet the Government of Canada's goal of net-zero emissions by 2050.<sup>27</sup> As the most recognizable environmental program in Canada, the EFP is arguably best positioned to help the agricultural industry clearly demonstrate their commitment of environmental stewardship on a national level. Census data shows that although farms are decreasing in numbers, they are increasing in the adoption of environmental practices<sup>25</sup> Environmental practices with increasing adoption rates include no-till seeding, autosteering and use of renewable energy sources. No-till seeding has increased, both in number of farms practicing and number of acres seeded, from 1991 to 2021 in Canada. The use of autosteering has also increased from 40,000 farms in 2016 to 50,000 farms in 2021.<sup>25</sup> New technology and innovations in the Canadian agricultural industry are helping position farmers to adopt environmental practices more readily. Furthermore, industry is demanding more sustainability practices resulting in an increase in industry-lead programs. In recent years, a number of programs became mandatory to certain Canadian farmers - for example, Alberta and Manitoba potato producers are required to complete an EFP to sell to specific retailers.

Policy and programs are difficult to design and can be difficult to measure as funds spent usually equate to program uptake.<sup>26</sup> The EFP, for example is an excellent agri-environment educational tool for farmers, and we can distinctly measure uptake by the number of farms that have formally attended an EFP workshop and created an Action Plan. Cost-share incentives are available in Ontario, as well as many other provinces for agricultural landowners who have completed an EFP and identified certain activities in their Action Plans. In Quebec, farmers are compensated by their provincial Ministry of Agriculture for environmental practices and advisory services are provided to support training and education.<sup>49</sup> Access to cost-share funding allows some measurement of implementation, but farms that do not access funding make it difficult to measure the full effects of the program. Research into all farmers that have participated in an EFP workshop would be beneficial in measuring the tangible outcomes of the program. We need to look at how to monitor the uptake and effectiveness of increased environmental stewardship. A starting point would be implementation of EFP's Action Plans or certification within industry's sustainability frameworks.

There is some opinion that more of the federal and provincial Business Risk Management (BRM) budgets could go towards new and separate agri-environmental programs, as only about 8% of BRM expenditures are directed to environmental stewardship.<sup>24</sup> In preliminary reports from the development of the next agricultural policy framework, the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (SCAP) program, a push

was made for cross-compliance between environmental stewardship practices and access to BRM programs. A subsequent report from the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute (CAPI) however, noted cross-compliance between BRM and agri-environmental programs would be burdensome to an already complicated suite of programs and ineffective as the level of payment would be the biggest leverage over the actual environmental benefit.<sup>24</sup> And, the government funds available to adopt environmental best management practices were lower than the actual costs of implementing these practices, decreasing the appeal to farmers.<sup>23</sup> A further argument against cross-compliance is that the rationale for environmental practices is markedly different from the rationale for BRM programs.<sup>23</sup> The BRM programs are designed to provide agricultural producers with protection against income and production losses.<sup>54</sup> While there is a link between some environmental practices and income and production losses, these are many other causes outside of environmental conditions for these losses. As discussed earlier, environmental practices are only one component of managing risk and cultivating sustainability for the agricultural sector. A better approach is through cost-share programming. Cost-share programs are available to help implement action plans and increase adoption of environmental practices. Government should continue to promote the EFP as a key environmental stewardship tool for Ontario farmers and landowners.

#### INTEGRATING THE EFP INTO ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS

The Canada-Ontario EFP could be altered to integrate into other agri-environment programs and standards. In Alberta, the EFP has an added section for farmers that are part of an established Farm Management Group. These additional questions create EFP+ and allow users to claim Silver within the Farm Sustainability Assessment (FSA), a global sustainable farming standard within the food and drink industry.<sup>33</sup> As noted previously, certain groups are also turning to the EFP as an indicator of their membership's commitment to environmental stewardship. The Potato Growers of Alberta made it mandatory for members to complete an EFP to align with McCain's decision to only purchase products that are sustainably sourced.<sup>31</sup> This requirement by the Potato Growers of Alberta ensures that their members still have access to sell their products to McCains, a large potato purchaser in Canada. Similarly, to meet McDonald's request that suppliers produce potatoes in a sustainable way, Manitoba worked to meet the requirements of the Potato Sustainability Alliance by creating an additional Potato Production chapter to the EFP. Farmers that have completed the EFP and Potato Production chapter are able to sell to McDonald's.<sup>31</sup> Dairy Farmers of Canada also require all producers to complete an EFP as part of their ProAction plan. This begs the question, would there be a commodity organization in Ontario that would benefit from requiring EFPs to show sustainable practices?

