

NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE

**Standing Policy
2017-2018**



Introduction

Since 1895, the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture has represented the interests of Nova Scotia's agricultural community. Today its members account for over 90% of all agricultural production in Nova Scotia. With an organization structure that includes representation from 13 county and regional federations and 27 recognized agricultural commodity groups, the Federation brings together over 2400 individual farm businesses representing all aspects of primary agriculture in the province.

The advocacy areas that the Federation prioritizes are addressed through standing policy, resolutions and committee work. The Federation also has positions on issues. Progress updates on each of the advocacy areas are presented to Executive Committee, Council of Leaders, News and Views, and the NSFA AGM.

The advocacy areas are guided by the principal Vision and Mission of NSFA.

Our Vision:

"A competitive and sustainable future for the farming community in Nova Scotia."

Our Mission:

"To enable a sustainable future for the farming community by building farm businesses that are focused on the triple bottom line – that being financially viable, ecologically and socially responsible."

Members of the NSFA

NSFA Affiliated Commodity Groups

1. Chicken Farmers of Nova Scotia
2. Chicken Producers Association of Nova Scotia
3. Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia
4. Dairy Farmers of Nova Scotia
5. Egg Farmers of Nova Scotia
6. Goat Association of Nova Scotia
7. Grape Growers Association of Nova Scotia
8. Greenhouse Nova Scotia
9. Hatching Eggs Association of Nova Scotia
10. Horticulture Nova Scotia (Berry)
11. Horticulture Nova Scotia (Vegetable)
12. Nova Scotia Potato Marketing Board
13. Landscape Nova Scotia
14. Maple Producers Association of Nova Scotia
15. Nova Scotia Beekeepers Association
16. Nova Scotia Cattle Producers
17. Nova Scotia Fox Breeders Association
18. Nova Scotia Fruit Growers Association
19. Nova Scotia Greenhouse Vegetable Marketing Board
20. Nova Scotia Mink Breeders Association
21. Nova Scotia Young Farmers Forum
22. Organic Council of Nova Scotia
23. Pork Nova Scotia
24. Sheep Producers Association of Nova Scotia
25. Soil and Crop Improvement Association of Nova Scotia
26. Turkey Farmers of Nova Scotia
27. West Nova Agro Commodities Limited
28. Wild Blueberry Producers Association of Nova Scotia

County/Regional Federations

1. Annapolis County
2. Antigonish/Guysborough Counties
3. Cape Breton / Richmond Counties
4. Colchester County
5. Cumberland County
6. Digby County
7. Halifax-East Hants
8. Hants County
9. Inverness/Victoria Counties
10. Kings County
11. Lunenburg/Queens Counties
12. Pictou-North Colchester
13. Yarmouth / Shelburne Counties

Corresponding Members

1. Women's Institute of Nova Scotia
2. Nova Scotia 4-H Council
3. Farmers Markets of Nova Scotia
4. Perennia

Agricultural Land

Agricultural land is land that is managed for farm use and land with agricultural potential. These uses include pasture land, crop land, horticultural land, maple groves, Christmas tree, orchards and class 2, 3, and 4 soils as defined by the Canadian Land Inventory. Ensuring availability of agricultural land allows for future generations to farm.

There are many issue areas that are impacting agricultural land use. According to the “Preservation of Agricultural Land” report by the Agriculture Land Review Committee, Nova Scotia has a little over 29% (1.57 million hectares) of its land classed as Agriculture. Of these 1.57 million hectares, 1.82 thousand hectares was being farmed in 2006. The report indicated that agriculture land abandonment, urban sprawl/development, soil fertility and impact of rising water on dykeland are all issues of concern that must be addressed. Beyond insuring availability of agricultural land for present and future generations, increasing land values, property migration when sold and trespassing are all significant concerns among land owners.

In 2017, NSFA convened an Agricultural Land Policy Committee to continue work on addressing the aforementioned issues as well as other recommendations. The committee’s goal is to examine and work toward implementation of the recommendations in the Preservation of Agriculture Land Report, NSFA also believes there should be a provincial land strategy for agriculture land use in Nova Scotia. The committee has representation from varying organizations who are impacted by work directly with agricultural land, including NSFA Executive and Council, Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources, Annapolis Valley Land Trust Society, Department of Municipal Affairs, Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities, and Perennia.

Policy Statement

It shall be the policy of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture to address land issues through a joint committee and collaborative effort. The Federation will advocate for a comprehensive land use strategy that will include an agricultural land bank, 0% taxation on land owned by a registered farm or land actively maintained as farmland by a registered farmer, access to Crown Land for agriculture use, and support for those who bring land into agriculture production. The Federation will also use the appropriate avenues to request at minimum that 5,000 acres of agriculture land be placed under easement within the five-year review of EGSPA.

Labour and Skills Training

Skilled labour is critical to any farm operation. Trained employees increase farm productivity and efficiency. Additionally, with sufficient labour, farms are able to add value to their products which creates an opportunity to increase revenues and grow markets.

The Canadian Agriculture Human Resource Council (CAHRC) conducted a study across Canadian farms and the agriculture industry to identify the gaps and associated costs. The report analyzed the needs, barriers and opportunities for each of the provinces. The Nova Scotia report discovered in 2014, 9,200 people were employed in agriculture and 15% of those were made up of foreign workforce. With that, there were 500 jobs left unfilled which lead to \$15 million in lost sales due to labour shortages. The report projected that in 2025 there will be 11,300 workers required in the agriculture industry. Between 2014 and 2025, CAHRC anticipated 29% of the workforce will be lost to retirement, creating a labour gap of 3500 people.

