

DRAFT

COMPETITIVE REGION



The Agricultural System

This Chapter outlines the objectives and the policies for the Region's *Agricultural System*. The *Agricultural System* contains an agricultural land base and the *agri-food network* that enables the agri-food sector to thrive. There are natural heritage features located throughout the agricultural land base, and farm stewardship facilitates both environmental benefits and agricultural protection.

The agricultural land base is comprised of *prime agricultural areas*, including *specialty crop areas*, and *rural lands*. The *agri-food network* includes *infrastructure*, services and assets important to the viability of the agri-food sector.

The Region's Agricultural System, including the natural environment system, will provide a significant contribution to the Region's resilience and our ability to adapt to climate change. The agricultural land base will be protected for the provision of healthy, local food for future generations. Farming will be productive, diverse, and sustainable.

Regional Agriculture Committee and Agri-Food Strategy

Niagara Region has a long standing Agricultural Policy and Action Committee (APAC) with a mandate to advise Regional Council on issues that impact the agricultural industry by initiating, developing, implementing and participating in actions and strategies needed to advance the agricultural industry and preserve the agricultural land base throughout Niagara. The APAC maintains a Regional Agri-Food Strategy, with a mission to support agri-food prosperity and sustainability.

Agricultural System Objectives

1. To protect the Region's agricultural land base.
2. To support a thriving agri-food sector and rural economy that:
 - a) Adapts to new and changing agricultural markets;
 - b) Takes advantage of new agricultural opportunities;
 - c) Diversifies agricultural economic activities and adds value to primary agricultural products; and
 - d) Improves the understanding of agriculture by the general public.
3. To provide an efficient and orderly pattern of land uses in the *Agricultural System*, which:
 - a) Conserve and enhance the agricultural and natural environment systems;
 - b) Preserve capabilities for natural resource extraction;
 - c) Protect the watersheds; and
 - d) Adapt and develop resiliency to climate change.

4. To protect normal farm practices by minimizing the potential for conflicts between farm and non-farm uses.
5. To encourage *agriculture-related uses* and *on-farm diversified uses* that:
 - a) Support the *Agricultural System*;
 - b) Are at an appropriate location and scale suitable to the agricultural area; and
 - c) Contribute to profitable, economical, resilient, and environmentally sustainable agriculture.
6. To provide for a limited amount of non-agricultural uses on *rural lands*.

1. Policies for the Agricultural System

1. The geographic continuity of the agricultural land base, as shown in Schedule **B**, and the functional and economic connections to the *agri-food network* will be maintained and enhanced.
2. *Prime agricultural areas* and *specialty crop areas* shall be protected for long-term use for agriculture.

Prime agricultural areas are areas where *prime agricultural lands* predominate. *Specialty crop areas* shall be given the highest priority for protection, followed by Canada Land Inventory Class 1, 2, and 3 lands, and any associated Class 4 through 7 lands within the *prime agricultural area*, in this order of priority.

3. In the *specialty crop areas* and *prime agricultural areas*, the permitted uses and predominant use of land will be for *agricultural uses* of all types. This includes secondary uses, such as:
 - a) *Agriculture-related uses*;
 - b) *On-farm diversified uses*; and
 - c) Compatible uses such as forestry and conservation of the natural environment.
4. The removal of topsoil and the placement of fill in *specialty crop areas*, *prime agricultural areas*, and *rural lands* is generally discouraged. Local municipalities will be encouraged to enact by-laws to regulate the placement of fill and the removal of topsoil and to require the rehabilitation of lands from which topsoil has been removed.