The Ontario-EFP is being used by Durham College in their Food and Ag Regulations and Policies course, and Algonquin College in their Sustainable Agriculture Course. The integration of the EFP into educational programming could be extended into other college and university programs, but also into agriculture-adjunct programming and at earlier education levels to show how agriculture is and can continue to contribute to environmental sustainability.

Future policy and programming are likely to increase their emphasis on sustainability in farming, and we must acknowledge the ripple effect on-farm practices have on many other industries, all the way up to government and global commitments. It would not be surprising if more players in the agricultural sector require producers to prove sustainable practices, which may go well beyond environmental practices to also ensuring economic and social outcomes.

The policy and programming around agri-environmental programs needs to become a partnership between government, industry and producers as the many players push for confirmation of sustainable

farming practices. Everyone must work together to overcome challenges and provide solutions to agri-environmental issues.

#### INTEGRATING THE TRIPLE-BOTTOM-LINE

Environmental stewardship is just one component of a sustainable agricultural sector.

Government policy and programs must acknowledge the importance of and inherent link between the people, profit, and the planet. Working towards sustainability necessitates a wider focus on managing and mitigating risk within the agricultural sector. A comprehensive approach to managing risk – on farm and within the agricultural sector at large, provides an effective framework for addressing factors that may be hindering our capacity to achieve sustainability, in all senses of the word. A farm that is struggling financially, not able to access the labour required to operate, or experiencing levels of stress that hinder their capacity to operate effectively will struggle to meet the increasing environmental demands of government and industry. Confining sustainability policy and programming to environmental outcomes will limit our capacity to reach our sustainability goals.

The Environmental Farm Plan provides an excellent tool for increasing farmers' knowledge and adoption of environmental practices as part of a sustainable approach to farming. Likewise, the Growing Your Farm Profits business assessment and planning provides an excellent tool for increasing awareness and adoption of business practices that contribute to a sustainable farm business. And AgriShield covers both, as well as production practices. Recognizing that each serves a unique purpose and AgriShield is more complex than the others, it would be beneficial for each of these tools to reference the others so that producers are aware of their options.

It would also be beneficial for policy and programming focusing on sustainability goals to integrate and incentivize the use of the broader tools that cover the economic and societal components of sustainable practices as part of the larger risk management narrative.

As financial benefits were shown as a motivating factor for adopting environmental and business practices, with Farm Credit Canada's Sustainability Incentive Program and other incentive programs, there is an opportunity to acknowledge and reward producers who have a comprehensive risk management or business plan that includes the triple-bottom-line components of sustainability. Perhaps completion of Growing Your Farm Profits could allow Ontario landowners to receive additional incentive payments. And like the EFP, Growing Your Farm Profits could be integrated in farm sustainability assessment programs and school curriculum.

#### FOCUS AREA 2: COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

Healthy stewardship of agricultural land is required to safeguard farming and the production of food, fuel and fiber for generations to come, and producers know this. However, there is a lack of knowledge pertaining to the connection between environmental stewardship and sustainability in terms of economic and social goals. Communicating the linkage between the three (3) pillars of sustainability (the triple-bottom-line) to Ontario landowners could increase adoption of environmental practices as economic and societal benefits are acknowledged and realized.

Some of the business management benefits stated on Ministry websites encouraging participation in the EFP program included increased efficiency, profitability, new customers, access to markets, viability of business, access to funding, improved mental health and time management.<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup> Ontario however, does not state these additional benefits within their program information and promotional efforts.<sup>6</sup>

Communicating these additional benefits to Ontario landowners may result in increased participation in the EFP and other environmental programming. There is evidence that Ontario farmers have used their EFPs to meet Nutrient Management Act (NMA) requirements, counter accusations made by others regarding environmental neglect, qualify for other programs/opportunities, or achieve a favourable loan rate or insurance premium.<sup>8</sup> These non-environmental benefits have been captured, but not communicated.

During the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute (CAPI)'s webinar, *In Conversation: The Future of the Environmental Farm Plan Program in Canada* on May 5 2022, Susie Miller, the Executive Director of the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Crops noted that EFP uptake among grain farmers was lower than other commodities and that farmers need to see the positive benefits of environmental stewardship effecting their bottom line in general, and not necessarily limited to government funding.<sup>35</sup> The webinar noted that research investigating impacts of EFP best practices and the on farm benefits, such as reduced fertilizer or fuel use, or access to certain markets, could help to increase the uptake of the EFP. The impact of the farm's viability of implementing EFPs, or other agri-environmental programs, would be valuable to communicate to landowners.

