

Memorandum

Date: May 18, 2021

To: Members of Council

From: Kyle Munro, Community Planner, Planning Department

Subject: The Road to 2051: An agricultural trends study for planning policy in the Town of Caledon

The agricultural sector plays a key role in supporting the Town of Caledon's economy, cultural heritage, and environmental stewardship. With increasing rates of growth expected to occur in Caledon over the next 30 years, protecting the agricultural land base for future productive use is a key priority.

Background

The Town of Caledon commissioned the services of the Wilton Consulting Group to undertake a study of agricultural trends to 2051 to help inform the development of long-range agricultural planning policy as part of the Future Caledon Official Plan Review. The trends study has recently been completed.

The study focused on an examination of varying local, national and international planning policy sources, including a literature review of related academic studies, industry and government reports and municipal and provincial land use policies affecting agriculture. Over 20 interviews were also conducted with local agricultural operators, provincial, municipal and agri-food industry representatives and a community survey was conducted with 230 participants, including responses from farmers, residents and people employed in Caledon. A strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats analysis of the future of agriculture in Caledon was also undertaken.

Three underpinning values inform the key findings of the study:

1. An important relationship exists between agriculture and the environment;
 - The agricultural sector in Caledon provides several environmental goods and services for the community. Conversely, the agricultural sector in Caledon relies on the environment to thrive.
2. Maintaining food production is a part of a healthy community;
 - Supporting an environment where the agriculture and agri-food industries thrive can support health outcomes in the Town of Caledon and the Region of Peel.

3. The agricultural sector and rural communities are core components of Caledon's thriving economy.
 - The Town's rural communities contribute to the economic stability and viability of the Town of Caledon as well as the Region of Peel.

Key Findings

Through the research process, three key groups of findings related to Caledon's agricultural sector emerged.

1. Agriculture is a valued part of Caledon's economy and local heritage.
 - a. The local agri-food value chain matters.
 - b. Supporting the agricultural sector can improve food security.
 - c. The agricultural land base provides ecological goods and services.
 - d. The Town faces intense development pressure and speculation on agricultural lands and should work with developers to integrate space for agricultural uses within new development.
 - e. Educating residents, local officials, staff members and community officials about agriculture is important to foster positive urban and rural connections.
2. Caledon's rural landscape and agricultural system has the potential to provide a unique visitor experience.
 - a. Agritourism presents a significant opportunity as a growth sector in Caledon.
 - b. The Town should support on-farm diversified uses.
 - c. The equine sector is a key part of Caledon's economy.
3. Caledon has an opportunity to embrace innovative agri-food technologies and urban agriculture.
 - a. The Town should explore opportunities to integrate agriculture into urban and residential spaces.
 - b. Innovative technologies will support the agricultural industry.
 - c. Opportunities exist for further development of controlled environment systems in Caledon.

The findings from the research process arrived at three complementary scenarios being proposed for the future of agriculture in Caledon in 2051:

1. The agricultural land base be preserved and strengthened, through actions such as:
 - Establishing a countryside line
 - Implementing a transition-to-farming designation
 - Strengthening requirements for agricultural impact assessments
 - Managing non-farm uses on agricultural land
 - Enacting policies to foster positive urban-rural relationships
 - Strengthening the use of minimum distance separation policies

2. The Caledon agricultural sector be promoted as part of the rural experience, through actions such as:
 - Supporting policy options to promote on-farm diversified uses
 - Supporting agriculture-related uses
 - Implementing an agricultural-sector focused community improvement plan
3. The Agricultural sector be adapted to complement a growing population, through actions such as:
 - Promoting urban agriculture
 - Allowing or providing greater flexibility for small lot agriculture
 - Enabling investment in food processing
 - Incorporating agriculture in community greenspace

Next Steps

Study Consultant, Dr. Bronwynne Wilton, will be presenting the study and its findings to the Town of Caledon Committee of the Whole (Planning and Development) on May 18, 2021 and the Peel Federation of Agriculture (PFA) and Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group (PAAWG) throughout May 2021. The Future Caledon Official Plan Review process will utilize the study results to assist with the review and development of draft agricultural and rural-related policy.

The study has been circulated to the Region of Peel and is publicly available through the Future Caledon Official Plan Review website (www.future.caledon.ca). A copy of the survey results is included in the appendices of the final report.