



## County of Brant Council Report

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**To:** To the Mayor and Members of County of Brant Council

**From:** Jessica Kitchen, Planner – Zoning Administrator  
& Brandon Kortleve, Zoning Technician

**Date:** September 1, 2020

**Subject:** RPT-20-112 – On-Farm Diversified Uses – Policy Updates

**Purpose:** For Information & Direction

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### Recommendation

THAT report RPT-20-112 be received as information; and

THAT staff be directed to initiate an Official Plan amendment and Zoning By-Law amendment for the purpose of updating and including policies related to On-Farm Diversified Uses (OFDUs) in the County of Brant, as outlined in this report.

### Strategic Priority

1. To grow in a responsible manner that protects and enhances the attributes that are unique to each individual community;
2. To engage citizens in a dialogue that is transparent, multi-faceted, and mutually respectful; and
3. To facilitate the growth of a diversified local economy.

### Financial Considerations

As this is a County initiated amendment to current policies in place there are no financial implications to be considered at this time.

### Executive Summary

The County of Brant Planning Division wishes to review its Official Plan policies and Zoning By-Law requirements regarding agricultural uses and on-farm development. This report considers the new *Provincial Policy Statement (2020)*, the Guidelines for Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas (Publication 851, OMAFRA), as well as the current policy framework in place through the County of Brant Official Plan (2012) and the Comprehensive Zoning By-Law (61-16). The purpose of this report is to highlight areas of the policy framework that require updates to reflect current Provincial policy requirements, as well as initiate the process to explore changes to the County of Brant's current policies. This process will focus on weighing potential benefits and impacts of on farm diversified uses within the rural areas, in advance of the County moving towards a new Official Plan in 2022.

## 8.a.

### **Background**

The entirety of the agricultural lands within County of Brant are located within a prime agricultural area, as defined by the *Provincial Policy Statement (2020)*, with the majority of the lands in the County of Brant being classified as prime agricultural land. This prime agricultural land classification refers to lands that are classified as Class 1, 2, and 3 in the Canada Land Inventory, Soil Capability Classification for Agriculture, as collected by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. These rural and agricultural areas are an important component to the economic success of the County of Brant and to our quality of life.

When managing the agricultural land base of the County of Brant, the Province of Ontario encourages the use of an agricultural system approach that works to maintain and enhance the continuity of agricultural land systems, as well as the functional and economic connections to the agri-food network. The purpose of the agricultural system approach is to maintain and enhance a viable, thriving agricultural sector. As the County of Brant seeks to enhance the attributes unique to its individual communities, and continue to facilitate the growth of a diversified local economy, diversification of the rural areas becomes a key component in successful economic growth and support. Our agricultural system of is one of the longest running and most important economic sectors of the County's history and identity. Planning staff are reviewing the policies affecting land-use in the Agriculture designations in order to ensure that they conform to Provincial policy but also encourage economic resilience throughout our agricultural land systems.

Current Official Plan policies in the County of Brant focus on agricultural activities that enhance the agricultural lifestyle of the County of Brant, ensuring these activities are protected and have the opportunity to flourish. In addition to the primary forms of land use promoted in the Agriculture designation, being all types of farming and normal farm practices, secondary permitted uses are also encouraged. As noted in Section 3.3.1. of the Official Plan (2012), agricultural home occupations such as sales outlets for agricultural products produced on the farm, farm vacation and tourism enterprises, and small-scale home industries are also permitted. These uses are encouraged as secondary uses provided they are limited in scale and are compatible with and do not hinder surrounding agricultural operations. These uses are also encouraged in ways that will support and enhance the County's surrounding hamlets and villages. While the objectives of the current Agriculture designation seek to promote a wide range and scale of agricultural activities, staff have noted some changes that can be implemented to better enhance and support a diversified agricultural system within the County of Brant.

### **Report**

The existing policies present a preliminary notion that diversification shall be encouraged and supported within the rural areas through Section 1.11.2.3.2 Objectives of the County of Brant Official Plan in order to promote and strengthen the agricultural economy, while protecting resources. The generalized structure of these current policies exclude guidelines concerning appropriate land uses, size and scale of operations, process, and implementation of on farm diversification. This project will work towards clarification of current terminology, uses/activities and achieving consistency with the Provincial policy framework in an effort to create a cohesive language and intent within

the County of Brant Official Plan and Zoning By-Law. Staff will be looking to include policies which support agricultural practices and provide opportunities for farmers to supplement their incomes through diverse on-farm activities, which are secondary and supportive to the principal farming operations. This will be accomplished through establishing appropriate diversified land use options, ensuring minimization of land use conflicts and the prevention of non-agricultural urban uses outside of the Urban Settlement Areas.