5. The Region encourages the continued operation and expansion of agricultural infrastructure including irrigation systems.
6. Local municipalities, with assistance from the Region, shall formulate policies and schedules for inclusion in their Official Plans to protect the agricultural land base consistent with the policies of the Niagara Official Plan.
7. An *agricultural system* has been identified in which all types, sizes, and intensities of *agricultural uses* and activities and *normal farm practices* shall be promoted and protected in accordance with Provincial Standards. Removal of land from *prime agricultural areas* may only occur for expansions or identification of *settlement areas* through the time of a *comprehensive review*. Revisions to the Greenbelt Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan boundaries and redesignation of *specialty crop areas* are prohibited.
8. All proposed development and uses will include sustainable on-site private water and sewage subject to applicable Provincial regulations and Ministry approval.
9. Non-agricultural uses should not be located in *specialty crop areas* and *prime agricultural areas*. The introduction of new non-agricultural uses of all types into these areas has a potential adverse impact on *agricultural uses*, natural resources and the natural environment. Permissions for limited non-agricultural uses may be considered through an amendment to this plan, subject to the following conditions:
 - a) The completion of an *agricultural impact assessment* by a qualified professional;
 - a) New non-agricultural uses are not permitted in *specialty crop areas*;
 - b) The proposed use complies with the *minimum distance separation formulae*;
 - c) There are no reasonable alternatives in *rural lands* or in *settlement areas*;

Mitigating impacts from new or expanding non-agricultural uses

This would depend on the size and nature of the proposed use, the existing *agricultural uses*, and on any buffering factors between them. For example, creeks, roadways and other prominent features would be helpful in defining and screening a non-agricultural use from surrounding agricultural operations. Mitigation measures should be incorporated as part of a proposed non-agricultural use, as appropriate, within the area being developed.

- d) There are no reasonable alternative locations in other *prime agricultural areas* with lower priority agricultural land;
 - e) Impacts from new or expanding non-agricultural uses on surrounding agricultural operations and lands should be mitigated to the extent feasible;
 - f) Applications must be supported by adequate technical assessments to ensure that private water supply and private sewage services can be provided; and
 - g) Compliance with policies contained in the Niagara Official Plan, including the Natural Environment and Mineral Aggregate Resource Policies.
10. Proposed residential lots being considered for a consent in the *agricultural system* must meet the following conditions:
- a) Any new lot is of sufficient size and has suitable soil and site conditions for the installation and long-term operation of a private sewage disposal system in compliance with Provincial requirements;
 - b) Any new lot has an adequate ground or other water supply, in compliance with Provincial requirements;
 - c) Any new lot has sufficient frontage on an existing publicly-maintained road;
 - d) Where possible, joint use should be made of the existing road access to the farm operation;
 - e) Road access to any new lot does not create a traffic hazard because of limited sight lines on curves or grades or proximity to intersections;
 - f) The size of any new lot shall not exceed an area of 0.4 hectares except to the extent of any additional area deemed necessary to support a well and private sewage disposal system as determined by Provincial requirements; and
 - g) Proposed lots should be located to minimize impacts on surrounding farming operations.
11. New uses on existing lots and proposed new lots must be separated from existing livestock operations on adjacent properties. Similarly, new or expanded livestock operations must be separated from existing uses on adjacent properties. It is required that local official plans and zoning by-laws use the *minimum distance separation formulae* as their standard for assessing proximity to existing or proposed new livestock operations. Exceptions may be made for agricultural buildings under the same

ownership. Other non-agricultural uses shall comply with the *minimum distance separation formulae*.

12. Where *agricultural uses* and non-agricultural uses interface, land use compatibility shall be achieved by avoiding or, where avoidance is not possible, minimizing and mitigating adverse impacts on the *Agricultural System*, by incorporating measures as part of new or expanding non-agricultural uses, as appropriate, within the area being developed.
13. Any land conveyance for a residential lot shall comply with local official plans and by-laws where more detailed and/or more restrictive criteria are included.
14. Temporary accommodation for seasonal or full-time farm labour may be permitted without severance where:
 - a) the size and/or nature of the agricultural operations makes the employment of such help necessary; and
 - b) where such temporary accommodation does not have a significant effect on the tillable area of the agricultural operation or its viability.

