

BEYOND THE SOIL CLASS



Ontario's farmland is a finite and non-renewable resource that we cannot afford to lose. Farmland provides us with food, fuel, fibre, flowers, and more, and every Ontarian relies on it in one way or another. Even so, we lose thousands acres of farmland every week to non-agricultural development including urban sprawl and aggregate extraction. This rate of loss is unsustainable and will impact future generations.

Protecting farmland is crucial because without farmland, farming is not possible.

Ontario's farmland has been sorted into classes that show how capable it is of supporting agriculture. The surveys that created this classification system provide valuable data about the land, however these classes don't tell the whole story. While soils that fall into higher-ranked classes are typically better at producing traditional row crops (corn, soybeans, wheat) and horticulture, the soils that fall into lower-ranked classes are still a highly valuable agricultural resource capable of supporting a large variety of agricultural activities, such as tender fruit and livestock production. All of our agricultural land is worthy of protection.

Ontario's Agricultural Sector is Diverse

Ontario farmers produce over 200 commodities on a commercial scale.

Diversity within the agricultural sector ensures that the sector remains resilient and strong for both the consumers and the more than 837,000 Ontarians it employs.

Did you know that many crops have different preferences when it comes to the type of soil they like? A soil that may not produce high yields of one crop may just have the characteristics a different crop needs to flourish!

All of Ontario's farmland is valuable and capable of producing food for future generations of Ontarians.

Ontario's agricultural land is as diverse as the range of crops it produces. Having the farmland on which a wide variety of crops can be produced is key to protecting the resilience of our agricultural sector.

More Than an Agricultural Resource

In addition to producing food, fuel, fibre, and flowers, farmlands can also provide a range of ecosystem services that benefit the surrounding landscape like water filtration, flood mitigation, and wildlife habitat!

Farmers are stewards of the land, and they work hard to protect our valuable resources while producing fresh food for Ontarians. The potential to sequester carbon in our farmlands is huge, and could make a big difference for the future. The more farmland that is permanently protected, the more farmland we can put to work for the environment.

We Need Stronger Protections

Ontario's farmland is a non-renewable resource, the loss of which will impact future generations greatly. Maintaining a contiguous land base will help ensure the strength of our agricultural sector and protect our diverse array of agricultural soils, so that we are always able to produce a range of agricultural products. Soils that fall into lower-ranked classes are still valuable resources. We need strong, long-lasting protections for all of Ontario's farmland.

Learn more about what farmland that falls outside of the prime agricultural designation can do:



Some tender fruit crops, like peaches, cherries, and more, do well on coarser soils that drain quickly, even though these soils may be considered poor for the production of typical row crops like corn or soybeans.

Grapes can also do well on quickly draining soil. A thriving wine industry can be built on lands that are not considered ideal for traditional row crops.



Permanent pastures, like those used for beef cattle and other grazing animals, can be established on lands that have slopes too steep for machinery, or on land too stony for cropping. These pastures can also provide great habitat for grassland birds, including species at risk like the Bobolink and the Eastern Meadowlark.

Conventional crops like corn, soybeans, and wheat can do well on many types of soil. There are management techniques available that farmers can use to work with the land and overcome limitations.



Some farms in southern Ontario are experimenting with cultivating rice, which can do well on soils that retain water.

Clay soils have good water and nutrient retention, which can help crops during times of drought.



Ontario has an innovative agricultural sector that is constantly evolving. Farmers continue to produce new crops and develop management techniques to adapt to changing opportunities. Land that may not be considered 'good' for agriculture now may be well-suited for different crops in the future.

#beyondthesoilclass



Possibility grows here.