We know that profitability is not the only factor driving the adoption of beneficial farm business practices; producers are looking to manage farm risk, prepare for farm transition and retirement, reduce stress and improve quality of life, and improve family and farm team harmony.<sup>15</sup> We also know there is a positive correlation between the adoption of business management practices to environmental stewardship and societal wellbeing. Farmers with a written business plan are more likely to follow other best practices. And farmland management and sustainable practices were one of the top three topics of greatest interest as reported by Canadian producers.<sup>42</sup>

The implementation of an EFP should be viewed as a risk mitigation strategy as part of risk management and sustainable business plan and there is an opportunity to communicate this connection to Ontario landowners. Risk mitigation and management is language that resonates with farmers in the context of business planning as well as peace of mind that can support positive farmer mental health.<sup>43</sup>

Linking farm business management and environmental stewardship together to describe a sustainable farm business could help to increase the adoption of both environmental practices and business management practices.

In 2019, FCC completed a Content Survey that revealed producers are keen to learn more about environmental stewardship.<sup>42</sup> Producers look to many sources to learn about new opportunities for their farm businesses. Producers under the age of 40 were more likely to use social media sites at least weekly, so new marketing tactics with social media platforms should be utilized to target a younger audience. Mobile compatibility is also important as more and more producers are visiting websites from their phones. Several reports indicated social settings (agri-environment clubs, friends or family), were also effective means for farmers to learn about and implement EFPs.<sup>8,49</sup>

### FOCUS AREA 3: GAPS IN RESEARCH

Information directly relating to Ontario landowners who have not or have only occasionally participated in government or other agri-environmental programs to determine the tools, information and communication tactics and strategies to reach those producers could not be obtained through the course of this research. However, some information on participation of landowners outside of Ontario in agricultural and agri-environmental programs to verify preferred tools, information and communication



tactics and strategies helps shed light on future research opportunities in Ontario. Further study of the research methodologies used in other jurisdictions would be helpful to direct further research in Ontario.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The research reveals a number of opportunities for Ontario to increase the participation of landowners in agri-environmental programming. The recommendations derived from this research are presented in three (3) distinct categories: Policy and Programming, Communication Tactics and Strategies, and Future Research.

### **Policy and Programming Recommendations**

The EFP as a free workshop and tool for farmers is an excellent starting point for Ontario's landowners to evaluate their environmental stewardship. It can be difficult to change behaviour, especially when asking farmers to go above and beyond established management practices. Provide evidence of measurable impacts including environmental and non-environmental results. Incentives matter and removing barriers to participation is essential to increase adoption of environmental stewardship practices.

1. Continue to use the EFP as a flagship program for environmental stewardship in Ontario and encourage industry to integrate the EFP as the environmental module within sustainability frameworks and programs

2. Enhance the EFP to align with other compliance standards – ex. Farm Sustainability Assessment, Potato Sustainability Alliance, etc.
3. Enhance the EFP to include emergency preparedness and disaster response to respond to immediate threats while promoting proactive risk management.
4. Work with schools and training institutes to incorporate the EFP into academic curriculum at all levels
5. Consider EFP program eligibility requirements that may be preventing access to the program (ex. having Farm Status)
6. Create a version of the EFP for Ontario landowners who do not farm the land themselves
7. Integrate participation in the EFP program into Ministry sustainability and climate change action programming including funding and cost-share available for skills development, peer groups, advisory support and implementation of environmental practices for individual producers and non-profit organizations
8. Instead of cross-compliance, pursue incentive and/or financial reward programs (access to funding, tax incentives, etc.) for producers demonstrating environmental stewardship through the EFP
9. Create a mechanism to better measure EFP program participation, implementation and impacts (ex. implementation of action plans, benefits realized (environmental, economic, and social), and opportunities for improvement)
10. Address known barriers to EFP adoption in other jurisdictions including access to program information, awareness of funding and other support opportunities, concerns with compliance and follow-up responsibilities including time and implementation costs, and concerns with confidentiality and public disclosure
11. Include farmers and non-farming landowners in a review of the EFP and any associated environmental compliance requirements to understand and rectify barriers to participation – cost, time, infrastructure, etc. and preferred communication and delivery methods
12. Establish a link between the EFP and Growing Your Farm Profits to support a more comprehensive approach to managing risk and reaching sustainability goals (including environmental, economic and social outcomes)
  - a. Reinstate cost-share funding for skills development, advisory support and implementation of beneficial management practices beyond environmental practices
13. Create decision-support/investment tools to help producers and landowners assess the benefits and return on investment for adopting environmental practices
14. Revise the EFP to track and show improvements over time making it easier for farmers to review and revise as environmental practices are implemented.

## Communication Tactics and Strategies Recommendations

Sustainability means different things to different people. Likewise, success is defined in many ways and depends on many factors, not just environmental outcomes. People also have unique learning styles and rely on many different sources of information to assess risk and opportunity.

