



# Implementing the Agricultural System

Niagara Region

Agricultural Policy & Action Committee  
(APAC)

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OMAFRA

# Today's discussion

Significance of the agri-food sector and rationale for the Agricultural System approach

Provincial Agricultural System policy

- Greenbelt Plan, A Place to Grow, Niagara Escarpment Plan

Agricultural Land Base mapping

Economic development

- Approach and resources
- Examples

Future steps

# Greater Golden Horseshoe

Best farmland under pressure

## Agriculture

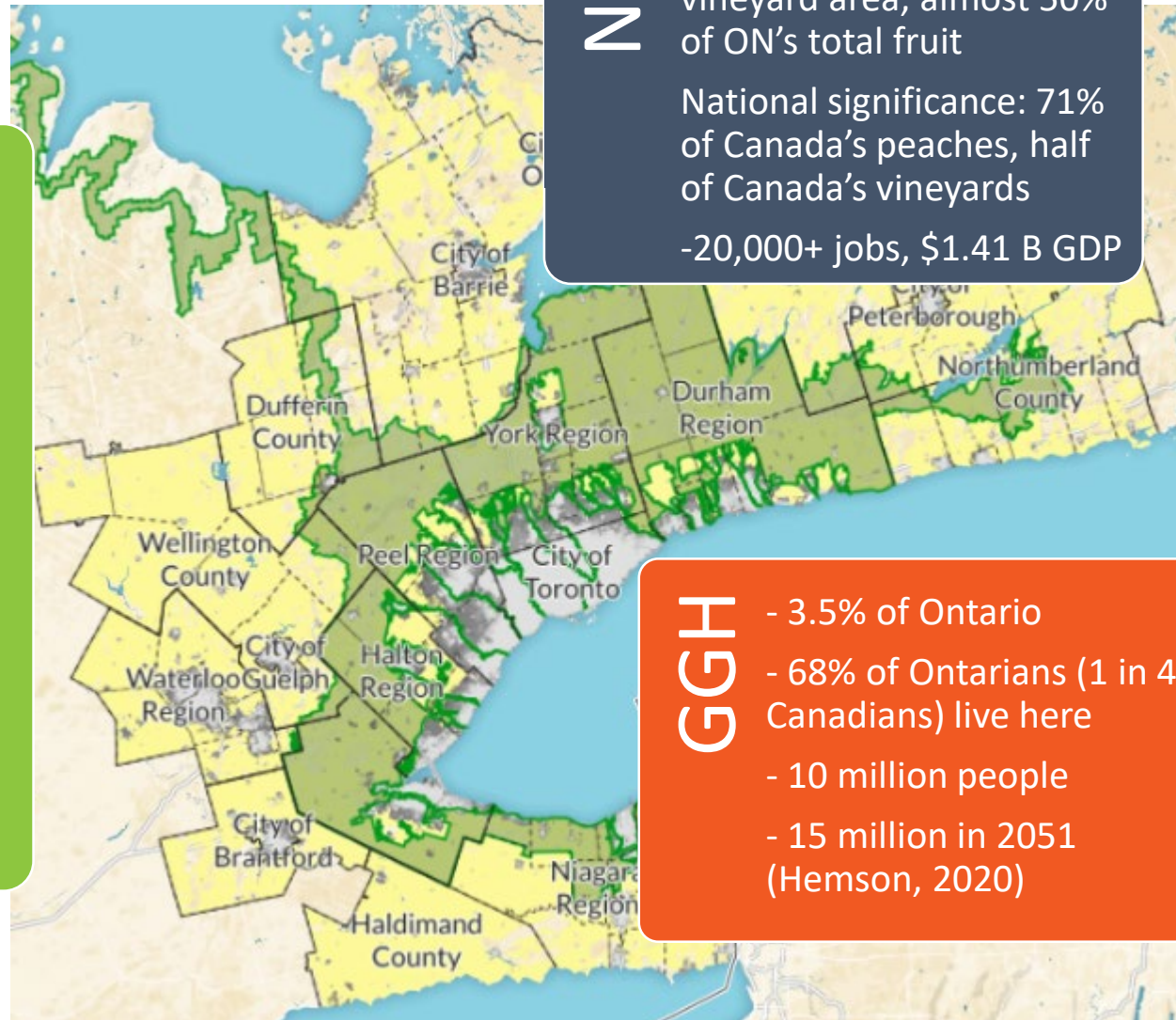
- 40% in agriculture
- 60% prime agricultural land
- 42% of ON's best Class 1 land
- 2 specialty crop areas
- \$5 B in gross farm receipts
- 3000 farms sell direct to consumers
- 38% of ON's livestock
- One of North America's largest food processing clusters

## Niagara

- Gross farm receipts >2.5 times the ON average
- 90% of ON's peach acreage; 92% of ON's vineyard area, almost 50% of ON's total fruit
- National significance: 71% of Canada's peaches, half of Canada's vineyards
- 20,000+ jobs, \$1.41 B GDP

## GGH

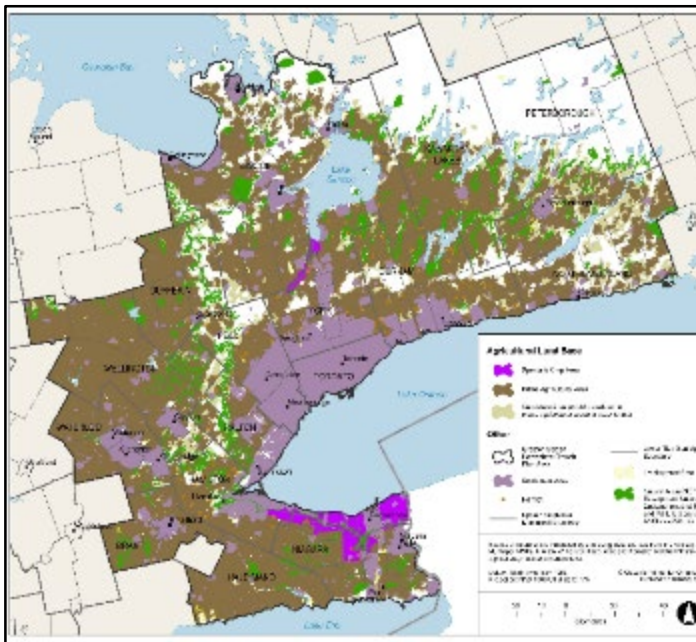
- 3.5% of Ontario
- 68% of Ontarians (1 in 4 Canadians) live here
- 10 million people
- 15 million in 2051 (Hemson, 2020)