Through the NSFA Labour and Skills Committee, action has been taken to educate the agriculture community in areas such as finances, computer use and more through the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education's Workplace Education and Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive (WIPSI) programs. While these courses have proven to be extremely valuable and well received by industry, there are other skills that must be worked on in a different fashion than the Workplace Education model. A tool that PEI uses to address the training and skill deficit is through a Farm Technician Apprenticeship Program which is also a designated blue seal trade.

Policy Statement

It shall be the policy of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture to work with the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency to implement an agriculture apprenticeship program. NSFA will study the training needs of the agriculture industry and will continue to offer Workplace Education courses and any applicable Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive training. NSFA will also continue its relationship with Canadian Agriculture Human Resource Council as a member and participant in projects. NSFA also commits to working with appropriate organizations and governments to ensure successful programs for accessing foreign labour.

Programs

The Canadian Agriculture Partnership (CAP) is a Federal-Provincial-Territorial funded agreement that is the architecture for Canadian agriculture policy for the 21st century starting April 1st, 2018. According to the Calgary Statement, investments CAP encompasses include trades and marketing, science, research and innovation, risk management, environmental sustainability, value added and processing, and public trust.

The agriculture industry faces many high risks from disease to weather to volatile markets. Also, capital investments for value added processing take away from the essentials such as agriculture land and harvesting equipment. In recent years, consumer perception of agriculture has been skewed due to misleading marketing and extreme activist organizations. A vast majority of farms in Nova Scotia are environmentally conscious which is evident through high uptake of programs such as the Environmental Farm Plan program which is likely due to the on-farm visit approach offered in Nova Scotia. In addition to all of this, research and innovative technologies cannot always be applied to farms in Nova Scotia because of farm/field size and the diversification on farms. In addition to funding areas identified in CAP, administration of programs has been identified as a concern by membership through NSFA's resolution process.

NSFA has been actively involved in negotiations for the multi-lateral agreement of the Canadian Agriculture Partnership and is continuing to advocate and communicate opportunities for farmer participation in the bi-lateral negotiations.

Policy Statement

It shall be the policy of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture to play a meaningful role in the implementation of programs in any policy framework for Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector. NSFA will advocate for a long-term growth strategy, changes to successor programs and for policies and programs that address the specific needs of Nova Scotia's primary agricultural industry. The Federation recognizes the need for greater investment in the agricultural industry so that programs can play a meaningful role in farm development on a continual basis.

Public Trust

Public Trust, as pertaining to agriculture, is the extent to which the public/consumers trust the value chains which produce their food and other agriculture products. With various avenues available to consumers to find out information, many companies, activists groups and self-proclaimed experts are telling a story about agriculture, but not necessarily the true story about agriculture in Nova Scotia.

Public trust has lessened for varying reasons. According to recent census data, the Nova Scotia population is continuing to out-migrate from rural regions of Nova Scotia to urbanized centres. This alludes to that not only are Nova Scotians further removed from agriculture by another generational degree, they are also becoming further distanced from rural life and understanding the socio-economic importance of agriculture and spin-off industries. The message of extreme activist organizations and corporate food chains has been on the rise and are misleading Nova Scotians about how their food is produced.

NSFA, farmers, and those who support farmers must take a lead on public trust initiatives. The formation of a national public trust steering committee is bringing together stakeholders across the sector including grocery chains, restaurants, farmers and more to develop a cohesive message about agriculture across all sectors. The recently announced National Food Policy has the potential to create an opportunity to educate Canadians on how food is produced in Canada, Codes of Conduct and regulations that determine production practices while gaining trust. Also, the addition of Public Trust Pillar in the Canadian Agriculture Partnership implies the issue's importance on a national scale.

Policy Statement

It shall be the policy of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture to advocate for a collaborative approach for Public Trust during the Canadian Agriculture Partnership negotiations and Public Trust Activities to be farmer driven. NSFA will also work with the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture on regular benchmarking of public perceptions of agriculture.

Regulatory Burden

Regulatory burden is imposed when regulation and policies are implemented and increase the amount of paperwork, cost and time for businesses to operate. In agriculture, regulatory burden can be imposed by varying levels of government: municipal, provincial and federal. Some issues can be multi-jurisdictional which further complexes the burden.

The reasons that regulations are burdensome to agriculture are varying. Outdated regulations can limit growth and often don't reflect the current direction of the industry. For example, crown corporations like the Nova Scotia Crop and Livestock Insurance Commission and the Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board require an Order in Council for some decisions that could be effectively made by the boards which know the industry. Federally, strategies coming into place like the Healthy Eating Strategy have the potential to negatively impact sectors of the agriculture industry. Cross jurisdictional regulations like food safety can cause confusion when deciding which regulations, if any, a farm must follow in order to access market(s). In addition to regulations, public policy and inconsistent service delivery creates burdens as well.

Regulatory burden has been a Standing Policy of the Federation for a long time. New regulations and changes to existing regulations are inevitable; however, should be implemented in such a way that minimally impacts farmers, farm families and farm operations. NSFA regularly collaborates with other stakeholders – Canadian Federation of Agriculture, commodity organizations and others – to ensure that impact is minimal and that changes are warranted. Additionally, when service delivery is inconsistent across Nova Scotia, NSFA advocates to rectify the situation.

Policy Statement

It shall be the policy of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture to continue to monitor, participate and communicate changes to regulations at the provincial and federal levels that will impact agriculture. NSFA will also advocate for an increase in the lending limit for Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board, and for the NSCLIC Board to determine key reporting deadlines.