



**Food and Agriculture in Haliburton County:
Looking Beyond the Census**

A Harvest Haliburton Project

Authors: Faye Adamson & Kate Hall

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2016, Harvest Haliburton undertook a Community Food Assessment in order to explore agricultural production and consumption. They are now continuing with this research in order to create a more robust and accurate account of farming and food production in Haliburton County.

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) develops profiles at the County level based on Census data collected on agriculture, food, and business activities.¹ The Census data profile provides County demographics, a profile of existing agriculture (including number of farms by size, income, activity, etc.) profiles of the populations' food expenditure, production, and consumption activities, as well as a comparison of agricultural data points over the past three Census years: 2006, 2011, and 2016.² The raw Census data can be found at: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/stats/county/index.html>

Although this data profile for the County is a starting point, it is not granular enough to give an accurate account of the farming, food production activities, and agricultural sector in Haliburton County (See Limitations of the Data in Section 10). By presenting the interpreted data in this report to local stakeholders and engaging them in conversations about what is actually happening on the ground, the authors have gathered additional first-hand information to strengthen the Census findings and develop a more holistic picture of the state of agriculture in our region.

Local agricultural stakeholder input was gathered through two focus groups as well as four key informant interviews. Our stakeholders included livestock farmers, vegetable and maple syrup producers, market gardeners, and homesteaders. The valuable contributions of knowledge from these stakeholders can be found in the subheadings “*What we Heard*”.

2. KEY DEFINITIONS

Agricultural Operation

Statistics Canada uses the term “agricultural operation” in place of the more colloquial word “farm” as its definition encompasses a broader range of agricultural activities, such as maple syrup and honey operations. “An agricultural operation is defined as a farm, ranch or other operation that produces agricultural products intended for sale”.³ Note that an agricultural operation includes the production of one or more of the following agricultural products intended for sale: crops, livestock, poultry, animal products, greenhouse or nursery products, mushrooms, Christmas trees, sod, honey or bees, and maple syrup products.⁴ No actual sales need to take place in order to be classified as an agricultural operation; you need only have the intention to sell. For the purposes of this report, the terms ‘farm’ and ‘agricultural operation’ will be used interchangeably.

¹ Statistics Canada, 2017a

² Statistics Canada, 2017a

³ Statistics Canada, 2015a

⁴ Statistics Canada, 2015a

Farm Operator

“Those persons responsible for the management decisions in operating an agricultural operation. **Can be** owners, tenants or hired managers of the agricultural operation, including those responsible for management decisions pertinent to particular aspects of the farm — planting, harvesting, raising animals, marketing and sales, and making capital purchases and other financial decisions”.⁵ For the purposes of this report, the term ‘farm operator’ will be interchangeable with ‘farmer’.

3. BENEFITS OF THE OF AGRICULTURE

Statistics Canada administers a Census of Agriculture every five years “to develop a statistical portrait of Canada’s farms and its agricultural operators”.⁶ There are many advantages to the existence of, and participation in the Census of Agriculture. For the operator, the Census provides a channel to have their voice heard, and once combined with the voices of their peers, operators can access the collective industry data, and use it to make informed decisions related to their own business operations. At the government level, the Census also serves to provide information, which is incredibly useful in making planning, economic, disaster relief, and other informed decisions. Additionally, government policy advisors, farm associations, and independent advocacy groups use the information to determine where to focus their efforts. The Census of Agriculture is particularly advantageous when compared to other Agricultural surveys as the data is broken down by municipality: “Its community-level data ensure that the issues affecting farmers, farm communities and agricultural operations are included when making decisions that affect them and their livelihood”.⁷

4. WHO COMPLETES THE CENSUS?

As this report is based on Agricultural Census Data, it is important to discuss who participates in an agricultural Census. According to Statistics Canada, any person “responsible for operating a farm or an agricultural operation should fill in a Census of Agriculture”.⁸ This specifically includes any person who sells or plans to sell agricultural products. Operations are not required to have a Farm Business Registration Number to participate in the Census.⁹ Each Census year, Census of Agriculture invitations are mailed via Canada Post to all known farm addresses.¹⁰ These are determined from previous Census and agricultural surveys, through Statistics Canada’s business registry, as well as distributed to any person who identifies them self as a farm operator on the Census of Population questionnaire.¹¹ Considerable effort is taken to ensure that all farm operators answer the Census. One such example is having multiple methods to complete the Census; on paper, online, or by phone call. Follow up calls are also made to any person who does

⁵ Statistics Canada, 2015c

⁶ Statistics Canada, 2015b

⁷ Statistics Canada, 2015b

⁸ Statistics Canada, 2017b

⁹ Note: Farm Business Registration Numbers are required once an operation’s annual sales exceed \$7,000

¹⁰ Statistics Canada, 2017b

¹¹ Statistics Canada, 2017b

not respond to the Census, and several safeguards exist in the data processing system to ensure that no one is missed.¹²

5. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND OUR AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY AT A LOCAL LEVEL?

Employing local people in food production while simultaneously increasing our County’s food security by growing more food crops and raising more livestock locally, would make a considerable contribution to our community’s economic development and sustainability. Certainly not all agricultural crops thrive in Haliburton due to soil quality, climate, and our shorter growing season. However, there are many agricultural endeavours that are feasible. Becoming familiar with the existing and potential agricultural activity serves as a starting point to build upon, and to aid in determining what agricultural economic development opportunities exist in our County.