# What is the Agricultural System approach?

*An **Agricultural System** is a group of inter-connected elements that together create a viable, thriving agricultural sector*

## Agricultural Land Base



Continuous, productive land base comprised of prime agricultural areas and other lands that support agricultural production



## Agri-Food Network

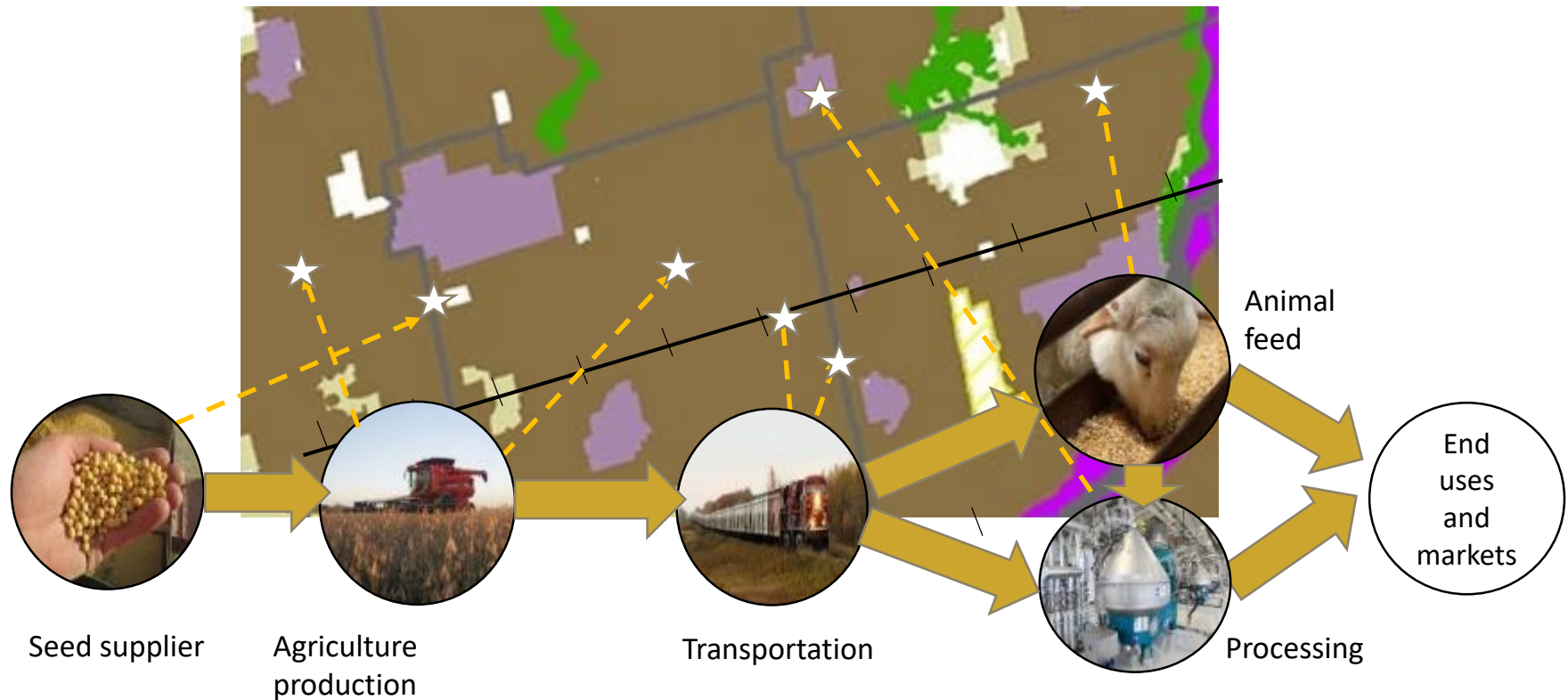


Infrastructure, services, and agri-food assets (processors, feed mills, etc.) important to the viability of the agri-food sector



# Agricultural System Concept

- ✓ Ontarians expect government to protect farmland to support economic opportunities and provide a measure of food security.
- ✓ To make business decisions, farmers need to know the land is secure and supply chain is intact.
- ✓ Enabling the agri-food sector to grow and prosper requires deliberate, strategic planning.
- ✓ Impacts on the Agricultural System are considered before decisions are made

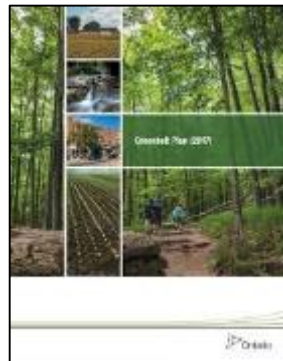


**A thriving agri-food sector depends on a protected land base and a complete supply chain that may extend across municipal boundaries**

# Provincial agricultural system policy

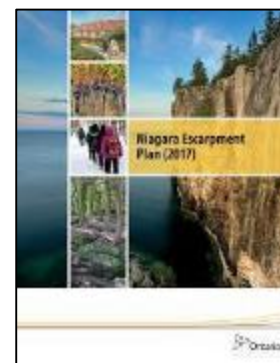
## A Place to Grow and Greenbelt Plan

- Municipalities are **required** to protect the agricultural land base and enhance the economic connections to the agri-food network
- Municipalities are **encouraged** to implement regional agri-food strategies and actions to sustain and enhance the agricultural system and economic prosperity



## Niagara Escarpment Plan

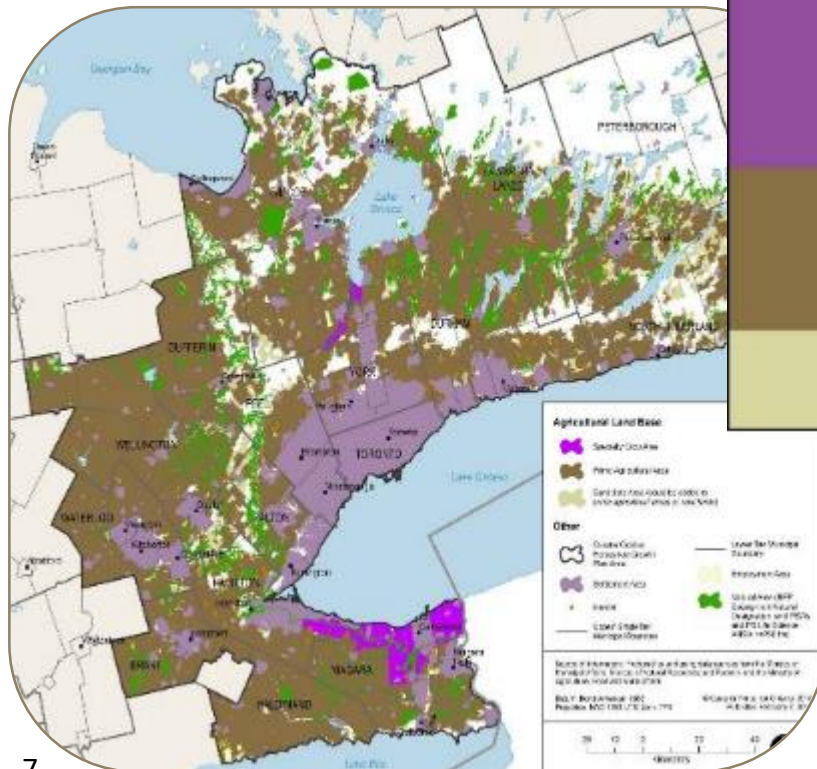
- Prime agricultural areas in the NEP area should be identified according to the broader Agricultural System, recognizing both the agricultural land base and agri-food network
- Linkages to the Agricultural System outside the plan's area should be considered