2. Policies for Specialty Crop Areas

1. In *specialty crop areas*, all continuous existing uses lawfully used for such purpose prior to December 16, 2004, (the date the Greenbelt Plan came into effect), are permitted. Also, in *specialty crop areas*, single detached dwellings are permitted on existing lots of record, provided they were zoned for such as of December 16, 2004.
2. *Specialty crop areas* shall not be redesignated in official plans for non-agricultural uses. Non-agricultural uses may be permitted subject to **<insert appropriate infrastructure policies>**.
3. *Settlement areas* are not permitted to expand into *specialty crop areas*.
4. In the *specialty crop areas*, consents to convey may be permitted only in accordance with the following provisions and the general consent provisions in Section A. Within the Niagara Escarpment Plan Area, the policies of the Niagara Escarpment Plan, as amended from time to time, shall prevail unless the following policies are more restrictive, then the more restrictive policies shall prevail. Policies for

**Exemptions for
non-agricultural uses**
**<insert appropriate
exemptions>**

lot creation in local Official Plans can be more restrictive than the following policies and still conform to this Plan.

- a) The consent is for an *agricultural use* where the severed and retained lots are intended for agricultural uses and provided the minimum lot size is 16 hectares;
 - b) The consent is for an *agriculture-related use*, provided that any new lot shall be limited to the minimum size needed to accommodate the use and appropriate sewage and water services;
 - c) The consent is for acquiring land for *infrastructure* purposes, where the facility or corridor cannot be accommodated through the use of easements or rights of way, provided that:
 - i. The need has been demonstrated and it has been established that there is no reasonable alternative; and
 - ii. An *agricultural impact assessment* has been completed by a qualified professional
 - d) The consent is for facilitating conveyances to public bodies or non-profit entities for natural heritage conservation, provided it does not create a separate lot for a residential dwelling
 - e) The consent is for minor lot adjustments or boundary additions, provided they do not create a separate lot for a residential dwelling, there is no increased fragmentation of a *key natural heritage feature* or *key hydrologic feature*, and complies with other policies in this Plan.
 - f) The consent is for a *residence surplus to a farming operation* as outlined in policy 2.5.
5. The severance of a *residence surplus to a farming operation* may be permitted under the following circumstances:
- a) The lot contains a habitable residence, which existed as of December 16, 2004, that is rendered surplus as a result of farm consolidation;
 - b) The severance shall not exceed an area of 0.4 hectares except to accommodate the use and appropriate sewage and water services to a maximum of 1 hectare;
 - i. Proposals that exceed 1 hectare may be considered subject to an amendment to this plan

To reduce fragmentation of the agricultural land base, the retained lot shall be merged with an abutting parcel. Where merging of two lots is not possible, the applicant must have the retained farm parcel rezoned to preclude its use for residential purposes.

3. Policies for Prime Agricultural Areas

1. In *prime agricultural areas*, consents to convey may be permitted only in those circumstances set out in the following provisions and the general consent provisions of Section A. Policies for lot creation in local Official Plans can be more restrictive and still conform to this Plan.
 - a) The consent is for *agricultural uses*, subject to the following criteria:
 - I. supported through a planning justification report;
 - II. provided that the resulting parcels are both for *agricultural uses*;
 - III. the size of the resulting parcels meet the local official plan and zoning agriculture provisions, and:
 - i. is appropriate for the farming activities proposed;
 - ii. is suited to the particular location and common in the area; and
 - iii. provides some flexibility for changes in the agricultural operation.
 - b) The consent is for *agriculture-related uses* subject to the following:
 - i. any new lot shall be limited to the minimum size needed to accommodate the use and appropriate sewage and water services;
 - ii. any new lot shall be zoned to preclude residential uses in perpetuity; and
 - iii. The completion of an *agricultural impact assessment* by a qualified professional.
 - c) The consent is for a *residence surplus to a farming operation* as outlined in **policy 3.2**
 - d) The consent is for a lot adjustment for *legal or technical reasons*.
 - e) The consent is for *infrastructure*, where the facility or corridor cannot be accommodated through the use of easements or rights-of-way.
2. The severance of a *residence surplus to a farming operation* may be permitted under the following circumstances:
 - a) The lot contains a habitable residence, which existed as of June 16, 2006, that is rendered surplus as a result of farm consolidation;