1. Communicate a holistic, comprehensive definition of sustainability including environmental, economic, and social/societal goals to promote the importance of the triple-bottom-line approach to a sustainable and resilient agricultural sector
2. Include economic and social/society benefits in agri-environmental program promotions
3. Customize the EFP and promotional materials to address the specific concerns of different production sectors and demographics



4. Align EFP promotions with emerging and real-time industry issues where the EFP can help mitigate or manage risk (be part of the solution), or be used to seize new opportunity
5. Use diverse communication channels including social media to promote the EFP program and its benefits to diverse audiences, including youth
6. Use diverse delivery methods for the EFP program including in-person and virtual workshops, self-paced courses, downloadable templates, how-to videos, audio casts and a mobile app
7. Use diverse promotional methods including video success stories, testimonials, workshops and presentations, in-person and virtual farm tours and demonstrations, photos, and on-farm visits with technical experts
8. Create an ongoing dialogue between government, producers, and landowners to inform how to increase EFP adoption and implementation
9. Create specific communications to address perceived barriers and motivators to implementing EFPs (ex. free training, cost-share funding available, regulatory compliance, peace of mind)

### Future Research Recommendations

With very little research available from farmers and landowners who do not participate in agri-environmental programs, Ontario has an opportunity to pursue future direct research focused on a better understanding of this demographic including their needs, wants, desires and opportunities to align with other sustainability programming.

1. Direct research with everyone who has participated in an EFP workshop and/or completed an EFP to:
  - a. Understand the reasons for their participation and any changes to participation
  - b. Understand any challenges they encountered in implementing their EFP Action Plan and opportunities for program improvement
  - c. Understand and measure the benefits they have realized (including environmental, economic, and social) from creating/implementing their EFP
  - d. Understand the other agri-environmental programs they participate in, including their reasons for participating, any challenges encountered or areas for improvement, and benefits realized (including environmental, economic, and social)
  - e. Understand preferred communication tactics and learning preferences
2. Direct research with farmers and landowners who have not or have only occasionally participated in government or other agri-environmental programs to:
  - a. Understand the challenges and barriers to participating in government or other agri-environmental programs to inform improvement measures
  - b. Understand their motivations to participating in government or other agri-environmental programs to inform improvement measures including communication tactics
  - c. Understand preferred communication channels, formats and learning preferences to inform program design, marketing and promotions
3. Direct research to understand the uptake, performance measures and outcomes achieved by other government or agri-environmental programs to compare with and inform how to enhance EFP program uptake and benefits realized in Ontario
4. Direct research to understand how the EFP can integrate and be integrated into existing sustainability frameworks and assessment tools to increase uptake and effectiveness (ex. Farm Sustainability Assessment, Growing Your Farm Profits, Verified Sustainable Beef Program)
5. Direct research to better 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



## CONCLUSION

As societal pressures around environmental stewardship increase and Canada has set ambitious targets for achieving its environmental outcomes, the agricultural sector will continue to come under the spotlight for its role in environmental sustainability.

The fundamental research question *“Can a case using 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 participation and the adoption of environmental stewardship practices?”* was confirmed as being a positive approach to increasing environmental stewardship and participation in agri-environmental programming for Ontario landowners.

The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) is the most widely used environmental assessment and planning tool in Canada. With 30 years of history and over 40,000 users in Ontario, increasing participation in the EFP program was identified as key focus for Ontario to increase the adoption of environmental stewardship practices for Ontario landowners. However, communicating the environmental benefits of program

participation alone is not enough to attract and retain program users, and environmental stewardship is not enough to make meaningful progress towards sustainability targets. If farms are not economically viable or access to safe working conditions or healthy nutritious food is compromised, we will not reach our sustainability goals.

Management experts and scholars view sustainability through the triple-bottom-line, recognizing there is a balance between achieving environmental, economic and societal or social goals. Farmers who implement farm business practices to proactively mitigate risk and uncertainty for their operation through planning report higher profits, greater confidence in decision-making, are more likely to seek skills development opportunities, are more likely to reach out for support, are more likely to adopt other beneficial practices, and are less likely to feel stressed or overwhelmed.

Government and Industry will benefit from recognizing and promoting the triple-bottom-line to Ontario's primary producers and landowners to help increase the adoption of agri-environmental programming, promoting the economic and social benefits derived from and inherently linked to environmental practices.

Policy and programming, communication strategies and tactics along with further research concentrating on opportunities to enhance the use and promotion of the Environmental Farm Plan in Ontario will help increase the adoption of environmental stewardship practices by farmers and landowners.



