

2022 Standing Policy

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Agricultural Land

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

There are many issue areas that impact 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. 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 ensuring 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. Multiple levels of governments are working to protect land for various reasons including biodiversity, wildlife, wetlands and agriculture. There is potential for conflict between these objectives.

In 2017, NSFA assembled an Agricultural Land Policy Committee to continue work on addressing the issues mentioned above, 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. The committee has representation from varying organizations who are impacted by work directly with agricultural land including: NSFA Executive and Members, Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture, Department of Lands and Forestry, Annapolis Valley Farmland 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. Land efforts will focus on protecting agricultural land for future generations.

Soil & Water

Healthy soil and available water are essential for successful farms and food security. Availability and quality of soil and water are being compromised by the challenges that come with climate change.

While the practices to improve soil and water are different, they complement each other well as healthy soils retain water and soils are a mechanism to filter water. Protecting soil and water will require investments and projects in the areas of provincial strategies, farm level resources and funding. Provincial strategies for farms to improve soil health and have access to high quality clean water will help benchmark progress of policy changes and program implementation. Farm level resources will enable farms to weigh the pros and cons of best management practices and technologies most applicable to their farm production system. Ample funding for research, knowledge and tech transfer, and industry adoption will encourage province wide industry adoption and implementation of soil health and water use practices.

Increasing resources to develop long term plans in these areas will help farms adapt to and mitigate against the impacts of climate change without negative impacts on farms’ bottom lines. Much needs to be done before the consequences are irreversible.

Standing Policy

It shall be the policy of Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture to work with stakeholders to address soil and water issues faced by farms in Nova Scotia. The federation will also actively advocate for funding and implementation of long-term solutions for continual soil health and clean water supply.

FPT Agreement

Federal Provincial Territorial (FPT) agreements have been in place to support farmers for decades. The Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) replaced Growing Forward 2 FPT which expired in 2018 and was preceded by Growing Forward from 2008 to 2013. These agreements provide program funding intended to support agriculture. Each framework identified new priorities and the cost share between provincial and federal governments. Some programs are cost shared between the federal and provincial governments while others have a national scope and are federally delivered. The framework can be divided between two groups – Business Risk Management (BRM) Programs which includes insurance and disaster programming and non-BRM programs such as environmental protection, climate change adaptation, marketing and diversity in agriculture. The FPT agreements reduce ad hoc payments to industry and meet Organization for Economic Co-operation Development (OECD) standards to be within the green and amber boxes for trade.

The current FPT Agriculture framework, Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP), is set to end in 2023 with anticipation that CAP2 will follow. With the current government already referring to the next framework as CAP 2, it is reasonable to expect priorities under the non-BRM programs to remain the same as those priorities under CAP. This federal government has demonstrated interest in consulting on various matters across government and there is anticipation that consultations can be expected for CAP2. This will give industry associations and farmers opportunities to participate in consultations and inform the needs of the Agriculture Industry.

Program content and delivery haven't been satisfactory in recent years. This is obvious as NSFA membership has passed more than a dozen resolutions pertaining to programs in recent years. Some resolutions were focused on programming to support specific sectors of the agriculture industry while other resolutions were broad to address the flaws in program delivery. With better consultation, many of the industry concerns could be addressed.

BRM programming has long had its faults. The intention for the BRM suite of programs is presumably to support farms with various unmanageable risks including climate change and volatile markets. Many BRM programs, notably AgriStability, have demonstrated themselves ineffective and inaccessible to many farms. The BRM programs are undergoing federal review with input from the National Programs Advisory Committee and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture.

Policy Statement

The Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture will take a leadership role in consulting with membership to inform recommendations and lobby efforts for the next Federal/Provincial/Territorial agreement for Agriculture.

Processing Capacity

Processing is a necessary step to get most agricultural products to market. The complexities of processing – regulatory, food safety, technological advancements name a few – have driven many processors either out of business or out of the province. This has compromised Nova Scotia's food security and viability of the agriculture industry as a whole.

Processing is a cross sector issue and each sector has both alike and unique barriers. Nova Scotia has experienced a significant decline in processing capacity in the meat, fruit, vegetable and dairy sectors in recent decades. Those new to processing are challenged with lack of or conflicting resources to ensure food safety and regulatory adherence.

NSFA recognizes the value and necessity of processing to the success of agriculture in Nova Scotia. Increasing processing capacity in Nova Scotia will strengthen food security and increase opportunity for farms to be more profitable. Lots of work needs to be done in the spaces of financing, funding, clear regulations and incentives to bring and keep processing facility in Nova Scotia.

Standing Policy

It shall be the policy of Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture to lobby for incentives and other tools to increase processing capacity in Nova Scotia. NSFA will continue work with interested stakeholders to identify how we can collaboratively address challenges with processing in Nova Scotia.

Regulatory Affairs

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 complicates the matter.

The reasons that regulations can be a burden to those in agriculture vary. Outdated regulations can limit growth and often don't reflect the current direction of the industry. Inspection has proven to be a challenge across many aspects of the agriculture industry. Access to abattoirs is a barrier for many livestock farmers in Nova Scotia and pending changes under the provincial inspection system have the potential to further limit inspection times and booking deadlines. While legislation is often challenging, there are elements that are promising. For example, The Meat Inspection Act has a provision allowing the Minister to assemble an advisory committee on topics related to abattoirs and meat inspection. Many of the challenges that processors face would be able to be addressed through this committee.

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 industry stakeholders – Canadian Federation of Agriculture, commodity organizations and others – to ensure that impact is minimal and that changes are warranted.

Policy Statement

It shall be the policy of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture to continue to lobby for regulations that reflects the needs of farmers, farm families and farm operations. NSFA will then monitor, participate, and communicate changes to regulations at the provincial and federal levels that will impact agriculture. NSFA will also work with industry stakeholders to ensure compliance requirements are well communicated throughout the industry.