Legal or Technical Reasons

Legal or technical reasons means severances for purposes such as easements, corrections of deeds, quit claims, and minor boundary adjustments, which do not result in the creation of a new lot (PPS).

- b) The severance shall not exceed an area of 0.4 hectares except to accommodate the use and appropriate sewage and water services to a maximum of 1 hectare;
 - i. Proposals that exceed 1 hectare may be considered subject to an amendment to this plan
 - c) To reduce fragmentation of the agricultural land base, the retained lot shall be merged with an abutting parcel. Where merging of two lots is not possible, the applicant must have the retained farm parcel rezoned to preclude its use for residential purposes.
 3. Where urban area boundaries have been established closer to an existing livestock operation, new urban development must comply with the *minimum distance separation formulae*.

4. Farm Diversification Policies

1. *Agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses* are permitted in the following areas:
 - a) *specialty crop areas*;
 - b) *prime agricultural areas*; and
 - c) *rural lands*

Type of Use	Agricultural Uses	Agriculture-Related Uses	On-Farm Diversified Uses
Definition	Growing of crops or raising of animals; includes associated on-farm buildings and structures; all types, sizes and intensities; <i>normal farm practices</i> are promoted and protected	May or may not be on a farm; farm-related commercial or industrial use; compatible with surrounding agricultural operations; directly related to farms in the area; supports agriculture, provides products or services to farms; benefits from proximity to farms	On a farm; secondary use; limited in area; includes, but is not limited to, home occupations, home industries, <i>agri-tourism uses</i> and value-added uses; compatible with surrounding agricultural operations
Example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cropland • Pastureland • Barns and other associated buildings and structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local processing • Farm equipment repair shop • Agriculture research centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agri-tourism uses</i> • Small restaurant • Home occupations

2. Proposed *agriculture-related uses* and *on-farm diversified uses* shall be compatible with, and shall not hinder surrounding agricultural operations.
3. *Agriculture-related uses* and *on-farm diversified uses* shall be consistent with the applicable provisions of the Provincial Policy Statement, and conform to A Place to Grow Plan, Greenbelt Plan, and Niagara Escarpment Plan.
4. *On-farm diversified uses* are secondary to the principal agricultural use of the property, and are limited in area. The appropriate scale for diversification uses may vary depending on the type of use and whether the activities are located in the *specialty crop area* or in other *prime agricultural areas*.
5. Local municipalities through their Official Plans and Zoning By-laws should define, categorize, and provide specific performance criteria for *agriculture-related uses* and *on-farm diversified uses*, in accordance with the provisions of the Niagara Official Plan. Local Official Plans can be more restrictive regarding their *agriculture-related uses* and *on-farm diversified uses* policies and still conform to the Niagara Official Plan.
6. Local municipalities may limit the number of *agriculture-related uses* and *on-farm diversified uses* permitted in association with the farm operation.
7. Local municipalities shall utilize site plan control to regulate the impact of *agriculture-related uses* and *on-farm diversified uses*, in relation to entrances, parking and loading facilities, signage, grading and storm water drainage, buffering and landscaping and landscape protection.
8. Local municipalities, through their official plans, may provide for the implementation of *agriculture-related uses* and *on-farm diversified uses* through the establishment of a development permit system, based on the degree of compatibility of specific uses in relation to the principal agricultural operation.
9. Local municipalities may permit some uses “as of right” through local documents. “As of right” uses may include such *agriculture-related uses* that are small scale and directly related to the farm operation or *on-farm diversified uses* that are also small scale and are compatible with the principal agricultural operation on the property and surrounding agricultural lands.