## APPENDIX: ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN COMPARISONS ACROSS CANADA

### British Columbia

#### Environmental Farm Plan Program

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/programs/environmental-farm-plan>

Description	Intake Times	Funding	Promotion	Benefits Communicated			Compliance	Delivery	
				Environmental	Financial	Social		3 <sup>rd</sup> Party	Format
<p>The Environmental Farm Plan Program (EFP)'s objective is to provide farm and ranch operators with the means to identify agri-environmental risks and opportunities. The goal of the EFP Program is to improve on-farm awareness of agri-environmental risks.</p> <p>The EFP &amp; BMP programs provide eligible producers with access to consultants (EFP Planning Advisors) to assist in the completion of EFPs and support the application process to BMP funding. The EFP and BMP programs enhance the capacity of producers to maintain competitiveness by adapting and responding to emerging and changing environmental and climate change conditions.</p>	<p>April 1, until funds are allotted</p> <p>EFPs to be updated every 5 years</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>-Cost-share ranging from 50% to 85% to implement bmps</p> <p>-Maximum funding per farm is \$70,000 over the life of the CAP Agreement</p> <p>-Eligible operations are permitted up to 3 project or equipment-related BMP applications per year per farm</p> <p>-Through the Beneficial Management Practices program</p>	<p>-Website</p> <p>-Success Stories</p> <p>-Weekly E-Bulletin</p>	<p>-increased environmental sustainability</p> <p>-improved relationships with environmental agencies</p> <p>-Improved response to environmental incidents through contingency planning</p> <p>-promoting on-farm biodiversity</p> <p>-reducing greenhouse gas emissions</p> <p>-increasing water and nutrient use efficiency</p> <p>-protection of riparian areas</p> <p>-building healthy soil</p>	<p>-increased efficiency</p> <p>-increased profitability</p> <p>-new customers</p> <p>-enhanced marketing opportunities</p> <p>-access to funding</p>		<p>Starting April 2022, farmers do not require BC Assessment "farm status" to participate in the EFP program. Farm status is still one of the requirements to participate in the BMP funding program.</p> <p>In some cases, a completed EFP is required to access some cost-share programs.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Investment Agriculture Foundation (IAF)</p> <p><a href="https://iafbc.ca/environmental-farm-plan/">iafbc.ca/environmental-farm-plan/</a></p>	<p>On-farm appointment</p> <p>Workbook: online</p>

### Alberta

Environmental Farm Plan Program <a href="https://www.albertaefp.com/">https://www.albertaefp.com/</a>									
Description	Intake Times	Funding	Promotion	Benefits Communicated			Compliance	Delivery	
				Environmental	Financial	Social		3 <sup>rd</sup> Party	Format
<p>The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) is a voluntary, whole farm, self-assessment tool that helps producers identify their environmental risks and develop plans to mitigate identified risks. We are working together with farmers committed to environmental stewardship.</p> <p>More than 12,000 EFPs have been completed in Alberta.</p>	<p>Unknown</p> <p>EFPs to be updated every 10 years</p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cost-share up to 50% to implement bmps</li> <li>-Maximum funding ranging from \$48,000 to \$100,000 over the program term, this includes any funding received through the previous Efficient Grain Dryer program.</li> <li>-Through the Efficient Grain Handling Program and Farm Technology Program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Website</li> <li>-Success Stories</li> <li>-E-Bulletin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-healthy environment</li> <li>-sustainable production of crops and livestock</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-marketing</li> <li>-sustainable sourcing is becoming a requirement of many major food purchasers</li> <li>- increase operational efficiency while reducing farm costs</li> <li>-access to funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-public concern</li> <li>-shows commitment to managing environmental risks</li> <li>-a healthy and productive farm for the next generation</li> </ul>	<p>Meets silver level sustainability requirements for the international Sustainable Agriculture Initiative and its Farm Sustainability Assessment program recognized by over 150 agricultural processors and retailers</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Online with one-on-one in-person visit if needed</p> <p>Workbook: online or print versions</p>

Saskatchewan Environmental Farm Plan Program <a href="https://www.saskatchewan.ca/business/agriculture-natural-resources-and-industry/agribusiness-farmers-and-ranchers/canadian-agricultural-partnership-cap/environmental-sustainability-and-climate-change/environmental-farm-plans">https://www.saskatchewan.ca/business/agriculture-natural-resources-and-industry/agribusiness-farmers-and-ranchers/canadian-agricultural-partnership-cap/environmental-sustainability-and-climate-change/environmental-farm-plans</a>									
Description	Intake Times	Funding	Promotion	Benefits Communicated			Compliance	Delivery	
				Environmental	Financial	Social		3 <sup>rd</sup> Party	Format
<p>The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) is a free, online self-assessment tool designed to help producers identify environmental risks on their farm and create action plans to address those risks.</p>	<p>Unknown</p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Cost-share ranging from 30% to 90% to implement bmps</li> <li>-Maximum funding from \$10,000 to \$100,000 to implement bmps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Website</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-access to funding</li> </ul>		<p>In some cases, a completed EFP is required to access some cost-share programs.</p> <p>-required for Variable Rate Mapping BMP</p> <p>-proAction through SaskMilk</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Workbook: online</p>