6. DEMOGRAPHICS

Employment

In 2016 the population of the County of Haliburton was 17,785. Figure 1 shows that four per cent of the population was made up of people who were unemployed but wished to work (as opposed to someone who is “non-working” as they are retired or under working age).¹³ The Official Plan for the County of Haliburton recognizes that with the projected increase in population, approximately 71 new jobs will be required each year to meet the employment needs of the County’s residents.¹⁴ Fostering the agriculture and food production sector in Haliburton County could offer some of these needed opportunities for employment.

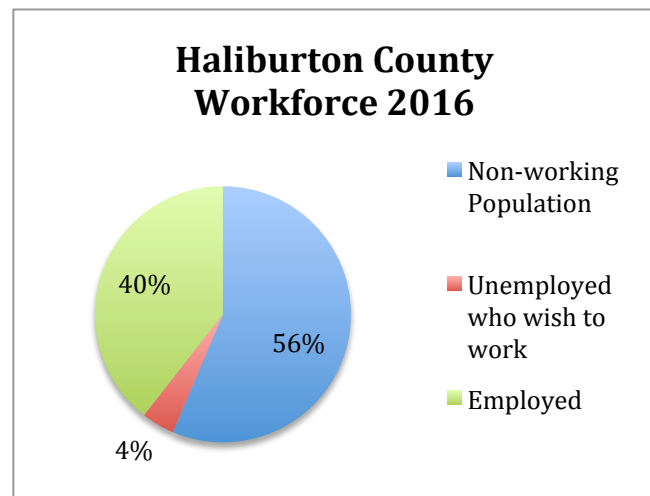


Figure 1: Haliburton County Workforce (2016)

Number of Farms

Figure 2 (shown on Page 6) shows the steady decline in reported agricultural operations in Haliburton County over the ten-year Census period from 2006 (84 farms) to 2016 (59 farms).

¹² Statistics Canada, 2017b

¹³ Statistics Canada, 2017a

¹⁴ County of Haliburton, 2017

Of the 59 farms, 23 businesses reported operating “crop and animal production” in 2016 and employing 30 people in total between them.

What we Heard

Stakeholders expressed the feeling that the Census is not quite capturing the trend with respect to the number of farms operating in Haliburton County. One stakeholder whose family has lived in the County for generations said that many farms were abandoned between the 1960s and 1990s, and fields previously in production have become overgrown with trees and shrubs. Stakeholders agreed that there appear to be new, smaller farm operations popping up now more than ever before. They noted that the recent trend in new farms tends towards homesteads and market gardens, which are likely a difficult group to capture on the Census due to scale as well as perceptions of what constitutes a “farm”.

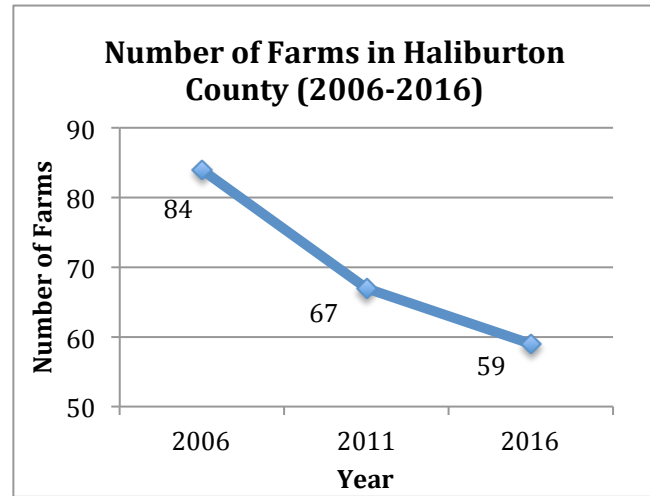


Figure 2: Number of Farms in Haliburton County (2006-2016)

The market gardeners and homesteaders reported that they did not see themselves represented in the data. They noted that the Census is not structured to capture information of such a small-scale. For example, some may grow a number of rows or plants of a particular crop but as they do not measure their production in acres, their data is too small-scale to capture.

Farm Operators

According to the 2016 Census of Agriculture for Haliburton County, 75 individuals identified themselves as farm operators, of which 55 are men and 20 are women. Conversely, only 30 individuals listed themselves as employed in crop or animal production, which suggests that many of these farm operators do not consider themselves “employed” by their farm.

As illustrated in Figure 3, there has been a steady downward trend in farm

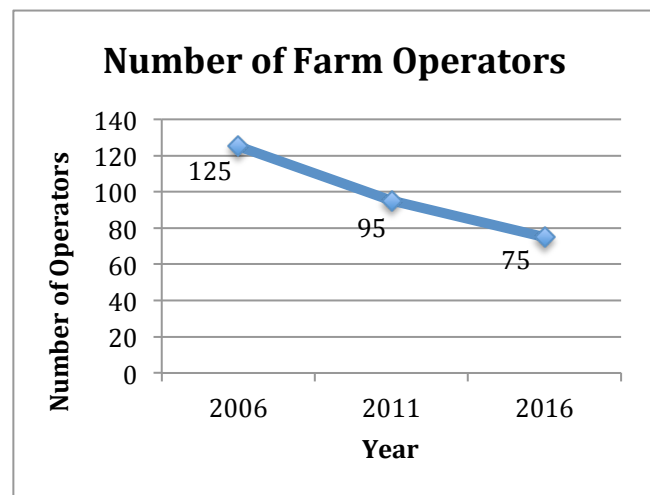


Figure 3: Number of Farm Operators (2006-2016)

operator numbers between 2006 and 2016. This trend is not unique to Haliburton County as similar downward trends in farm operator numbers are seen throughout Ontario.¹⁵

It is important to note in Figure 4, that 45 of the 75 farm operators are 55 years or older. Therefore, of the relatively small number of operators, it can be expected that as many as 60 percent might be thinking about retirement in the next ten years. This is similar to the provincial norm, with 55 being the average age of a farmer in Ontario, compared to the Haliburton County average of 58.