10. Local municipalities may recognize some uses through a process that involves site-specific zoning. Larger scale *agriculture-related uses* and *on-farm diversified uses* may require a site specific zoning amendment to evaluate the impact and compatibility to the principal agricultural operation and surrounding agricultural lands.

11. The following criteria shall be considered when reviewing Planning Act applications for proposed *agriculture-related uses* and *on-farm diversified uses*:

- a) Whether the proposed activity is more appropriately located in a nearby settlement area or in rural lands;
- b) Whether the use is required on or in close proximity to the agricultural operation for it to support and complement the agricultural activity;
- c) The extent to which the use is compatible with the existing farming operation and surrounding farming operations;
- d) Whether the scale of the activity is appropriate to the site and farming operation;
- e) Whether the use is consistent with and maintains the character of the agricultural area;
- f) The use does not generate potentially conflicting off-site impacts;
- g) The activity does not create a new residential use;
- h) The use is limited to low water and low effluent producing uses and the site is capable of accommodating the use on private water and private sewage treatment systems;
- i) The use does not require significant improvements to utilities or infrastructure such as roads or hydro services; and
- j) The use complies with all other applicable provisions of the Niagara Official Plan.

12. *Agri-tourism uses* may be recognized and regulated by the local municipality. The activities shall be subject to the following criteria:

- a) The scale of the operation is limited and appropriate to the site and the surrounding area;
- b) The use has minimal impact on, does not interfere with and is compatible with the surrounding agricultural and rural land uses;
- c) The use is limited to low water and low effluent producing uses and the site is capable of accommodating the use on private water and private sewage treatment systems;

- d) The use does not cause off site impacts related to infrastructure or transportation/traffic;
- e) The use does not generate potentially conflicting off-site impacts;
- f) Short-term accommodations shall not exceed 6 bedrooms;
- g) For special events, the use represents an occasional activity and is not a regular recurring activity;
- h) The timing and duration of such uses does not hinder the agricultural operation on the site or on surrounding lands; and
- i) The use complies with all other applicable provisions of the Niagara Official Plan.

Short-Term Accommodations

Short-term accommodations may include uses such as bed and breakfast facilities, farm stays, etc. Short-term accommodations are different from temporary accommodation for seasonal and full-time farm labour, as detailed in Policy 1.14.

13. Within the Niagara Escarpment Plan Area, the policies contained in the Niagara Escarpment Plan apply. *Agriculture-related uses* and *on-farm diversified uses* must meet the permitted uses, Development Criteria and policies of the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

5. Policies for Rural Lands

1. The predominant use of lands in *rural lands* will continue to be agriculture, but some non-agricultural related development may be permitted.
2. Permitted uses on rural lands include:
 - a) The management or use of resources in accordance with this plan;
 - b) Residential development in accordance with Section 6;
 - c) Agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses, on-farm diversified uses, normal farm practices, in accordance with this chapter;
 - d) Home occupations and home industries in accordance with local provisions;
 - e) Cemeteries; and
 - f) Other uses not described in this chapter may be permitted subject to an amendment to this plan.
3. Local Official Plan policies for non-agricultural development shall provide direction on the following issues:
 - a) The future pattern and character of development;
 - b) The extent of protection for agricultural activities;

- c) Considerations for the proposed use or development to be sustained by rural service levels and meet access and servicing requirements;
 - d) Impacts from new or expanding non-agricultural uses on surrounding agricultural operations and lands should be mitigated to the extent feasible:
 - i. Mitigation measures should be incorporated as part of the non-agricultural use, as appropriate, within the area being developed;
 - ii. Non-agricultural uses shall comply with the *minimum distance separation formulae*
 - e) The extent of protection to natural resources and the natural environment; and
 - f) Compatibility with adjoining agricultural areas, surrounding rural landscape and local land uses.
4. The *rural lands* along the Lake Erie shoreline contain historic patterns of seasonal and permanent residential development. These uses and expansions thereof continue to be permitted in accordance with local provisions.

