



National Farmers Union - NB
Union nationale des fermiers - N.-B.



NB Highlights from the 2016 Census of Agriculture

May 19, 2017

Further to the Census of Agriculture released by the Government of Canada on May 10, we have lots of empirical data to help us assess the current face of farming in New Brunswick. It paints a picture with a brush of familiarity, showing the declining number of farms and farmers (“farm operators”), the increasing (though only slightly) average age of farmers, and the shrinking livestock numbers. Though the *total* amount of arable land in NB isn’t listed, the total acreage under production of any kind has shrunk by nearly 11% (that’s roughly 155,300 acres, or 628 km² across all types of agriculture) since 2011.



All of these statistics reconfirm our need to foster the new generation of agrarians with education and support program, reclaim and work fallow farmland, and increase the demand and available markets for the products we are producing.

Primary agriculture in New Brunswick makes up a shockingly small fraction of our province’s GDP (this measure of productivity could be a whole other topic of discussion!): a mere 0.8%. If secondary markets such as processors, distributors, and retailers are added, the figure climbs to 4.9% - still seemingly low for such a rural province.

The number of farmers working off-farm has remained virtually unchanged, and represents close to half of the farming population. There is clearly still work to be done to ensure that those people choosing to grow food for the rest of us can make a living doing so.

Here are some things we can be smiling about:

- The percentage of farmers identifying as female has risen 1.3% from 2011 to 22.2% - now slightly more than 1 in 5 farmers
- The percentage of farmers under 35 years old has grown, both provincially and nationally. In NB, 8.6% of our farmers are under 35, while 57.2% are over 55 years, and the average age of our farmers in this province is now 56
- Gross farm receipts have gone up \$6.66M

- The percentage of farm receipts maintained as income rose slightly to \$0.15 for every dollar made - the only province in Atlantic Canada to report a positive change to this figure
- From 2011 to 2016, New Brunswick's beekeepers increased the number of colonies from 7803 to 26618 – a wonderful 214% increase, which is great news for everyone!

Opportunities to be seized:

- Only 1.7% of farms reported using renewable energy systems. In the NFU-NB's presentation to the Select Committee on Climate Change, we advocated for programs to move more farms to renewables. On farm electricity generation and storage would also alleviate some of the stress on farms in the case of power outages to the grid.
- Acreage under production has dropped nearly 11%. How can we get more New Brunswickers farming and more immigrants looking to take advantage of the beautiful farmland and rural life that NB has to offer?
- Between 2011 and 2016, NB had a net loss of 356 farms. If folks are retiring or getting out, how can improved farm succession planning help new entrants get started and ensure that decades of soil building and infrastructure maintenance continues on for the benefit of all New Brunswickers?



The National Farmers Union in New Brunswick exists to advocate for and support our farmers, but requires the strength of the entire agricultural community to move the sector forward in a positive and engaged manner. Consider becoming a member - either as a farm or associate member - to help guide agriculture in our community and improve the statistics in the next census 5 years from now.

English links

2016 Census of Agriculture (English): <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/ca2016>

“Blueberries: a bright spot for New Brunswick Agriculture”:

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/95-640-x/2016001/article/14803-eng.htm>

Liens français

Recensement de l'agriculture de 2017 (français): <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/fra/ra2016>

“Les bluets constituent un point fort de secteur agricole au Nouveau-Brunswick”:

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/95-640-x/2016001/article/14803-fra.htm>