Over 12,000 producers currently have an EFP in Saskatchewan.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Program payments are subject to a minimum rebate of \$250. The minimum claim is \$500</li> <li>-Through the Farm Stewardship Program (FSP) to implement environmental BMPs</li> <li>-Three priority areas – water quality, climate change and biodiversity</li> </ul>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-program funding through the Agricultural Clean Technology (ACT) Program</li> <li>-contracting with processors such as Roquette</li> </ul>		
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Manitoba									
Environmental Farm Plan Program									
<a href="https://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/environment/environmental-farm-plan/index.html">https://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/environment/environmental-farm-plan/index.html</a>									
Description	Intake Times	Funding	Promotion	Benefits Communicated			Compliance	Delivery	
				Environmental	Financial	Social		3 <sup>rd</sup> Party	Format
The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) is a voluntary, confidential, self-assessment of a producer's own farm or ranch delivered in partnership with Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP). Environmental farm planning assists farm managers in identifying agri-environmental assets and risks to develop an action plan to help mitigate high risk items. Environmental Farm Planning began in Manitoba in 2004 and	Unknown  A Statement of Completion is valid for five years in Manitoba	Yes -Cost-shared funding ranging from 25% to 50% to implement bmps -Maximum funding ranging from \$10,000 to \$100,000 -Through Ag Action Manitoba's Assurance Environment Grant	-Website -Weekly E-Bulletin (KAP)	-producing safe, high-quality food in a sustainable manner -improve air, water and soil quality -conserve biodiversity on Manitoba farmland -contribute to environmental protection and conservation -demonstrate due diligence by identifying environmental assets and risks on their farm and implementing actions to reduce those risks	-make Manitoba-grown commodities more marketable to environmentally-conscious consumers around the world -access to funding	-leaving a legacy for future generations	In some cases, a completed EFP is required to access some cost-share programs.  Offers the option to meet sustainability requirements for the international Sustainable Agriculture Initiative and its Farm Sustainability Assessment program recognized by over 150 agricultural processors and retailers	Yes Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP)	Workbook: online  Workshops will no longer be held and paper workbooks are no longer available



continues to be a high priority for Federal and Provincial governments. It is currently supported through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership.							It is also recognized in meeting sustainability requirements for several commodities: -potato production to meet McCain's/Simplot's requirements; -field pea production to meet requirements for Roquette; -dairy production to meet ProAction requirements; and -horticulture production for greenhouses and market gardens.		
EFP began in Manitoba in 2004, more than 6,500 producers with over 10.5 million acres have completed an EFP.									

Ontario									
Environmental Plan (EFP)									
Description	Intake Times	Funding	Promotion	Benefits Communicated			Compliance	Delivery	
				Environmental	Financial	Social		3 <sup>rd</sup> Party	Format
The Environmental Farm Plans (EFPs) are voluntarily prepared assessments by farm families to increase their environmental awareness in up to 23 different areas on their farm. Through the EFP process, farmers highlight their farm's environmental strengths, identify areas of environmental concern and set realistic action plans with timetables to improve environmental conditions.	April 3, 2018 to March 31, 2023	Yes -Cost-share up to 75% to implement bmps -Maximum funding ranging from \$2,500 to \$25,000 -Through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, Species at Risk Partnership on Agricultural Lands program, On-Farm Climate Action Fund program	-Website -Infosheets -Instructional Videos -On-Farm Success Videos	-highlight environmental strengths, identify areas of concern, and improve environmental conditions: the air, soil, wildlife, and water sources	-access to funding		In some cases, a completed EFP is required to access some cost-share programs.	Yes Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association	In-person and online  Two-day workshop or one-day renewal workshop  Update a previously completed EFP Workbook online using the eEFP  Workbook: paper and online

Over 40,000 participants since the program began in 1993									
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## Quebec

### Agri-environmental Support Plan (Plan d'accompagnement agroenvironnemental, PAA)

<https://www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/Productions/Agroenvironnement/mesuresappui/planaccompagnement/Pages/planaccompagnement.aspx>