What we Heard

There was much discussion among stakeholders about the difference in numbers between farm operators (75) and people employed in crop and animal production (30). One operator confirmed these statistics by sharing that four people work at their operation—all of whom would be considered agricultural operators by the Census definition (see page 4)—but at this point none of them are being paid, and therefore their operation does not provide employment to any one of them.

Succession Planning

Six operations in Haliburton County reported that they had a succession plan, five of these planned for the farm to be passed on to a family member, and one had a succession plan involving a non-family member.¹⁶ The limited response in this section of the survey could have many implications, but as it stands, the data can be interpreted to mean that as many as two thirds of our existing farms may be heading out of operation.

What we Heard

Our stakeholders reinforced the finding that low numbers of agricultural operators have succession plans. One operator stated that it would not even occur to them to have a succession plan, as they believe their operation is not in a condition to pass on. Another stated that it was likely only the biggest of operations that would be expected to have a succession plan. The one stakeholder that did have a plan for the future of their operation is actively in the process of succession planning and they are finding it to be an extraordinarily challenging process. They have 3 children, only one of whom wants the family land and business, so their task is to divide the assets fairly without dividing the operation. The regulations on land severance due to the location of the dwelling and agricultural buildings compound these problems.

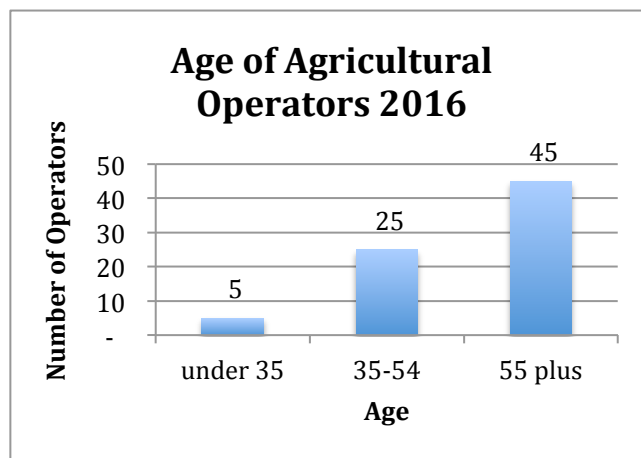


Figure 4: Age of Operators (2016)

¹⁵ Statistics Canada, 2017b

¹⁶ Statistics Canada, 2017a

The younger generation is generally trending towards a lack of interest in taking over the family farm when their aging parents retire from actively working the operation. Many farms are therefore moving away from the simple parent-to-child model of succession that has existed for generations. Stakeholders discussed the immense social value of farms remaining in production, and hoped that after the sale of farmland, buyers would also see the significance of the farm and its infrastructure.

7. POSITIVE TRENDS IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Small Scale Farming

Despite the overall decline in farm area, one of the positive trends noted in the Census data was in the increase in small-scale farming in Haliburton County. Table 1 shows us that all but two categories of farm size has decreased in representation between 2011 and 2016, and that the most significant increase in number of farms by size is found in farms under 10 acres.

Farm Area (in acres)	Number in 2011	Number in 2016	Percent Change
Total Farms:	67	59	- 12
Less than 10	4	7	+ 75
10-69	17	16	- 6
70-129	17	14	- 18
130-179	5	3	- 40
180-239	8	4	- 50
240-399	10	8	- 20
400-559	2	2	0
560-759	1	0	- 100
760-1,119	2	3	+ 50
1,120-1599	0	2	+ 100

What we Heard

Table 1: Number of farms by acreage.

Stakeholders confirmed the trend towards smaller-scale farming, and noted that local by-laws and provincial regulations are not yet supportive of this movement. For example regulations surrounding minimum lot size, and permitted agricultural uses in Zoning Bylaws which are not identified as strictly rural, are barriers to small scale agriculture.

One stakeholder uses a very localized model of farming where customers are informed of product availability by text message. This stakeholder currently serves about 12 people using this model, which is working, but is not overly profitable. To increase profitability, they recognize that they would need to scale up, meaning that their casual, small-scale model would likely need to change. Along with other market gardeners, they acknowledge that scaling-up operations would require them to hire staff, which they are not yet ready for as profits are marginal, and they would only be able to offer occasional work.

Another stakeholder estimated having two acres in production with small, intensive plots planted with a variety of seasonal vegetables. They have a small greenhouse as well as hoop houses to extend the growing season. They are also planning to use a neighbour's property to expand. Although they are not certified organic, they practice organic growing principles and use no chemical fertilizers or pesticides. Their operation supplies one local restaurant and they have a

small Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) that serves approximately 15 people. They are currently using Facebook to reach their customers.

