

**Policy Division
Food Safety and Environmental Policy Branch**

April 15, 2025

To: All municipalities in Ontario (Planning Department and/or Clerk's Office)

Re: Agricultural System Implementation

Dear municipal partners,

The [Provincial Planning Statement](#) (PPS, 2024) came into effect on October 20, 2024. To help foster a thriving agri-food sector, the PPS (2024) requires an Agricultural System approach province-wide, which strives to protect the agricultural land base and strengthen the viability of the agri-food network. Implementing an Agricultural System approach can help support agri-food businesses, farm operations, related employment and economic opportunities, and protect Ontario's highest quality farmland.

The PPS, 2024 Agricultural System approach includes two components: 1. the identification of the agricultural land base; and 2. the consideration of the agri-food network – which may include infrastructure, services and assets that the agri-food sector relies on.

To support municipalities in their implementation of an Agricultural System approach, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) has the following resources:

1: Agricultural Land Base Resources

To implement the agricultural land base, municipalities are required to identify and designate prime agricultural areas and consider if there are rural lands that could also be identified as part of an agricultural land base. Inclusion of rural lands within the agricultural land base is left to municipal discretion.

To support this work, OMAFRA has data and information available upon request that can help municipalities identify where prime agricultural areas and rural lands are present. While there is no requirement to utilize this data and information in identifying municipal designations, it can help to provide a basis that municipalities can then refine based on

local information, such as municipally-designated prime agricultural areas and settlement area boundaries.

The existing [OMAFA Implementation Procedures for the Agricultural System \(2020\)](#) continue to provide helpful guidance with respect to what/how municipalities can address Agricultural System policies in their respective official plans. It is important to note that given section 5.3 of the Greenbelt Plan, 2017 has not been modified, the 2018 provincial agricultural land base mapping and implementation procedures remains in effect for the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt. OMAFA staff are developing updated Implementation Procedures for the Agricultural System to align with the PPS (2024) and will provide notice once these updates have been finalized.

2: Agri-food Network Resources

The second component of the Agricultural System is the agri-food network. It complements and supports the agricultural land base. The agri-food network includes the regional infrastructure and transportation networks, agricultural operations, services, and other agri-food assets that are needed to sustain and enhance agriculture and the prosperity and viability of the broader agri-food sector.

The OMAFA [Agricultural System Portal](#) maps elements of the agri-food network, however, unlike prime agricultural areas, the agri-food network is not a land use designation within an official plan. Rather, awareness of, and support for the agri-food network is documented in an official plan for economic development purposes and can be achieved in several ways. This could include reference to local elements identified in asset mapping reports, or an inventory of components of the agri-food network in an official plan appendix. Other supportive approaches include policy cross-references to mapping and data tools, including OMAFA's Agricultural System Portal, the development of Agricultural Advisory Committees, supportive economic development policies for the agri-food network, and cross-references to Economic Development staff/programs.

Moving Forward

OMAFA staff will continue to work with municipalities to support implementation of the PPS 2024 Agricultural System policies. As such, we are pleased to share that as part of broader modernization efforts, the Ministry is embracing an 'evergreen' approach for maintaining and enhancing Ontario's digital soil mapping data.

As an example, improved topography/slope information available through new technology will be incorporated in a forthcoming digital update of the existing Canada Land Inventory (CLI) mapping for agricultural soil. As it becomes available, this new information is being applied to CLI ratings across Ontario. OMAFA is committed to making ongoing improvements to ensure CLI data is as accurate as possible. The work currently underway is anticipated to be completed in 2026/27. Until any future release of updated data, municipalities can continue using existing agricultural capability mapping (i.e., CLI ratings).

When you embark on implementing an Agricultural System approach or updating/refining existing official plan mapping, please contact OMAFA staff to discuss the data that may be available to support your project. You can locate OMAFA land use planning staff on [OMAFA's website](#). Below you will find a summary list of the additional resources related to Agricultural System planning and implementation.

Please share this correspondence with the appropriate planning and economic development department staff in your municipality.

Sincerely,



Andrea Martin
Director
Food Safety and Environmental Policy Branch

Resources

[Provincial Planning Statement, 2024](#)

[Implementation Procedures of the Agricultural System](#)

[A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019](#)

[Agricultural Systems Portal](#)

[OMAFA Agricultural land use planning staff](#)

[Economic tools](#)

[Canada Land Inventory information for Agricultural Land Use Planning in Ontario](#)

[Soil Capability for Agriculture in Ontario](#)

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