Description	Intake Times	Funding	Promotion	Benefits Communicated			Compliance	Delivery	
				Environmental	Financial	Social		3 <sup>rd</sup> Party	Format
<p>The Plan d'accompagnement agroenvironnemental (PAA) program takes individual farmers through a range of environmental risk areas that could be relevant for their farms, and draws attention to applicable environmental regulations and localized risk factors (e.g. presence of water, slope and soil type, etc.) that increase awareness of potential concerns and of recommended practices to address or monitor them.</p> <p>In the course of completing a PAA, agronomists will develop an action plan that lists identified risks, along with a timeline and options to address them.</p> <p>A completed PAA will have an agronomist's</p>	Unknown	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Cost-share up to 75% to implement bmps with maximum funding of \$17,500</li> <li>-Cost-share up to 85% to hire a consultant to support implementation with maximum funding of \$5,000</li> <li>-Through the Prime-Vert or the Services-conseils programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Website</li> <li>-Reseau agriconseil E-Bulletin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-adaptation to climate change and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions</li> <li>-management of fertilizers and residual materials on the farm</li> <li>-soil health and conservation</li> <li>-management and use of water in agriculture</li> <li>-integrated pest management</li> <li>-biodiversity in agriculture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-access to funding</li> </ul>		<p>In some cases, a completed EFP is required to access some cost-share programs.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Agri-environmental clubs</p>	<p>One-on-one with an agronomist</p>

signature, with the date of completion.									
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## New Brunswick

### Environmental Farm Plan Program

<https://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/environment/environmental-farm-plan/index.html>

Description	Intake Times	Funding	Promotion	Benefits Communicated			Compliance	Delivery	
				Environmental	Financial	Social		3 <sup>rd</sup> Party	Format
<p>An Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) is a voluntary, confidential and pro-active tool which can help producers to assess the environmental strengths and potential environmental risks in their farm operations. As part of the EFP producers develop their own action plans to address those strengths and risks and improve the environment.</p> <p>The objective of EFPs is to help producers develop a practical plan for operating their farm in a way that is environmentally sustainable, socially acceptable, and economically viable.</p>	<p>April 1</p> <p>EFPs to be updated every 5 years</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>-Cost share ranging from 30% to 75% to implement bmps</p> <p>-Maximum funding ranging from \$2,000-\$50,000 over the life of the CAP Agreement</p> <p>-Program funding for agriculture producer (individuals or groups) requires the completion of the EFP</p> <p>-Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture: Adoption of Environmental Beneficial Management Practices Program assists producers in implementing on-farm actions identified in the EFP.</p>	<p>-Website</p>	<p>-encourages the adoption of beneficial management practices that enhance soil, water and air quality, as well as biodiversity, all of which contribute to the sustainability of agriculture</p>	<p>-prepare for the future viability of your business</p> <p>-a growing number of your customers want to know that their food is being produced in an environmentally sensitive manner</p> <p>-reducing environmental risks can reduce the costs of production, increasing your farm's productivity</p> <p>-it costs less to prevent environmental problems than to correct them</p> <p>-access to funding</p>	<p>-ensure health and safety by identifying and addressing environmental risks on the farm</p> <p>-show the public that environment matters in agriculture and that you are actively involved in adopting environmentally sustainable practices</p>	<p>In some cases, a completed EFP is required to access some cost-share programs.</p> <p>A completed EFP may constitute some measure of "due diligence", showing that you have assessed your management practices and have identified areas where improvement may be needed.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Agriculture Alliance of New Brunswick</p>	<p>In-person and online.</p> <p>Individual consultation and workshops</p> <p>Workbook: paper and online</p>

## Nova Scotia

### Environmental Farm Plan Program

<https://nsefp.ca/>

Description	Intake Times	Funding	Promotion	Benefits Communicated			Compliance	Delivery	
				Environmental	Financial	Social		3 <sup>rd</sup> Party	Format
<p>The Nova Scotia Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Program is an educational program, and helps farmers identify and assess environmental risks on their properties and enables farmers to incorporate environmental considerations into their everyday business decisions.</p> <p><i>Note: Over the last year, a new Agri-Environmental Program (<a href="https://nsaep.ca">nsaep.ca</a>) has been developed including an Environmental Guide for Nova Scotia Farms to complement the EFP with emerging information and support resources to reduce environmental risk on farm, increase public trust and expand market access.</i></p>	Unknown	<p>Yes</p> <p>-Cost-share up to 60% for Stream 1 for implementation of bmps to a maximum of \$10,000 per year</p> <p>-Cost-share up to 25% assistance to the lessor of 10% of their gross commodity income, or \$15,000 for implementation of the activities listed per year for Stream 2</p> <p>-Through the Soil and Water Sustainability Program</p>	<p>-Website</p> <p>-Weekly E-Bulletin (NSFA)</p> <p>-Annual Environmental Guide for Nova Scotia Farms</p>	-reduce environmental risk on farm	<p>-through these plans, farmers may be able to demonstrate compliance with the Farm Sustainability Assessment (FSA) requirements, which could create new market opportunities, especially for exports</p> <p>-access to funding</p>	-increase public trust	<p>A completed EFP is required to access cost-share programs.</p> <p>EFP is Pillar 1 of the new Agri-Environment Program</p> <p>-Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) Species at Risk Partnerships on Agricultural Lands (SARPAL) program to demonstrate beneficial practices to enhance biodiversity and protect species at risk</p> <p>-Canadian Forage and Grassland Association (CFGa) to develop an on-line habitat and biodiversity tool that will allow farmers, and other landowners, to better identify and conserve habitat to enhance biodiversity on the farm.</p>	Yes Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture	One-on-one farm visits, newly designed detailed reports