Cattle

There were many positively trending agricultural enterprises reported in the 2016 Census for Haliburton County, one of which is cattle farming. As seen in Figure 5, the reported number of cattle dropped significantly between 2006 and 2011. However, the number of cattle more than doubled between 2011 and 2016, increasing from 444 animals to 923. This corresponds with the increase in farm numbers reported in the Census categories of “beef cattle ranching and farming”, and “dairy cattle and milk production”, which each saw an additional farm begin operation in 2016.

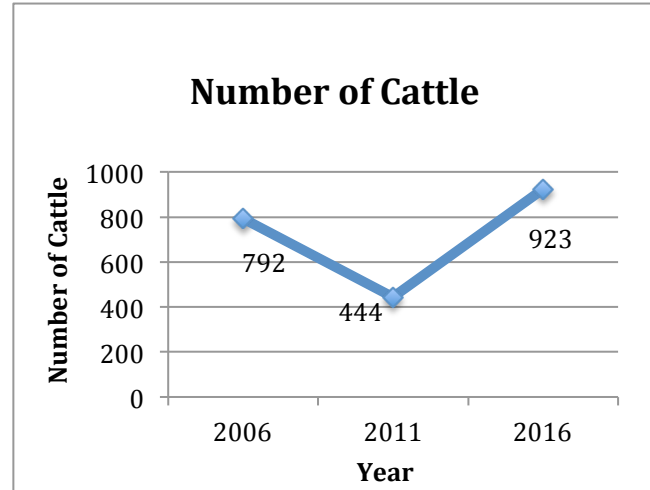


Figure 5: Number of Cattle in Haliburton County (2006-2016)

What we Heard

The increase in cattle numbers shown in the 2016 Census is not seen to be entirely reflective of what’s happening in Haliburton County. Stakeholders reported that cow/calf operations have largely been declining, and the number of breeding animals and their calves are thought to total less than what is being reported. Most cattle operations in the County are very small, having anywhere from 2-12 head of cattle. Only one operation has significantly more than this with around 100 head of breeding cattle.

One stakeholder could name about ten families that used to have anywhere from 10-50 head of cattle, but they said that these numbers are diminishing. Stakeholders explained some of the challenges of cattle farming in County, the most predominant problem being the lack of a local abattoir, which makes selling beef locally cost prohibitive. People may raise a cow to feed their own family, but stakeholders confirmed that the large majority of cattle leave the County to go to the auction barn for sale.

Haliburton County cattle operations also face further hurdles due to the increased challenge in growing nutritious feed for their livestock. Although our non-prime agricultural land can support grazing herds through the summer months, many operators find that much of Haliburton County’s land does not produce the high quality hay needed for the colder months, and buying hay to feed cattle increases costs, which then must be passed on to the consumer. One stakeholder felt the need to finish off cows with corn to make them profitable to sell for freezer orders: an option that makes beef farming even more expensive. It is far more economical, for

farmers to ship their animals to be sold at the auction barn than to also deal with the return journey, incur kill-cut-wrap costs, store the meat, and take freezer orders from a number of individuals. The auction barn is also able to monetize all parts of the cow, so no part of the animal is wasted. There is however at least one operator who sells pasture raised beef at the Farmers' Market, and grazes cattle in the region.

The Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO) reported in their presentation at the Haliburton County Farmers' Association's 2019 Annual General Meeting that the substantial drop in the price of beef as a result of trade agreements has led to a decrease in the number of cattle being raised. The BFO also speculated that emphasis towards plant-based proteins in the newly updated Canada's Food Guide could influence consumer demand for beef.

Hens and Chickens

The number of hens and chickens being raised within our County has steadily increased over the past three Census years, as seen in Figure 6.

What we Heard

The 99 hen restriction for small-flock farmers who do not buy quota¹⁷ makes egg production almost unprofitable. One stakeholder stated that there is a profitability threshold for farmers who raise laying hens and 99 hens is not within that threshold. Due to seasonality, egg farmers are cyclically overburdened with either eggs they cannot sell or overburdened with customers when they have no eggs left for sale. Regulations limiting small-flock farmers to farm gate sales, with the lack of a local egg-grading station make it very hard to make a living selling eggs.

There are however at least two operators raising meat birds for sale, which stakeholders tell us is two to three fewer than previous years. There are also a handful of others who raise both broilers and layers for home consumption.

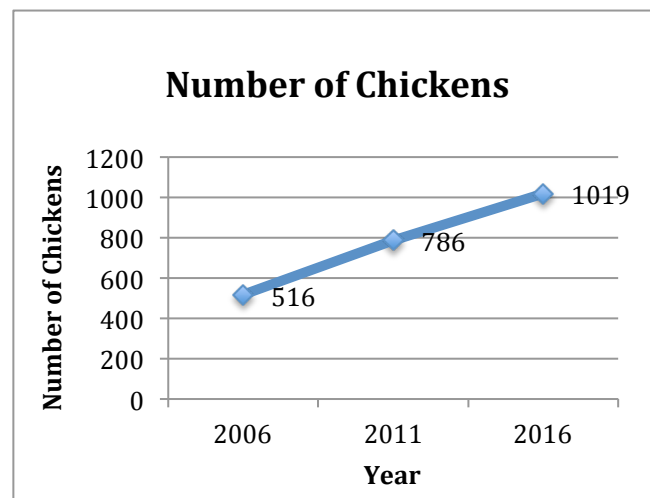


Figure 7: Number of Chickens in Haliburton County (2006-2016)

¹⁷ The quota system is a federally mandated supply management system, which governs the sale of eggs, along with dairy, chickens, and turkeys. Each of these industries is overseen by an internal board of industry members who stipulate where, when, how much, and by whom the product can be sold.