6. Non-Farm Residential Development on Rural Lands

- 1. The Region will permit some non-farm residential development on *rural lands* in accordance with the policies of this section.
- 2. The long-term pattern and character of future development within any local municipality must be carefully considered before non-farm residential development on *rural lands* can be approved.
- 3. Proposals for non-farm residential development on *rural lands* must meet the following criteria and the general consent provisions in Section 1.10, in addition to the other requirements of this Official Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the local official plans. Such development is limited to:
 - a) A maximum of 3 new lots (plus 1 retained);
 - b) For residential development consisting of up to three lots and one retained, the minimum lot size will be 1 hectare unless it is determined through a hydrogeological study that considers potential cumulative impacts that a smaller size lot will adequately accommodate private water and sewage treatment facilities for long term operation;

- c) The proposed development should offer amenities such as diverse landscaping and native vegetation;
- d) The proposal should be designed, insofar as is possible, to retain desirable natural features and vegetation, if any, and, in addition, may make provision for
- e) the enhancement of the site;
- f) The development should be at a scale and density suitable to the physical characteristics of the site;
- g) Soil and drainage conditions are suitable and permit the proper siting of buildings, the supply of potable water and the installation and long-term operation of an adequate means of waste disposal;
- h) The proposed development should be consistent with **<insert natural hazards policy>**; and
- i) Proposed developments must be suitably distant from, and protected from:
 - i. incompatible land uses such as existing pits and quarries;
 - ii. possible mineral resource areas recognized in this Plan;
 - iii. livestock operations, in accordance with the *minimum distance separation*;
 - iv. existing and former solid waste sites;
 - v. major existing and proposed transportation facilities; and employment uses.

7. Existing Use Policies

1. This Plan shall not prohibit the continued operation of legally established residential, commercial, employment, agricultural, and institutional uses.
2. In *specialty crop areas*, expansions of legally established structures and accessory structures which bring the use more into conformity with this Plan, are permitted subject to a demonstration of the following:
 - a) New municipal services are not required;
 - b) The use does not expand into *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrological features* unless there is no other alternative in which case any expansion shall be limited in scope and kept within close geographical proximity to the existing structure; and
 - c) The completion of an *agricultural impact assessment* by a qualified professional.
3. In *specialty crop areas*, conversions or redevelopment of legally established uses, structures, accessory structures are permitted subject to a demonstration of the following:

- a) The proposed use must be in accordance with the *Specialty Crop Guidelines*, as amended from time to time;
 - b) The use does not expand into *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrological features* unless there is no other alternative in which case any expansion shall be limited in scope and kept within close geographical proximity to the existing structure; and
 - c) The completion of an *agricultural impact assessment* by a qualified professional.
4. This Plan shall not prohibit the reasonable expansion or change in the use of such legally established use provided the following:
- a) Urban Area Boundaries are not superseded;
 - b) The use is brought more into conformity with this Plan;
 - c) The expansion does not involve a major intensification of land use in accordance with **<insert Natural Heritage policy>**;
 - d) The expansion will not have a negative impact on the Natural Heritage System;
 - e) result in the intrusion of new incompatible uses; and
 - f) subject to an *agricultural impact assessment* by a qualified professional and the following:
 - i. the need and desirability of the operation;
 - ii. regard for environmental, agricultural, and other policies of this Plan;
 - iii. compatibility with existing surrounding uses;
 - iv. access and servicing requirements being met; and
 - v. no new municipal services being required.
5. Further policies guiding the continued operation and possible expansion of such existing uses should be included in local official plans.
6. Within the Niagara Escarpment Plan area, the Niagara Escarpment Plan Policies apply to existing uses.
7. Notwithstanding Sections **2, 3, 5**, infill *development*, *redevelopment*, and resort *development* is permitted in developed shoreline areas of Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, and the Niagara River that are designated or zoned for concentrations of *development* as of July 1, 2017, subject to the following requirements. The *development* will:
- a) Enhance or be integrated with existing or proposed parks and trails, such as the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail, and will enhance ongoing or planned stewardship and remediation efforts;