## Prince Edward Island

### Environmental Farm Plan Program

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/agriculture-and-land/environmental-farm-plans>
<https://peifa.ca/efp/>

Description	Intake Times	Funding	Promotion	Benefits Communicated			Compliance	Delivery	
				Environmental	Financial	Social		3 <sup>rd</sup> Party	Format
Th Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program assists farmers and	April 1	<p>Yes</p> <p>-Cost-share ranging from</p>	-Website	<p>-sustaining production</p> <p>-managing risks</p>	-maintaining market access	-providing a healthy landscape for the next generation	A completed EFP is required to access cost-share programs.	Yes PEI Federation of Agriculture	The EFP can be completed in less than 2

landowners to identify and incorporate best environmental practices in their farming activities by developing a practical plan for operating their farm in a way that is environmentally sustainable, socially acceptable, and economically viable.	EFPS to be updated every 5 years	\$50/acre to 75% to implement bmps -Maximum funding of \$100,000 per farm over the life of the CAP Agreement -Through the Agriculture Stewardship Program including, but not limited to: Soil; Water; Energy; and Integrated Pest Management		-safeguarding your local environment -increase your understanding of your legal requirements related to environmental issues -identify what you are already doing well and pinpoint where improvements can be made	-effectively manage farm inputs like herbicides, insecticides and fertilizers -demonstrate to lenders and/or investors that you are managing your environmental risks -access to funding	-demonstrate to the public, government that you are managing your environmental risks			hours with one of the Department's environmental planning officers.  Meetings can be scheduled at the office in Charlottetown or in the convenience of the farm or office.
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## Newfoundland and Labrador

### Environmental Farm Plan Program

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/ffa/faa/agrifoods/land/land-use/envplanning/>

Description	Intake Times	Funding	Promotion	Benefits Communicated			Compliance	Delivery	
				Environmental	Financial	Social		3 <sup>rd</sup> Party	Format
Environmental Farm Planning (EFP) is recognized nationwide as a means for producers to identify and mitigate potential environmental risks on their farms.	Unknown	Yes -Cost-share funding up to 75% for commercial for-profit applicants. This includes funding from all federal, provincial and municipal government sources. -Maximum funding of \$400,000 over the life of the CAP Agreement and may be utilized in any one year, or over the five-year	-Website	-due diligence -ensuring you are keeping within regulations	-marketing advantages tied to a "greener product" -keep up to date on new funding initiatives -access to funding	-peace of mind knowing that you are doing what you can to ensure the safety of your family, farm and community	In some cases, a completed EFP is required to access some cost-share programs.	No	In-person and online.  Through one-on-one sessions or through consultation  Workshops are arranged as needed  Workbook: online

		life of the program -Through the Agriculture Business Program, Future Farms Program, Agriculture Land Development Program, Agriculture Growth and Innovation Program, Mitigating Agricultural Risks Program, Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Program							
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## Yukon

### Environmental Farm Plan Program

<https://yukon.ca/en/agricultural-beneficial-management-practices-funding>

Description	Intake Times	Funding	Promotion	Benefits Communicated			Compliance	Delivery	
				Environmental	Financial	Social		3 <sup>rd</sup> Party	Format
The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Program helps producers: -assess environmental risks on their farm; -prepare an environment farm plan; and -get funding for beneficial management practices to mitigate the risks.	April 1  EFPS to be updated every 5 years	Yes -Cost-share up to 50% if in-kind contributions are included; or up to 60% if there are no in-kind contributions -Maximum funding from \$5,000 to \$30,000	-Website	-assess environmental risks on the farm	-access to funding		In some cases, a completed EFP is required to access some cost-share programs.	No	Unknown

## Northwest Territories

### Environmental Farm Plan Program



<https://www.iti.gov.nt.ca/en/services/apply-agriculture-and-environment-program-funding>

Description	Intake Times	Funding	Promotion	Benefits Communicated			Compliance	Delivery	
				Environmental	Financial	Social		3 <sup>rd</sup> Party	Format
Agriculture & the Environment can get you the funding you need to pursue your passion for enhancing available agriculture information and environmentally-friendly agriculture practices.	April 1 2018-March 31 2023	Yes -Cost-share up to 90% -Maximum funding of \$15,000 over the life of the CAP Agreement -Eligible activities include funding for developing an EFP (consultant fees and travel)	-Website	-environmentally friendly agricultural practices	-access to funding		No	No	Unknown

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