Beekeeping

Figure 8 shows us that there was a significant decrease in the number of colonies shared among farms between 2006 (29) and 2011 (10). However, this appears to have rebounded between 2011 and 2016, as both the number of farms that keep bees, as well as the total number of colonies shared between these operations showed an increase with ten farms sharing 49 colonies in 2016.

What we Heard

Stakeholders experienced the trends reported by the Census: the number of bees plummeted a few years back (around 2011), and more recently beekeeping has become increasingly popular. The number of applicants wanting to bring honey to the local Farmers' Market also seems to be increasing.

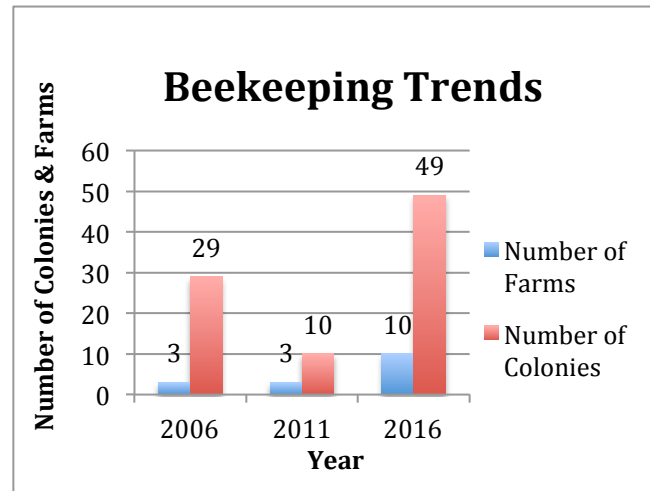


Figure 8: Beekeeping Colony & Farm Numbers in Haliburton County (2006-2016)

Maple Syrup Production

Figure 9 shows that the number of maple trees tapped in Haliburton County each year has remained fairly stable between 2006 and 2016. During these past three Census years, the number of farms who tap maple trees is slowly increasing. In 2006, 21 operations tapped trees, increasing to 22 operations in 2011, and 24 in 2016.

What we Heard

The strength of the local maple syrup industry was well represented by our stakeholders. One newer producer stated that they hope to increase their operation and tap just under two thousand trees this spring, with the aim to further increase production every year moving forward. The farming community is aware of the room for growth in the industry: it is seen as a very profitable variety of farming, only limited by the number of available trees in the County. The availability of idle bush at comparatively cheap rates, along with the growing market for the product, mean there are substantial opportunities for maple syrup operations in Haliburton County.

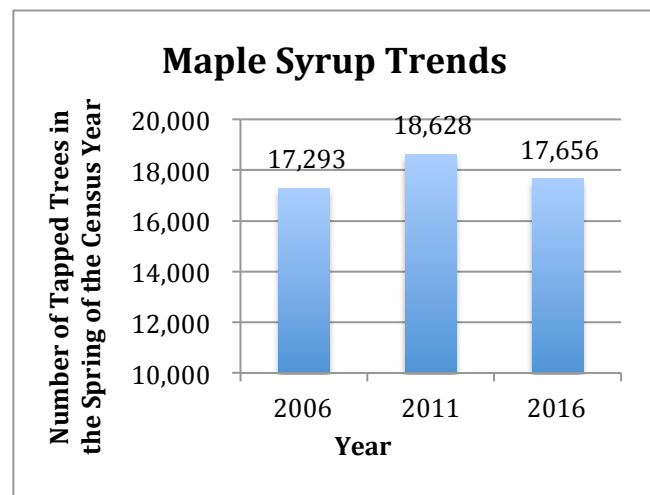


Figure 9: Maple Syrup Taps in Haliburton County (2006-2016)

Vegetable Production

The total acreage in vegetable production in Haliburton County dropped between 2006 and 2011, from 90 to 32 acres, but has since regained some ground with 48 acres of land in vegetable production reported in 2016. This corresponds to the increased number of farms reported in the ‘vegetable and melon farming’ Census category, increasing from four farms in 2011, to seven farms in 2016.

What we Heard

Stakeholders are slightly sceptical of the vegetable production acreage reported in the Census: they did not see evidence of a drop in vegetable production acreage between 2006 and 2011 as shown in Figure 10. In fact, they noted that there seem to be more new farms now than ever before.

Major Field Crops

The Census tells us that the agricultural producers in Haliburton County do not grow most of the “major field crops” listed in the Census. Major field crops include: winter wheat, barley for grain, corn for grain, corn for silage,¹⁸ soybeans, potatoes, oats for grain, mixed grains, and hay. Of these major field crops, farmers in the County only reported growing the last three—oats for grain, mixed grains, and hay, all of which saw an increase in production over the last five years as indicated in Table 2. Haliburton County experienced a combined increase of 586 acres of farmland in production in these three crops over the last Census period.

What we Heard

Stakeholders mostly agreed with the numbers reported here, however one individual pointed out that a large area of soybeans are being grown within the County and are not reflected in the data. It is believed that the hay, oats for grain, and mixed grains that are produced here are used primarily to feed livestock.