See Appendix A for detailed policies

# Agricultural land base mapping refinements

- A collaborative process between municipalities and the Province using criteria in the Implementation Procedures



**Specialty crop areas**  
Defined by Greenbelt Plan  
• No municipal refinement

- **Prime agricultural areas**  
Designated in official plans or identified by OMAFRA
- Municipal refinement under specific circumstances

- Could be added to *prime agricultural areas* or identified as *rural lands*
- Flexible approach to refinement

**Outside the agricultural land base**

- Not part of the agricultural land base refinement

- Occur during municipal OP review
- Within the Greenbelt area, provincial mapping applied when it was released (2018)
- In the area under APTG, mapping applies when incorporated into the OP

# Agricultural System Implementation Procedures

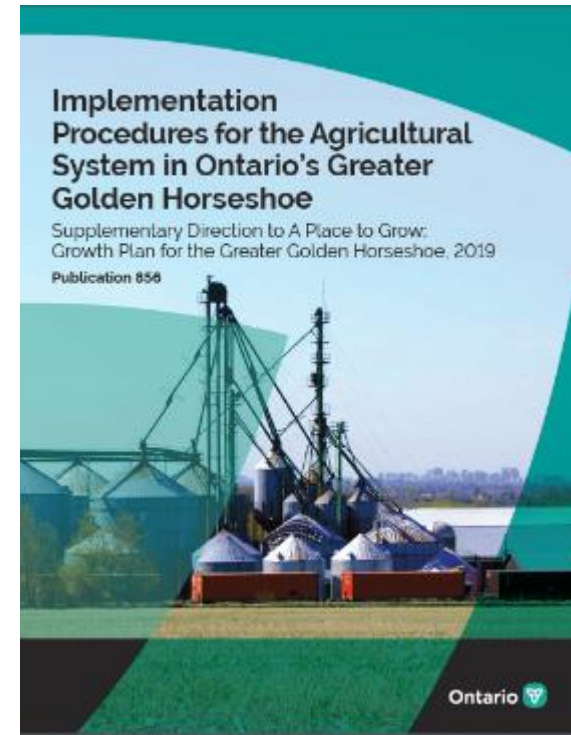
- Guides Agricultural System implementation
- Is “supplementary direction” to APTG

## Land use planning:

- Explains how the agricultural land base was identified, treatment of overlapping Natural Heritage and Agricultural Systems, implementation of the AgS prior to completion of the MCR, and criteria for municipal refinements to the agricultural land base.

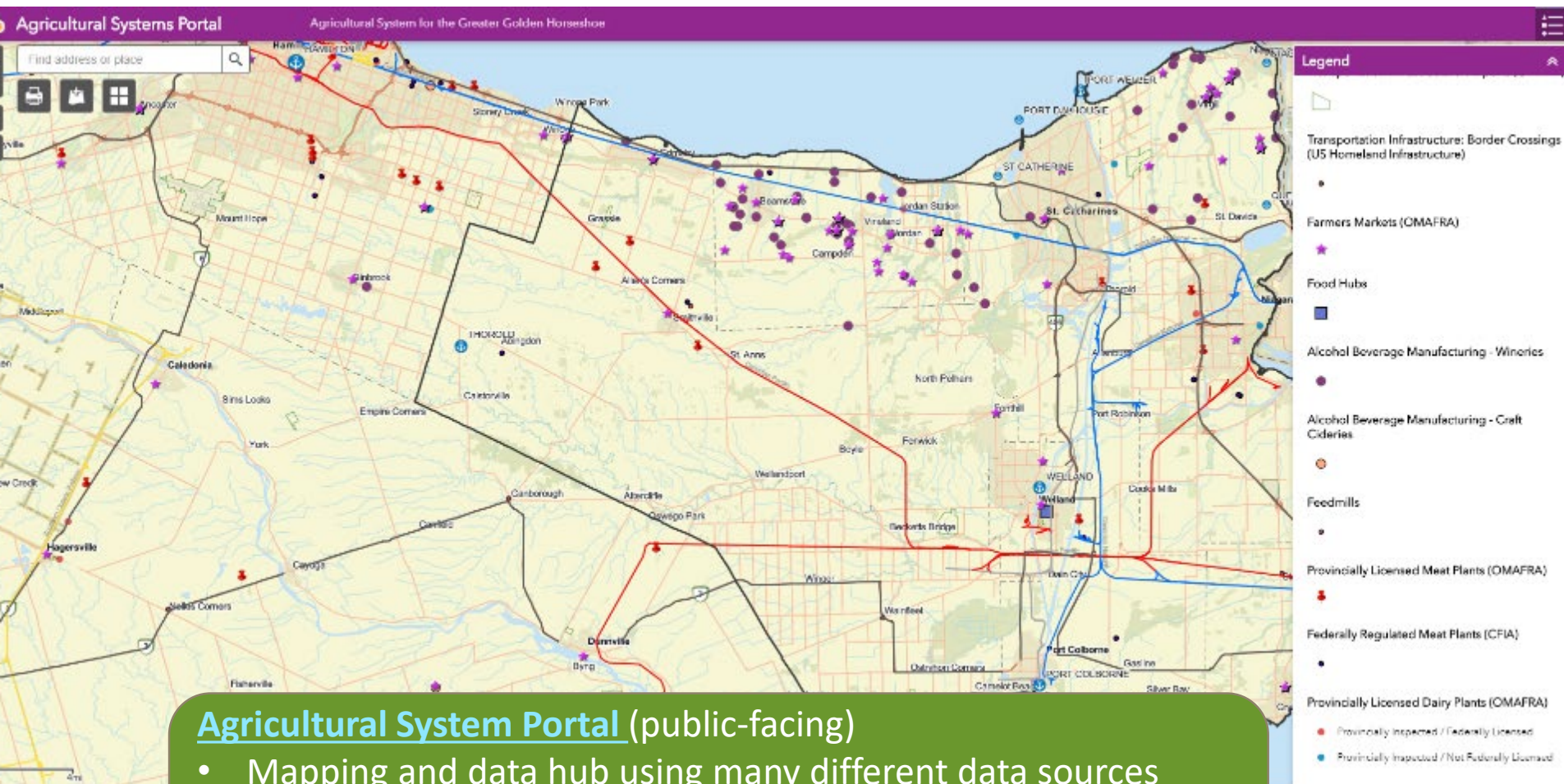
## Economic development:

- Discusses how to consider impacts on the Ag System when decisions are made on investments, growth, programs, policies, and services
- Introduces the agriculture economic development process and provides ideas to strengthen the prosperity of the agri-food sector depending on municipal capacity





# Agricultural System Portal showing elements of the agri-food network in and around Niagara Region



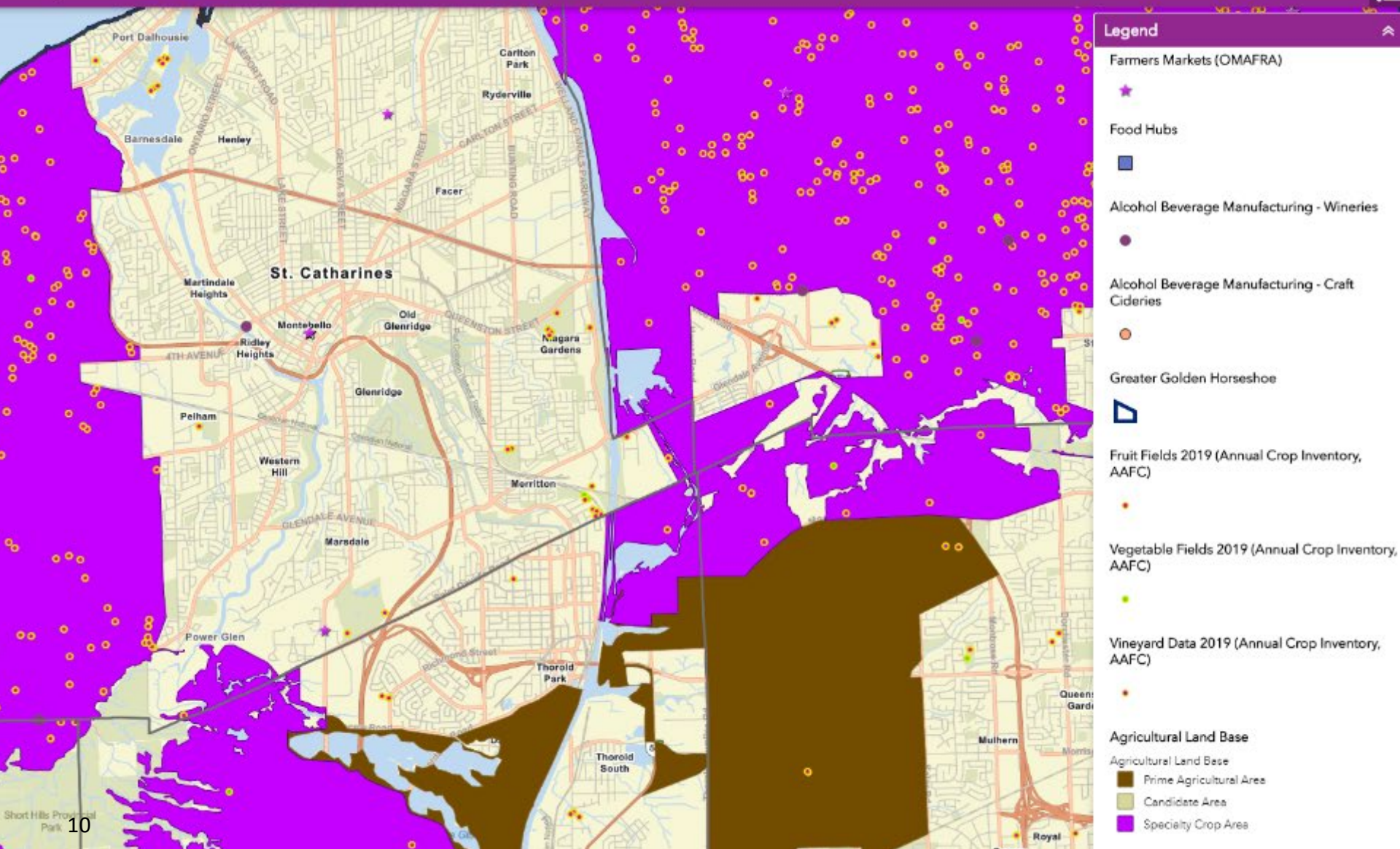
## Agricultural System Portal (public-facing)

- Mapping and data hub using many different data sources
- Used to identify agri-food clusters, attract and locate new businesses, and inform Agricultural Impact Assessments
- Most layers can be downloaded to recreate maps in own GIS