Staff will also consider a process to ensure that diversification occurs in a responsible manner which seeks to protect the agricultural character and valuable resources of the area. On-farm diversification will be limited in size and scale through the incorporation of guidelines which set definitive expectations and limitations on the incorporation of secondary and supportive operations. Careful consideration will be applied to minimum land area thresholds, maximum building area restrictions, as well as water and waste water standards and relevant environmental approvals in the creation of effective policies. Staff's goal will be to ensure that the cumulative impact of multiple agriculture-related uses in prime agricultural areas are limited and do not undermine the agricultural nature of the area.

In order to better understand how these areas presently function and what is desired in the future to maintain longevity of the agricultural systems of the County, Staff will work to engage with the farming community, the Agricultural Advisory Committee, Economic Development and Tourism. Engagement strategies will be exercised virtually at a distance utilizing tools such as social media, online surveys, and web-based meetings. Staff will include comments and feedback collected through this project in a further report to Council through what Staff has heard approach. The feedback collected throughout the engagement process will assist in developing the policy framework necessary to provide further opportunities within a diversified agricultural landscape.

### **Summary and Next Steps**

With Council's direction, staff are proposing to initiate the required process under the *Planning Act* in order to amend the County of Brant Official Plan and County of Brant Zoning By-Law 61-16 to update policies and regulations directly related to On-Farm Diversified Uses, to address conformity and implementation barriers that exist in our current policy framework. Staff are proposing the continuation of the following timeline for this project, noting that if adjustments to the timeline are required, Council will be notified and updated on the process of the project:

Task 1 – Background Research (In Progress)

Task 2 – Information Report (September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020)

Task 3 – ‘Call to Action’ and Public Engagement (Beginning September 2<sup>nd</sup>)

Task 4 – ‘As We Heard It’ Engagement Summary and Proposed Policy Direction Report (October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020)

Task 5 – Circulation to Staff, Agencies & Stakeholders for comments (Beginning October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020).

Task 6 – Public Meeting & Recommendation Report (November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020)

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**Prepared By:** Jessica Kitchen, Planner – Zoning By-Law Administrator  
& Brandon Kortleve – Zoning Technician

**Reviewed By:** Mat Vaughan, BES, MPLAN, MCIP, RPP, CMM3, Director of Planning

**Submitted By:** Pamela Duesling, MAES, MCIP, RPP, Ec.D., CMM3, General Manager of Development Services

**Attachments**

1. On-Farm Diversified Uses Glossy – *1 page graphic summary of the project*

**Copy to**

1. Heather Boyd, Clerk/Director of Council Services
2. Jennifer Mayhew, Planning Administrative Assistant
3. Jyoti Zuidema, Solicitor and Corporate Counsel

**In adopting this report, is a bylaw or agreement required?**

- By-law required (No)
- Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and /or Clerk (No)
- Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council (No)

# Frequently Asked Questions about On-Farm Diversified Uses

The Province of Ontario allows **3 categories of uses in the Province's prime agricultural areas.**

These general land-uses are dependent on the location, size, and the relationship to the property's farming operation.

1



### Agricultural Uses

Includes Crops, Livestock, Greenhouses, & Nurseries

2



### Agriculture-Related Uses

Includes farm supply co-ops, farmer's market, farm equipment repair shops, wine and cider production, grain drying operations, & livestock auctions

3



### On-Farm Diversified Uses

Bakeries, professional offices, health and wellness practitioners, small scale trades, seasonal tourism events related to the agricultural area (*petting zoo, corn maze, ziplining, wine tasting etc.*), and educational & commercial activities directly related to local farming.

## Did you know?

77% of the lands in the County of Brant are considered prime agricultural land by the Province of Ontario. That is over 600 km<sup>2</sup> (That's roughly the size of Prince Edward Island!)

**We need your input !**

To be considered an OFDU, the use must be:

- located on a farm,
- considered secondary to the agricultural use of the property,
- limited in scale/area, and
- compatible with the surrounding agricultural operations in a way that does not hinder them.

(Criteria for an OFDU - Provincial Policy Statement, 2020)

*While this project focuses on OFDUs, we will be exploring how we can best protect and diversify the agricultural areas of the County of Brant.*

We're updating our agricultural land-use policies. OFDUs can be an important part of any agricultural area, helping farms branch out and add to their income potential. Have your say about how we can best:

- protect our agricultural land,
- promote valuable services outside our towns and villages,
- diversify our rural economy,
- create jobs, and
- help our rural communities continue to prosper