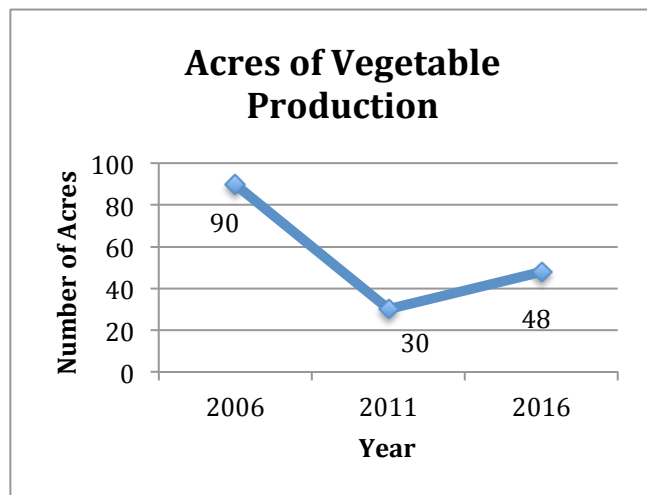


Figure 10: Acres in Vegetable Production in Haliburton County (2006-2016)

Major Field Crop	2011	2016
Oats for grain	22	100
Mixed grain	0	87
Hay	1484	1905

Table 2: Major Field Crops in Production in Haliburton County (2006-2016)

¹⁸ Corn for Silage: corn that has been anaerobically fermented in a silo, resulting in animal feed that is high in energy, digestibility, and stores well (Wheaton, 1983).

8. DOWNWARD TRENDS IN AGRICULTURE

The 2016 Agricultural Census did record some areas of decline as well. Stakeholders noted that the low number of larger producers in the County means that if one big operator leaves the industry, it hugely affects the Census numbers.

Acres of Farmland

The last three Census years show a downward trend in the total number of acres farmed in Haliburton County, as can be seen in Table 3.

Census Year	Number of Acres of Farmland in Production
2006	15,309
2011	12,749
2016	11,919

Table 3: Acres of Farmland in Production in Haliburton County (2006-2016)

What we Heard

Stakeholders offered possible reasons for the decrease in the number of acres of farmland in production. These include aging farm operators, farmland being bought and not actively farmed, zoning constraints to agricultural uses, as well as the trend towards smaller-scale farming requiring less acreage.

Fruit and Tree Nut Farming

In 2011 there were 3 “fruit and nut tree farms” reported, which decreased to just 1 farm in 2016.

Other Crops

“Other crops” are crops that are not classified as vegetables, fruits, oilseed and grain, or greenhouse and floriculture crops. This includes agricultural activity such as maple syrup production, or Christmas tree farming. Farms producing “other crops” decreased from 24 farms in 2011 to just 20 farms in 2016.

Turkeys

The most significant decrease in a specific animal count was in turkey production, decreasing from 93 birds in 2011, to zero in 2016.

What we Heard

This data point was not well received as one stakeholder was raising turkeys in 2016 when zero birds were reported. They wondered if the timing of the Census caused this, as they did complete a Census, likely in May, and might not have received their chicks until June.

Sheep, Lambs, and Goats

As seen in Figure, 11, the data profile shows a fairly significant decline in the number of sheep and lambs in the County. The number of sheep and goat farms also decreased from five, reported in 2011, to only two in 2016.

What we Heard

The largest sheep operation raises around 50 sheep but the operation does not breed their animals as it is too costly. Sheep are raised “in pasture” and their diet is supplemented with feed mash and hay that is bought out of County. Sheep require more nutritional hay than is available in Haliburton making it expensive for sheep farmers who have to drive a considerable distance to buy and import it.

The second largest operator has about 20 animals but has recently stopped breeding and is now essentially operating a “retirement home” for sheep. Stakeholders estimate another 24 sheep in addition to the two largest operations discussed above for a total of about 100 animals in County.

Stakeholders also knew of several people with small homesteads that each keep a handful of animals including sheep and goats. As has already been mentioned, stakeholders cited the lack of local infrastructure—in this case an abattoir—which increases the cost of transporting animals for the kill, cut, wrap process, eating away at almost all of the profit of raising these meat animals. One operator reported a profit of just \$25 on the sale of a whole animal.

Pigs

Data in the livestock inventory for pigs in the Census has been suppressed. However, there is one known hog farm that sells meat locally through Abbey Gardens Food Hub and by freezer order.

What we Heard

Stakeholders reported that there may be a few families that keep a pig for themselves. They estimate that there are approximately 75-100 animals in the County.

Other Animal Production

The category “other animal production” includes animals such as elk, deer, rabbits, alpacas and llamas. This category showed a decreased from 18 farms in 2011, to 11 farms in 2016.

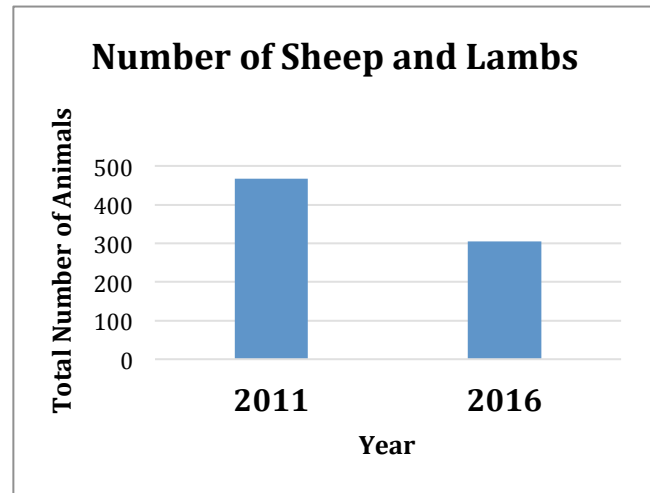


Figure 11: Number of Sheep and Lambs in Haliburton County (2006-2016)

9. CONSUMPTION DATA

The Census of Agriculture includes a food consumption and production profile, which provides a projected average of the demand for each food crop within our County, as well as how much of this demand is being met by our existing farms. There are many crops whose data was not made available and has instead been censored for privacy (as will be further discussed in the next section). Only two crops are included in the consumption data that are both possible to grow in Haliburton County, and have uncensored information: tomatoes and celery. These crops represent just two of the many opportunities for our County to produce more food to meet local demand.