- b) Restore, to the maximum extent possible, the ecological features and functions in development shoreline areas; and
- c) In the case of *redevelopment* and resort *development*:
 - i. Establish, or increase the extent and width of, a *vegetation protection zone* along the shoreline to a minimum of 30 metres;
 - ii. Increase the extent of *fish habitat* in the littoral zone;
 - iii. Be planned, designed, and constructed to protect *hydrologic functions*, minimize erosion, and avoid or mitigate sedimentation and the introduction of nutrient or other pollutants into the lake;
 - iv. Exclude shoreline structures that will impede the natural flow of water or exacerbate algae concerns along the shoreline;
 - v. Enhance the ability of native plants and animals to use the shoreline as both *wildlife habitat* and a movement corridor;
 - vi. Use lot-level stormwater controls to reduce stormwater runoff volumes and pollutant loadings;
 - vii. Use natural shoreline treatments, where practical, for shoreline stabilization, erosion control, or protection;
 - viii. Meet other criteria and direction set out in applicable *watershed planning* and *subwatershed plans*;
 - ix. Be serviced by *sewage works* which reduce nutrient inputs to groundwater and the lake from baseline levels; and
 - x. Demonstrate available capacity in the receiving water body based on inputs from existing and approved development.

Definitions

Agricultural impact assessment: A study that evaluates the potential impacts of non-agricultural development on agricultural operations and the *Agricultural System* and recommends ways to avoid or, if avoidance is not possible, minimize and mitigate adverse impacts (Greenbelt Plan, 2017).

Agricultural System: A system comprised of a group of inter-connected elements that collectively create a viable, thriving agricultural sector. It has two components:

- a) An agricultural land base comprised of *prime agricultural areas*, including *specialty crop areas*, and *rural lands* that together create a continuous productive land base for agriculture; and
- b) An *agri-food network* which includes *infrastructure*, services, and assets important to the viability of the agri-food sector.
(Provincial Policy Statement, 2020).

Agricultural uses: means the growing of crops, including nursery, biomass, and horticultural crops; raising of livestock; raising of other animals for food, fur or fibre, including poultry and fish; aquaculture; apiaries; agro-forestry; maple syrup production; and associated on-farm buildings and structures, including, but not limited to livestock facilities, manure storages, value-retaining facilities, and accommodation for full-time farm labour when the size and nature of the operation requires additional employment (Provincial Policy Statement, 2020).

Agriculture-related uses: means those farm-related commercial and farm-related industrial uses that are directly related to farm operations in the area, support agriculture, benefit from being in close proximity to farm operations, and provide direct products and/or services to farm operations as a primary activity (Provincial Policy Statement, 2020).

Agri-food network: Within the *agricultural system*, a network that includes elements important to the viability of the agri-food sector such as regional *infrastructure* and transportation networks; on-farm buildings and infrastructure; agricultural services, farm markets, distributors, and primary processing; and vibrant, agriculture-supportive communities (Provincial Policy Statement).

Agri-tourism uses: means those farm-related tourism uses, including limited accommodation such as a bed and breakfast, that promote the enjoyment, education or activities related to the farm operation (Provincial Policy Statement, 2020).

Infrastructure: means physical structures (facilities and corridors) that form the foundation for development. *Infrastructure* includes: sewage and water systems, septage treatment systems, stormwater management systems, waste management systems, electricity generation facilities, electricity transmission and distribution systems, communications/telecommunications, transit and transportation corridors and facilities, oil and gas pipelines and associated facilities (Provincial Policy Statement, 2020).