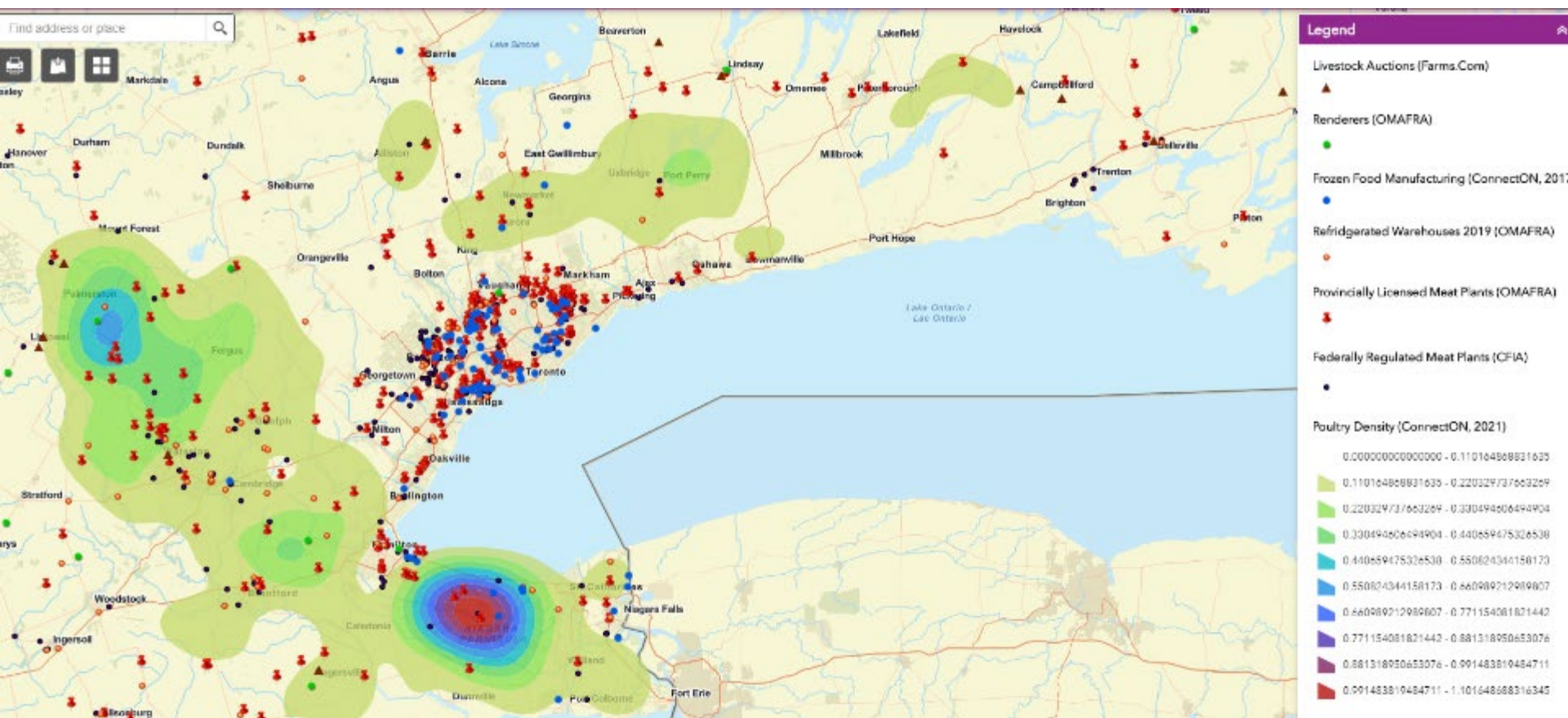


# Fruits and Vegetables

Agricultural System for the Greater Golden Horseshoe



# Poultry





# Agricultural Impact Assessments (AIA)

to improve compatibility between agricultural and non-agricultural uses

- A study to evaluate potential impacts of non-agricultural development on the Agricultural System (farmland, farm operations and the agri-food network).
  - Determines how to avoid impacts (e.g., through site selection), and recommends ways to minimize and mitigate adverse impacts (e.g., through site design, use of buffers).
  - For aggregates, addresses rehabilitation to an agricultural condition where that is required.
- Provincial guidance expected to be released soon.
- **A Place to Grow** and **Greenbelt Plan** require AIAs for
  - Settlement area boundary expansions
  - Mineral aggregate operations
  - Infrastructure projects
- **Niagara Escarpment Plan** requires AIAs for
  - Mineral aggregate operations
  - Infrastructure projects





# Agriculture Economic Development

## What is it?

The Agriculture Economic Development resource, helps create the right conditions for local agri-business to prosper.

## Purpose:

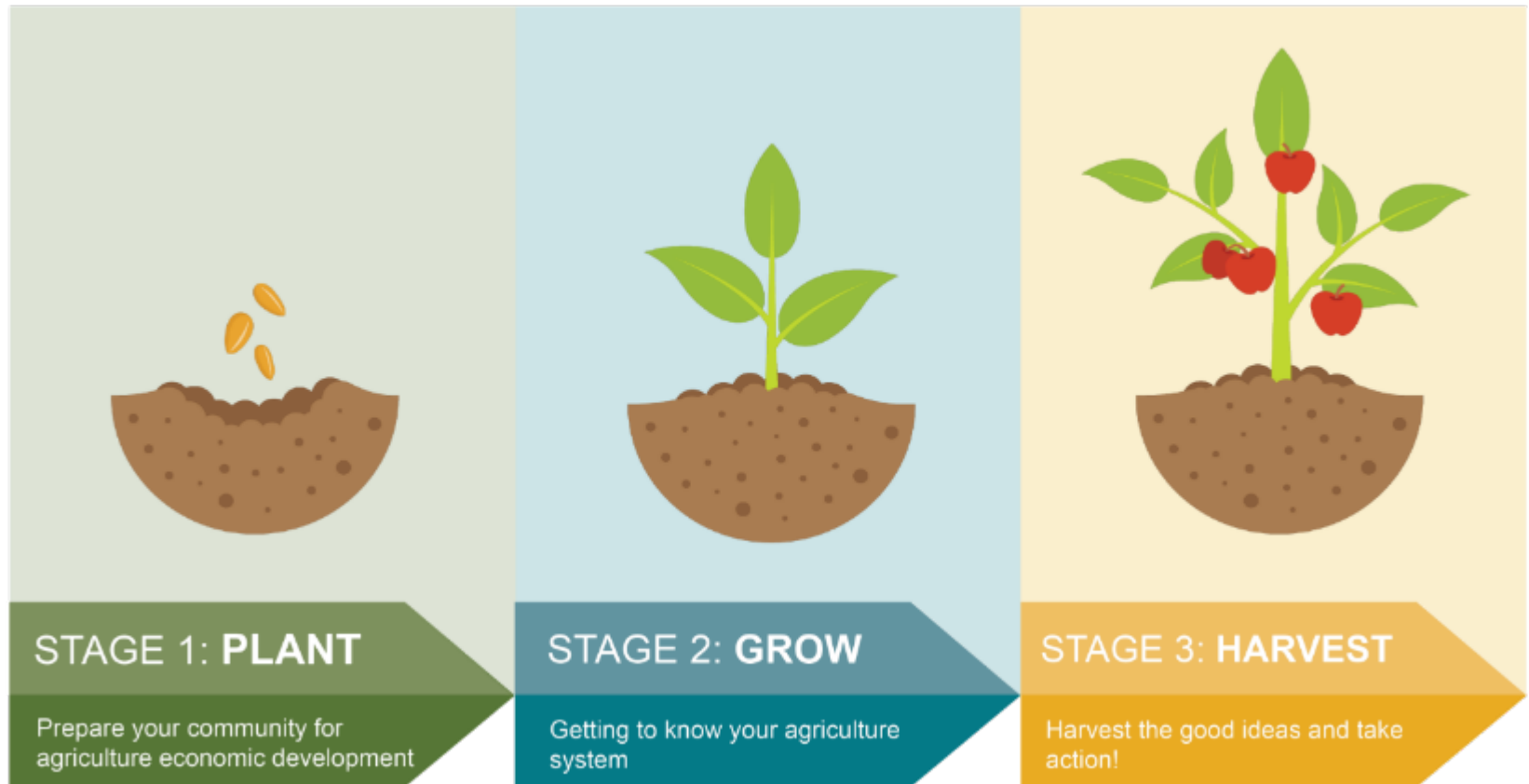
The Agriculture Economic Development resource helps communities to:

