



## 2021 Census of Agriculture Consultation Submission

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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, 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 nearly 63, 000 hectares across all types of agriculture) since 2011.

All of these statistics ([further summary can be found on our website](#)) reconfirm our need to foster the new generation of agrarians with education and support programs, reclaim and work fallow farmland, and increase the demand and available markets for the products we are producing in NB.

As the Government of Canada reviews their census for 2021, the NFU-NB has made an impassioned plea to maintain the questions regarding 'secondary data' that have historically been collected. This information helps assess existing, and develop new, programs and policy, and is very important to critiquing and improving the agriculture industry at home and across the country. The following was submitted to the Government of Canada on October 13, 2017:

- **Re: Tillage and seeding practices**

Though it may be accepted industry-wide, the term "no-till" being used as a synonym for herbicide use is misleading and controversial. We recommend clarification of the terms and blatant differentiation so that "no-till" be reserved for truly ecological practices that maintain healthy soil in terms of structure AND soil life. As is noted in the 'additional comment' section of this submission, a glossary of terms/lexicon is recommended as being accessible when completing the census forms.

- **Re: Inputs and manure**

Tacking agricultural inputs in the future is extremely important for the province. The data gleaned from tracking inputs allows one to track pest trends, soil erosion levels, and trends in inputs themselves. The survey result also remains as a record of the inputs used on the lands which can be useful in later years if there is any resource contamination or health effects. The National Farmers Union of New Brunswick lobbies for the promotion of environmentally sustainable agricultural practices and this data is useful for our organization to track the progress of farmers within this goal.

[\(http://nfunb.org/en/priorityareas/\)](http://nfunb.org/en/priorityareas/)



- **Re: Irrigation**

The use of irrigation can be closely tied to data on environmental and climate conditions in an area. Even without quantifying the amount of water used in an irrigation system, the presence or absence of an irrigation system would help indicate water use and draw on natural resources in a given area.

Use/acre could be a good way to indicate the amount of water used and degree of drought, however this is difficult to track/calculate, and water use is highly dependent on the type of crop/production.

- **Re: Number of paid employees**

The survey asks the respondent to include both family and non-family employees. Agriculture is often a family occupation which affects all members of the household. Traditionally, the male head of the household was the farm operator. It is important to capture the amount of unpaid labour that the rest of the family takes on, especially the owner's partner. For example, one household member may be the legal operator although the business may also rely upon the unpaid work of relatives who assist in the business' operations.

Recognition of unpaid labour has become a pillar in the fight towards economic equality waged by many women's advocacy groups and departments. The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women noted that, "Most of the paid and unpaid workforce is concentrated in tourism, farming, and fishing. As in the household, women's work in these sectors is largely unpaid, diminished as part of their husband's or father's occupation".

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives reported, "The nature of women's unpaid work has a powerful impact on their access to paid work and worsens inequality by limiting the time women have to participate in economic, political and social activities". Further, there were 184 positions available for Temporary Foreign Workers in NB in primary agriculture streams in 2016. The NFU-NB advocates on behalf of family farmers and sees their inherent value in supporting rural communities and contributing to Canadian agriculture and food security as a whole. We advocate for living wages for farmers AND for opportunities for those that participate in agricultural activities and contribute to the viability of agriculture in Canada to have the possibility of being a part of our communities in a more permanent manner. Data on all farm labour is essential to assess our programs, opportunities, and education/training gaps.  
(references are available)

- **Re: Direct Sales**

In recent years, direct sales have become increasingly trendy. More and more Canadians are looking to CSAs, farmers' markets and farm gates sales to buy local products. This



information is useful because it provides a fuller picture of how much money stays in the farmers' community or province. Estimates are that 95% of the New Brunswick food dollar is spent on imported food. The National Farmers Union in New Brunswick advocates for farmers to sell more food locally to meet demands. Direct sales ensure that local food is meeting local demands and infusing local money into local businesses. Further, it shows the diverse ways that agricultural producers sell their products to the public. <http://nfunb.org/en/priorityareas/>

Awareness of market data helps to determine economic trends and where there may be benefits for funding programs to support direct market sales, and where systemic gaps are in terms of i.e. storage and distribution. More than 1 in 5 farms in New Brunswick (22%) rely on direct market sales (*Government of Canada Census of Agriculture, 2016*), which represents an important economic driver and gives a good indication of the agriculture and community landscape in the province.

- **Re: Succession Plan**

With the new face of farming (female, sub/urban upbringing, some post-secondary education; *National New Farmers Coalition, 2015*) and written succession plans being prepared by only 7% of our farming population (*Government of Canada Census of Agriculture, 2016*), succession is a hot topic that could begin to be remediated by policy and programming. Matching programs (for maturing farmers and successors) exist in small numbers and have limited capacity. As family/generational farm succession is dwindling, networking and industry connections beyond the immediate family and community have become increasingly important; as such, programs and funding to help clarify and establish a succession process and find suitable successors should be a priority.

- **Re: Renewable Energy**

The use of renewable energies on farm can be closely tied to data on environmental and climate conditions in an area, especially when used in tandem with the information collected about irrigation. Even without quantifying the amount produced or used in a given system, the presence or absence of renewable energies would help indicate resource use and draw on natural resources in a given area. Comparatively over time, the use and cost of renewable energies can be compared to 'conventional' energy sources, and used in turn to support funding or rebate programs that can benefit farmers (or any industry) and reduce the burden on our current/conventional energy systems and the effects they have on our natural resources.



### Additional Comments:

- **SPLIT HIGH AND LOW BUSH BLUEBERRY PRODUCTION**

In 2013, the government of NB signed a deal with Oxford Frozen Foods to exchange nearly 16,000 acres of prime Crown land, deemed suitable for wild blueberry production for land that had previously been cleared and was not suitable for crop production. This exchange and new acreage coming online effectively doubled the wild blueberry acreage in Gloucester County. The main controversy around this exchange was that many blueberry producers in the area already had applications in to the provincial government to access portions of that land, and they were all “lost”. These statistics, if discernible from highbush stats, are part of how we track changes in the economically-significant lowbush blueberry industry, and the effects of sales and land rights decisions in our area.

- Much of the '**SECONDARY DATA**' questions on the census are what give a real picture of the agricultural landscape in Canada, province to province. Maintaining many of these sections is critical to working toward a holistic system that works for not only farmers, but for our greater population, and economy. Without figures on farm labour, how will we be able to assess the gaps and work toward educating a new generation of farmers? Without stats on inputs, how will we be able to assess their effects and justify researching better alternatives? Without data on renewable energies used of farm, how are we going to justify developing these sectors and ween our industry off heavy reliance on fossil fuels? Without data on farm succession plans, how will we develop programs to help make farm matches, justify new training programs for farmers, and bring back the accessibility of 'taking over the farm?'

The information collected in the secondary data is crucial for research and policy development at all levels throughout the agriculture sector and its supporting partners in industry and community.

- **PAPER FORMS AND PHONE QUESTIONNAIRE** (in addition to online forms) How will access info be shared so those without [reliable] internet or literacy know their options for completing the census? **DEMOGRAPHICS:** Our farming population is aging (average 56 years old) and largely rural. This indicates that the internet is not a reliable assumption for the first choice of method of completion. Access to alternative ways of census completion must be disseminated and easily accomplished.
- **DEFINITION OF TERMS** must be available (minimum online) for comprehension when completing the census so respondents can clarify their understanding of terms.