Legal or technical reasons: means severances for purposes such as easements, corrections of deeds, quit claims, and minor boundary adjustments, which do not result in the creation of a new lot (Provincial Policy Statement, 2020).

Minimum distance separation formulae: means formulae and guidelines developed by the Province, as amended from time to time, to separate uses so as to reduce incompatibility concerns about odour from livestock facilities (Provincial Policy Statement, 2020).

Normal farm practices: means a practice, as defined in the *Farming and Food Production Protection Act, 1998*, that is conducted in a manner consistent with proper and acceptable customs and standards as established and followed by similar agricultural operations under similar circumstances; or makes use of innovative technology in a manner consistent with proper advanced farm management practices. Normal farm practices shall be consistent with the *Nutrient Management Act, 2002* and regulations made under that Act (Provincial Policy Statement, 2020).

On-farm diversified uses: means uses that are secondary to the principal agricultural use of the property, and are limited in area. *On-farm diversified uses* include, but are not limited to, home occupations, home industries, *agri-tourism uses*, and uses that produce value-added agricultural products. Ground-mounted solar facilities are permitted in *prime agricultural areas*, including *specialty crop areas*, only as *on-farm diversified uses* (Provincial Policy Statement).

Prime agricultural area: means areas where *prime agricultural lands* predominate. This includes areas of *prime agricultural lands* and associated Canada Land Inventory Class 4 through 7 lands, and additional areas where there is a local concentration of farms which exhibit characteristics of ongoing agriculture. *Prime agricultural areas* may be identified by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food using guidelines developed by the Province as amended from time to time. A *prime agricultural area* may also be identified through an alternative agricultural land evaluation system approved by the Province (Provincial Policy Statement, 2020).

Prime agricultural land: means *specialty crop areas* and/or Canada Land Inventory Class 1, 2, and 3 lands, as amended from time to time, in this order of priority for protection (Provincial Policy Statement, 2020).

Redevelopment: means the creation of new units, uses or lots on previously developed land in existing communities, including *brownfield sites* (Provincial Policy Statement, 2020).

Residence surplus to a farming operation: means an existing habitable farm residence that is rendered surplus as a result of farm consolidation (the acquisition of additional farm parcels to be operated as one farm operation). (Provincial Policy Statement, 2020).

Rural lands: means lands which are located outside *settlement areas* and which are outside *prime agricultural areas* (Provincial Policy Statement).

Settlement areas: Includes both *urban settlement areas* and *rural settlement areas*:

- a) **Urban settlement area:** Lands located within the urban settlement boundary as identified in Schedule A. *Urban settlements* are made up of *built-up areas*, *designated greenfield areas*, and *excess lands*.
- b) **Rural settlement area:** Existing hamlets that are delineated in Schedule A of the Niagara Official Plan. *Rural settlements* are serviced by individual private on-site water and/or private wastewater systems, contain a limited amount of undeveloped lands that are designated for development and are subject to Official Plan policies that limit growth.
(Based on Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 definition and modified for the Niagara Official Plan).

Specialty crop area: means areas designated using guidelines developed by the Province, as amended from time to time. In these areas, specialty crops are predominantly grown such as tender fruits (peaches, cherries, plums), grapes, other fruit crops, vegetable crops, greenhouse crops, and crops from agriculturally developed organic soil, usually resulting from:

- a) soils that have suitability to produce specialty crops, or lands that are subject to special climatic conditions, or a combination of both;
- b) farmers skilled in the production of specialty crops; and
- c) a long-term investment of capital in areas such as crops, drainage, infrastructure and related facilities and services to produce, store, or process specialty crops.
(Provincial Policy Statement, 2020).

Specialty crop guidelines: Guidelines developed by the Region or Province, as amended from time to time (Developed from the Provincial Policy Statement definition of *specialty crop area* and modified for this Plan).

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