- Identify opportunities, assets and challenges to agriculture economic development
- Support their community strategic planning process



A Resource Guide for  
Communities

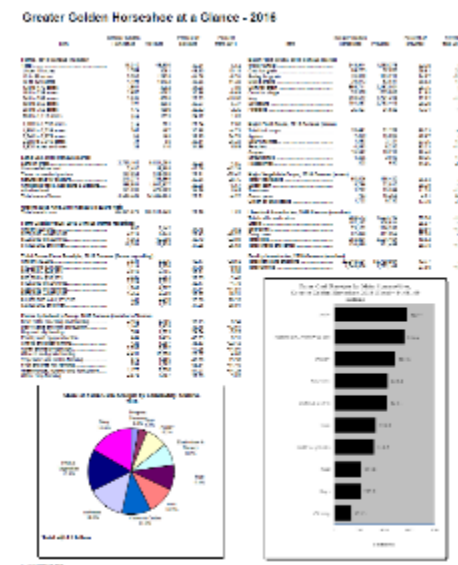
# Agriculture Economic Development: A Process for Change



# Supporting Communities: Know the Sector to Grow the Sector

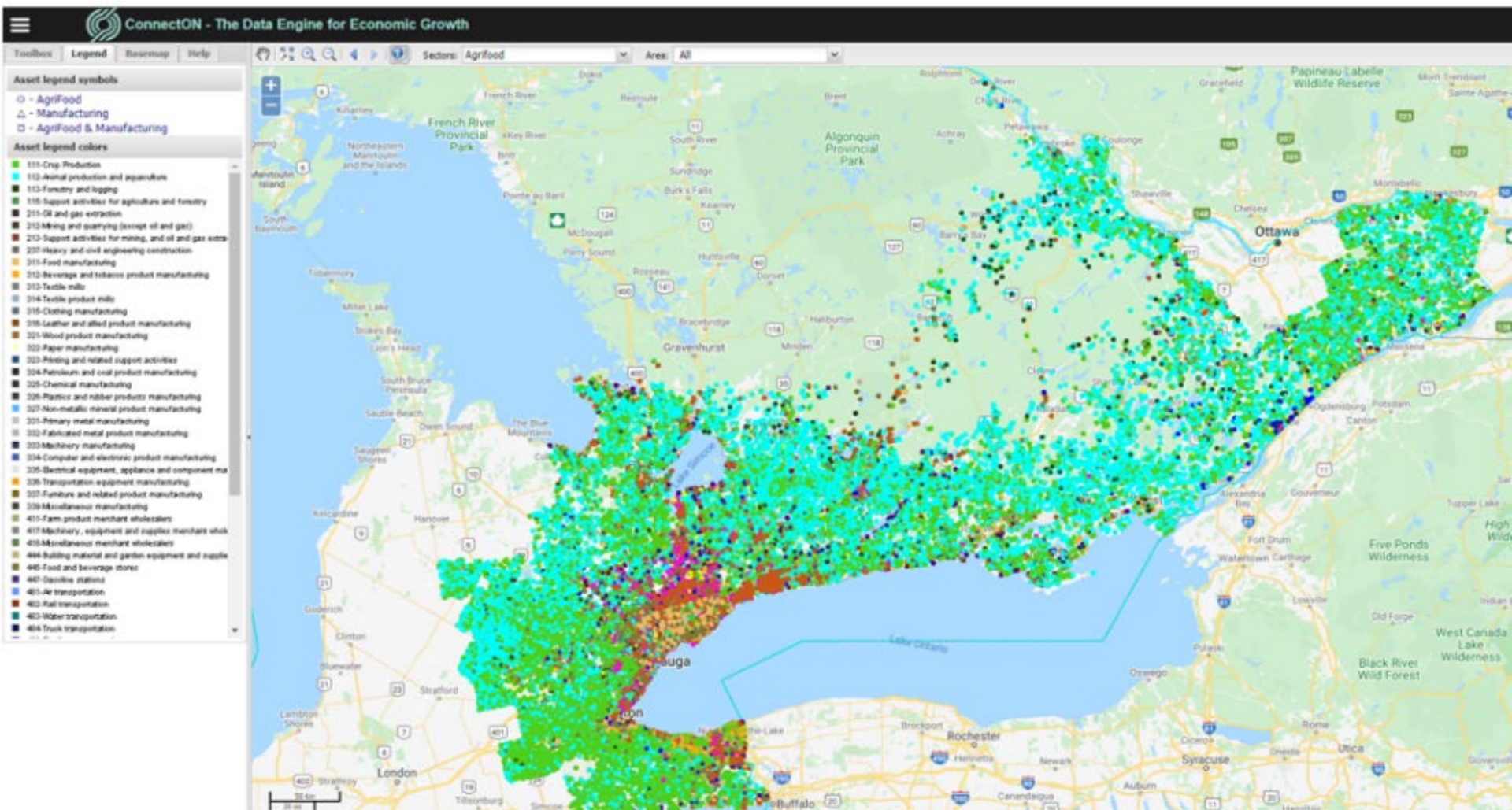
Data can help communities identify strategic opportunities to grow the sector and support an Ag Systems Approach

- [OMAFRA Agricultural Information Atlas](#)
- [Census of Agriculture](#)
- [OMAFRA Agricultural Census Maps](#)
- [AAFC Soil Survey Reports](#)
- [County Agricultural Profiles](#)
- [County Business Profiles](#)
- [OMAFRA Ag System Portal](#)
- [OMAFRA's Regional Economic Analysis Tool \(Analyst\)](#)
- [GHFFA's ConnectON Asset Mapping Tool](#)