The average person in Haliburton County (based on an amalgamation of data from various Statistics Canada surveys) consumes 8.19 kg of fresh tomatoes in a year. As tomatoes are only available seasonally, and cannot be kept fresh for long periods, the Census provides an estimate for the amount of ‘fresh produce required for a 3-month summer’, which in this case is 2.05 kg per capita. This data has been averaged, and does not factor in the increased consumption of vegetables when they are seasonally available and at their peak flavour, however it is a useful starting point. The consumption profile tells us that the County’s summer tomato needs are approximately 36,415 kg. When factoring in the average yield per acre, we require our farmers to grow 1.23 acres of tomatoes to meet the local summer demand. It is reported that our local farmers cultivate a total of one acre of tomatoes. We can therefore ascertain that the local demand could support an additional quarter of an acre of tomato supply.

The celery crop also indicates an opportunity for increased local production: in a 3-month summer, the average person consumes 0.76 kg of celery, totalling 13,561 kg for the population of Haliburton County. This requires 0.58 acres of celery cultivation; however, no acreage of celery production was reported in the 2016 Census. This demand leaves room in the market for local celery production, which is currently being met by out of County producers.

Crop:	Tomato	Celery
Annual fresh consumption per capita	8.19kg	3.05 kg
Annual consumption for total population	145,659 kg	54,244 kg
Annual consumption for a 3 month summer	36,415 kg	13,561 kg
Land required to meet summer demand	1.23 acres	0.58 acres
Land in production	1 acre	0 acres
Demand not being met in county	0.23 acres	0.58 acre

Table 4: Crop Production and Consumption Data (2016)

What we Heard

Some operators found this data interesting, however some were frustrated. For example, the data suggested that there is an opportunity to grow another quarter acre of tomatoes to meet local demand. However, one stakeholder stated they have never sold out of any single crop, including tomatoes. They suggest that rather than focusing on increasing the availability of crops grown locally, we need to work on educating citizens to buy local. The consumption data may be reflective of grocery store sales, however, the ability to sell local produce depends on access to

markets and consumers, and locally grown produce may not be as conveniently accessible as produce in the grocery store. Local growers need equal access to markets if they have a hope of meeting consumer demand.

10. LIMITATIONS OF THE DATA

Agricultural Census data can only tell us what is being reported. As the Census is not intended to capture at home food production, it does not account for those who grow food for themselves on a household or homestead scale, those who may share their surplus harvest with friends and neighbours, and those supplying food (however small-scale) without completing an Agricultural Census. Nor does the data include individuals outside the definition of agricultural operator (see definitions on pages 1 and 2).

Much of the data collected is not made available to the public in order to protect the confidentiality of the limited number of respondents. This raises significant challenges in interpreting the data as there are large gaps in the information available. For example, each of the major fruit crops documented by the 2016 Census were either not reported as being grown in Haliburton County (peaches and grapes), or the total acreage of each crop was censored for privacy (apples, sour cherries, strawberries, raspberries, as well as total fruit acres). In 2011 it was reported that there were seven acres dedicated to fruit production, so presumably the censored data point for 2016 implies that we now have fewer than seven acres of fruit production remaining, but without access to the information, it is difficult to draw accurate conclusions.

Limitations were also caused by the amalgamation of data for our small rural areas. The only discrete data reported at the Municipal level is for the Township of Minden Hills. All other Municipal data (Algonquin Highlands, and Dysart et. al) is aggregated and reported in the data for Highlands East. This may over represent what is happening in Highlands East and limits what information can be attributed to each of the three Municipalities.

The use of “average rural household” data instead of specific Haliburton County information also limits the accuracy of this Census report. For example, the food expenditure profile indicates that the average rural household spends 2% of their income on meat, but 0% of their income on fish.

The limited number of food crops included in the Food Consumption and Production profile also limits the usefulness of the conclusions that can be drawn from the data provided. As previously mentioned, many crops are viable in Haliburton County, however many of those crops that thrive in our northern climate are not listed.

Despite careful effort to reach all farm operators, some individuals do not report their farming activity to Statistics Canada. One reason may be that they do not define themselves and their operation as a farmer/farm. Whatever the reason, some farm operators slip through the cracks, and therefore their farming activity is not reflected in the data.

11. CONCLUSIONS

While the Agricultural Census is a valuable tool, the omitted information, combined with the use of averaged data, limit the conclusions and obscure the insights that can be extracted from the Census. The consequence of this missing information is that the Census reports do not provide a true picture of food and agriculture in Haliburton County. It is therefore necessary to engage local stakeholders to gather additional information in order to produce an accurate and holistic view of agricultural activity in Haliburton County.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOURCES

Networking for Industry Groups

Stakeholders reported that homesteaders, market gardeners, and other very small-scale food producers did not see themselves reflected in the Census data nor did they feel that the Census applied to them. They are also under-represented and under-served by existing farm associations. In order to network and share information among themselves, it could be productive for these small-scale farmers to form an association, or subgroup of an existing organization. This could serve as a starting point for further communal projects such as a work-share program, which would benefit the small-scale farming community by easing the burden on individuals who cannot employ help for the full season.