# ConnectON agri-food business assets

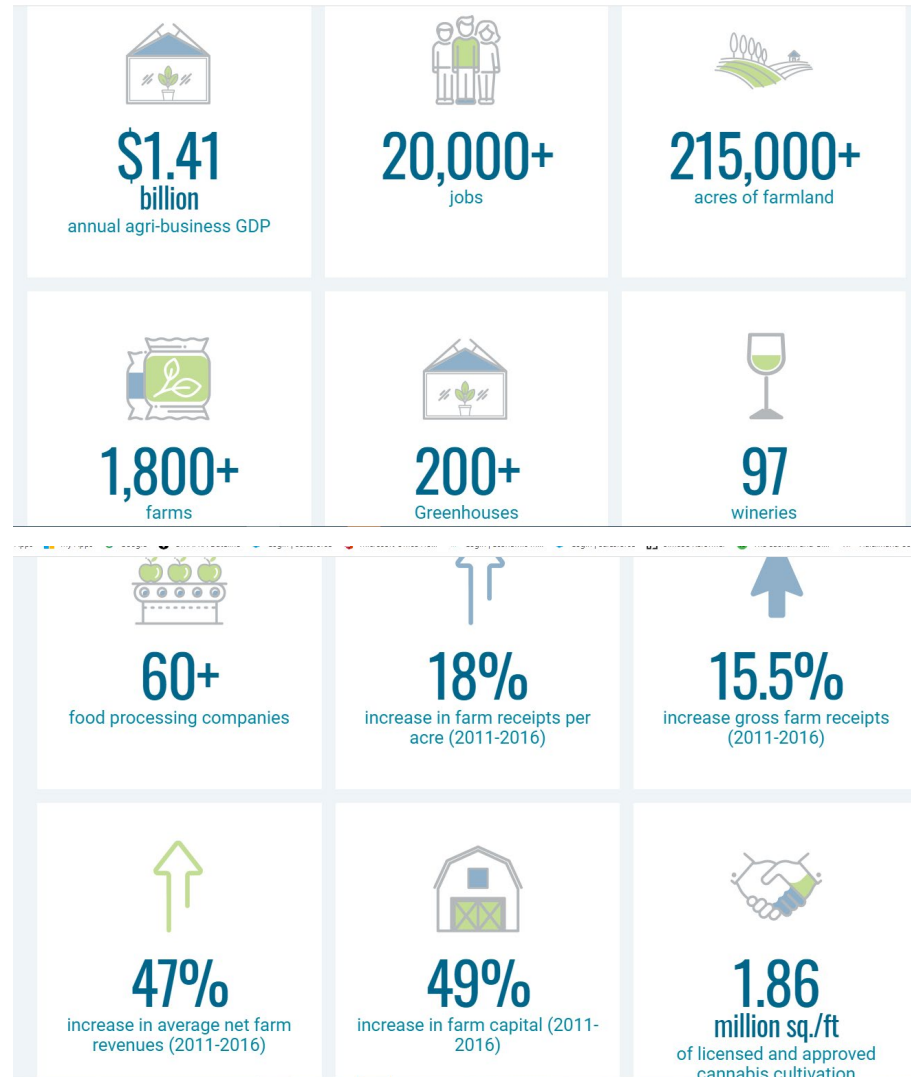
## Expanding province-wide





# Know the Sector to Grow the Sector

## Niagara's Agri Business



## STAGE 1: PLANT

Prepare your community for agriculture economic development

The first step is to plant the seed:

- develop an understanding of community readiness
- build a baseline understanding of local agriculture
- identify and share opportunities for agriculture economic development
- organize an advisory committee or leadership team and
- provide direction to identified collaborators (roles and responsibilities).

## STAGE 2: GROW

### Getting to know your agriculture system

The next step is to build an inventory of what is going on in the *Agriculture System* in the community. From this baseline data, trends and strengths can be identified. Conversations are held about the *Agriculture System* with local collaborators. Opportunities are identified to provide the evidence needed to garner support for new initiatives:

- develop an inventory of activities taking place across the *Agriculture System*
- engage with the agricultural community (e.g., surveys, focus groups) and
- conduct data analysis, environmental scans and opportunity identification.

## STAGE 3: HARVEST

Harvest the good ideas and take action!

After identifying community priorities, an action plan can be developed to achieve the community's goals. Across the agri-food value chain, action areas could include:

- stakeholder engagement
- communications and marketing
- business development
- workforce and leadership development
- investment attraction
- agriculture infrastructure and land use planning and
- research and innovation.



# NIAGARA AGRICULTURE PROFILE

# NIAGARA AGRICULTURE ECONOMIC IMPACT

→ [niagaracanada.com/key-sectors/agri-business/](https://niagaracanada.com/key-sectors/agri-business/)

Apps My Apps Google OMAFRA Dateline Login | Salesforce Microsoft Office Ho... Login | Economic M... Login | Salesforce Simcoe Reformer The Sackem and GL... HP Haldimand County/...

OVERVIEW **RESOURCES** REPORTS

Niagara College's Agriculture and Environment Innovation Centre works with private and public sector partners to develop innovative solutions to address today's challenges in precision agriculture, GIS, computer programming, sustainable food production, plant growth, horticultural practices, greenhouse operations, aquaponics, environmental management and renewable energies.

Niagara College's Canadian Food and Wine Institute has 40 acres of on-site vineyards, a hop yard, culinary gardens, and a greenhouse to provide students with valuable hands-on farming experience and collaboration opportunities with local industry. The Innovation Centre team offers a full suite of services to support industry innovation and commercialization of new products and processes.

Brock University's Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute (CCOVI) has established itself as a successful, internationally recognized research institute that is producing important work focused on growing and harvesting cool climate grapes.

Brock University's Advanced Biomanufacturing Centre pairs the cutting-edge work of Brock's plant biologists and chemists with biotechnology companies that develop this research into innovative products and services. With its research strengths in plant biology and natural product chemistry, Brock's partnerships with Niagara's agricultural businesses are expected to create jobs and economic growth in Niagara and beyond.

Vineland Research and Innovation Centre is home to 20 on-site PhDs who are conducting research in plant biology, viticulture, and horticultural research that is changing

A climate, land base, talent pool and research capabilities that support sector growth

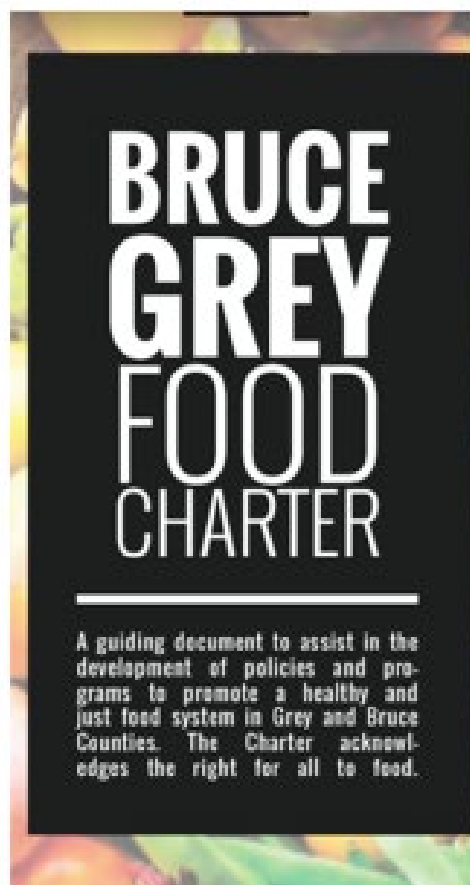
47% increase in farm revenues from 2011 to 2016

200+ greenhouses  
200,000+ acres of farmland

# Economic Sustainability and Development



The Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee advises and assists the Region's work to maintain a permanently secure, economically viable agriculture industry and preserve the character and landscape of Halton's rural areas. The Committee's work includes reviews and recommendations on many aspects of agriculture and agricultural policy in Halton.



An online collection of projects, programs and policies to help you support agriculture and food.  
 To view, click the topic button. A Google Drive folder will open in your web browser.

STUDIES	AGRICULTURAL SECTOR	FOOD LITERACY
	BROADBAND + INFRASTRUCTURE	FOOD SYSTEM
	BUSINESS RETENTION + EXPANSION	LABOUR + WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
	ECONOMIC IMPACT OF AGRICULTURE	LAND USE PLANNING STUDIES
	FEASIBILITY STUDIES	LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT
	FOOD DISTRIBUTION HUBS + INCUBATORS	OTHER STUDIES
STRATEGIES	AGRICULTURAL SECTOR	FOOD
	AGRICULTURE + CULINARY TOURISM	FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT
	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	OTHER STRATEGIES
PROJECT/PROGRAM	AGRICULTURAL SECTOR INFOGRAPHICS	STEWARDSHIP / ECO G+S PROGRAMS
	AGRICULTURAL SECTOR PROFILES	FOOD HUB SERVICES
	ASSET MAPPING PROJECTS	LOCAL FOOD PROMOTION
	COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLANS	OTHER PROJECTS/PROGRAMS
GUIDANCE	AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES	MUNICIPAL OFFICIAL PLANS
	FOOD CHARTERS	ZONING BY-LAWS
	FOOD POLICY COUNCILS	OTHER GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS
OTHER	FUNDING PROGRAMS	ONLINE TOOLS
	HOW-TO GUIDES AND TOOLKITS	OTHER RESOURCES

Notice a document missing? Please email the pdf, or web link to pdf, to [danielle.collins@ofa.on.ca](mailto:danielle.collins@ofa.on.ca).

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# Future steps

- Continue to support municipal implementation (OMAFRA's Rural Planners and Agricultural and Rural Economic Development Advisors are available to assist)
  - In GGH by July 2022 to conform with A Place to Grow
  - On-going
- Agricultural System Portal enhancements
  - Province-wide
  - Data portal
  - User friendly tools
- Release Agricultural Impact Assessment guidance document
  - Training



# Collaborative process

Early engagement with OMAFRA will be helpful to implement both land use (Rural Planner) and economic development (Agricultural and Rural Economic Advisor) initiatives

OMAFRA will share data, provide advice on being consistent with the Ag System mapping method, purpose and outcomes and provide agriculture economic development support



# Thank you!

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# Appendix A: Prime Agricultural Area Policy Summary - APTG and Greenbelt Plan

A Place to Grow: Growth Plan	Greenbelt Plan
<b>Prime Agricultural Areas</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Official plans must conform with the Provincial plans</li> <li>Prime agricultural areas must be protected for long term use in agriculture</li> <li>All types, sizes and intensities of agricultural uses and normal farm practices shall be promoted and protected</li> <li>Minimum Distance Separation applies</li> <li>A full range of agricultural, agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses are permitted</li> <li>AIA required for settlement area boundary expansions, infrastructure and mineral aggregate operation</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lot creation in prime agricultural areas as per PPS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As per APTG but new lots for agriculture must meet minimum lot sizes (16 ha in specialty crop areas; 40 ha in other PAA)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infrastructure, settlement area boundary expansion and aggregate extraction may be permitted subject to an AIA or equivalent; SABE may occur outside a Municipal Comprehensive Review as long as expansion &lt;40 ha</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New non-ag uses are discouraged and only permitted for infrastructure, mineral aggregate extraction, and modest expansion of towns and villages subject to an AIA or equivalent.</li> </ul>

# Appendix A: **Agricultural System**

## Policy Summary – APTG and Greenbelt Plan

### A Place to Grow: Growth Plan

### Greenbelt Plan

#### Agricultural System

- Shall maintain and enhance:
  - Geographic continuity of the agricultural land base
  - Functional and economic connections to the agri-food network
- Integrated planning for growth management, including goods movement and transportation planning shall consider opportunities to support and enhance the Ag System
- Municipalities encouraged to implement regional agri-food strategies and other approaches by
  - Supporting access to healthy, local and affordable food, urban and near urban agriculture, agri-food and agri-product businesses
  - Supporting opportunities for infrastructure, services and assets in the agri-food network. Negative impacts to the agri-food network should be assessed, minimized and mitigated
  - Consulting with agricultural advisory committees or liaison officers
- Where agricultural uses and non-agricultural uses interface, impacts to the Ag System must be avoided, minimized and mitigated; mitigation to be incorporated as part of the non-agricultural use
- Agricultural land base refinements may be proposed by the upper tier municipality for Provincial approval during municipal comprehensive review (MCR) based on provincial Implementation Procedures



# Appendix A: **Agricultural System**

## Niagara Escarpment Plan Area

### Niagara Escarpment Plan

- Prime agricultural areas in the plan areas should be identified according to the broader Agricultural System, recognizing both the agricultural land base and agri-food network
- Linkages to the Agricultural System outside the plan's area should be considered
- Impacts to prime agricultural areas must be avoided, minimized and mitigated
- Municipalities delineate and incorporate prime agricultural area mapping into their official plans including the NEP. This will occur during municipal comprehensive review
- Prime agricultural area policies in the NEP apply (e.g., permitted uses, lot creation)