The Haliburton County Garlic Growers Association is one such example of an industry subgroup that has formed an organization to connect growers and promote member sales through their annual Garlic Festival. Other sectors of Haliburton County agriculture; such as poultry farmers (both meat and eggs birds), beekeepers, as well as tree farmers, among others could benefit from forming similar interest specific subgroups.

Education and Training

Stakeholders expressed the need for a clearer understanding of who should complete the Census of Agriculture, as well as how it should be completed. Online tools provided by government ministries or advocacy groups, including Q & As on how to complete the Census, and information sessions or workshops surrounding definitions and terminology would both be beneficial in order to capture a more holistic picture.

We heard from stakeholders that succession planning is often challenging and complex. One way to ease this burden for aging operators would be to invite OMAFRA or OFA to provide in County workshops and training on succession planning.

Both OMAFRA and OFA do have existing resources, OMAFRA's online succession planning tools can be found at: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/busdev/succession.html>
OFA has teamed up with Farm Life: a fee-for-service succession planning company. This link also includes their joint webinar on succession planning: <https://ofa.on.ca/benefit/farm-life/>

Policy

Harvest Haliburton has submitted policy suggestions in support of local food systems and agriculture, and should continue with this valuable work. In particular we recommend that they participate and provide input in updating Municipal Zoning Bylaws as they come up for review.

Options for Keeping Farmland in Production

We heard from stakeholders that there is limited succession planning occurring, and the data reflects that there is a decline in numbers of larger farms. There could be opportunities with land trusts, agricultural co-ops and land matching¹⁹, to ease transitions and keep land in production.

The Haliburton Highlands Land Trust is an organization that is already working to preserve land in the region, however they focus on natural and cultural heritage for future generations and at this point have not been involved with the preservation of agricultural land. The Ontario Farmland Trust is another option to explore. Collaboration with these groups could present an opportunity for retiring farmers to keep the land in production while getting fairly compensated for their property.

Further information on the Haliburton Highlands Land Trust can be found at: www.haliburtonlandtrust.ca Ontario Farmland Trust: www.ontariofarmlandtrust.ca

Sales and Marketing Support for Local Producers

We heard from stakeholders that a directory and map of local agriculture and farm gate sales is needed to ensure that surplus is sold. We recommend that a brand be developed that identifies local producers as such, which could be used by restaurants and other establishments that buy from local producers. For examples of regions that have something similar, please see:

Durham Farm Fresh: www.durhamfarmfresh.ca
Grey/ Bruce County: www.eatlocalgreybruce.ca
and Prince Edward County's Guide: www.prince-edward-county.com/cat/farm-to-table

Starting in 2009, Haliburton County had a meat co-op designed to make it easier for potential buyers to connect with local meat producers. They had a volunteer manager who maintained a dedicated phone for the group, and customers could phone the co-op to find out what local meat was available, before being connected with individual producers. Once the customer and the producer made contact, all subsequent aspects of the sale were handled between them, and the co-op had no role in the sales transaction. Unfortunately the co-op disbanded, mainly due to the small number of producers involved, as well as individual members' frustrations with the work associated with making each sale.

¹⁹ Land matching is a tool designed to connect those with farmland which is not in production with those who are looking for land to farm. Farm Link is one such Canadian organization, and can be found at www.FarmLink.net

We recommend reinstating a similar co-operative (perhaps including a wider variety of producers), which could be overseen by a paid coordinator who would be responsible for handling the entire transaction, alleviating additional work for the farmer.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

Through this project, collaborators have identified opportunities for further development of certain agricultural products. These include:

Maple Syrup

Given the surplus of idle forest and relatively inexpensive land, this is a good direct to consumer product with a growing overall market.

Sheep, Lambs, and Goats

One larger operator/breeder of sheep is getting out of the business and no one is currently raising meat goats. Haliburton County pastureland is well suited to grazing and could support additional sheep and goat operations.

Poultry

There is demand for more operators to raise both chickens and turkeys for meat. Information sessions or workshops on the artisanal chicken program could encourage expansion in this sector. For further information on the artisanal chicken program, please see:

<https://www.ontariochicken.ca/Programs/Artisanal-Chicken-Program>

The lack of access to a local egg-grading facility prohibits the sale of local eggs beyond farm gate sales. However, there are numerous farm operators in the County selling eggs via farm gate that could benefit from increased promotion. As stated above, producers could be identified on a list of farm gate sales and through a map on the County's website, as well as on Harvest Haliburton and the Haliburton County Farm Association's websites.

Vegetables

There is an opportunity to increase production of vegetables at the market garden scale, in order to supply local restaurants, sell at the Farmers' Market, and through farm gate sales and CSAs.

Major Field Crops

There also could be an opportunity to coordinate crops grown for livestock feed with livestock farmers to help meet demand in County and keep land in production.

Garlic

As previously mentioned, data of current garlic production is not captured by the Census of Agriculture, however it can be, and is currently being grown in backyards and on small farming lots. It is a very successful and lucrative crop that thrives in Haliburton County, and has lots of potential for further growth.

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