



New Brunswick Agricultural Land Policy

Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture & Fisheries

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework to guide government decision making relative to the protection and development of agricultural lands in the Province of New Brunswick. This policy addresses issues that pertain to private land only. The development and use of Crown land for agricultural purposes, is already occurring, particularly by the blueberry and maple syrup sectors.

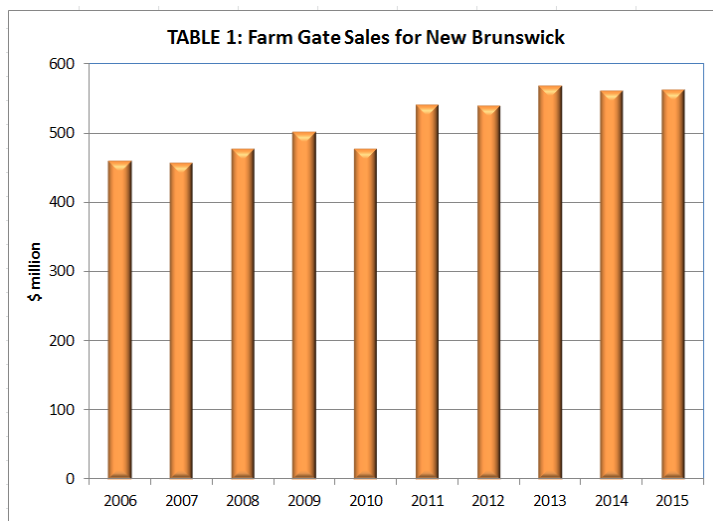
This document outlines important principles for agriculture to thrive and to guide the various departments and land use planners whose mandates impact the protection of agricultural lands and non-agricultural development in the province.

In the fall of 2015, the Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries held a series of public consultations with stakeholders and the public on the development of an Agricultural Land Policy for New Brunswick. This process was completed in March of 2016 and a *What Was Said* Report was made public in July of 2016.

The public consultations, as well as a jurisdictional review of agricultural land policies across Canada and a review of other New Brunswick reports, policies and recommendations, form the basis of this policy.

2 Background

Agriculture is a major economic contributor to this province and is important to the fabric of rural communities. Currently, agriculture generates approximately \$1.2 billion in revenues and employs over 11,000 people. As seen in TABLE 1, farm gate sales have steadily grown over the past ten years from \$460 million to \$563 million in sales – a 22% growth.



Only 5% of the province is used for agriculture. However, much more of the province has the potential for good agricultural production. This potential agricultural land, combined with an excellent climate and plentiful water, provides New Brunswick with significant opportunities to expand its agricultural production for both local and export markets.

Unfortunately, some of the best and

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richest farmland in New Brunswick continues to be converted into housing and other non-farm development. Topsoil has been stripped from prime agricultural land, rendering it useless to agriculture. Encroachment of all types, but especially residential encroachment around existing farms, continues to curtail farming activities.

Agricultural land is a finite, non-renewable resource that cannot be replaced once lost to development. It is the backbone of all agricultural activities. Clearing new land is expensive and it takes many years of careful husbandry to bring land to a productive state.

The implementation of an agricultural land policy will help create an effective tool, linked in with other appropriate legislation, such as the *Community Planning Act*, to protect and preserve farmland and promote agricultural development. It will give farmers, financial institutions and government a higher level of security for their investments and help generate sustainable agricultural economic activity for the future of New Brunswick. There is a need for government to create policy and incentives for those interested in farming, including immigrants, new farmers and existing operators, to use the potential that under-utilized and potential farmland has to offer for economic growth opportunities in New Brunswick.

3 Definitions

Agricultural land:

- All free-hold land currently being farmed, the majority of which is assessed as farmland by Service New Brunswick;
- Land that has previously been farmed and has not been developed for residential or commercial purposes; and
- **Under-utilized farmland.**

CLI: The Canadian Land Inventory system of evaluating land for agricultural use is based on soil type, topographical and climatic limitations.

Prime agricultural land: CLI class 2 and 3 and much of 4, which is typically land used for growing food. There is no Class 1 land in New Brunswick.

Under-utilized farmland: Agricultural land that is currently not being farmed. It includes lands reverting to shrubs and lands that are just being mowed to keep down the weeds and shrubs. It is often referred to as abandoned or idle farmland.

4 Expected Outcomes

- Enhancement of economic opportunities and the creation of new jobs, including through support of new entrants coming into agriculture, and through the development of additional lands being brought into productive farming enterprises by existing farmers.
- Protection of agricultural land from un-restricted losses to development, encroachment and topsoil stripping¹, which is preserved for long-term agricultural use.
- The protection of farmland is recognized as vital for the growth and sustainability of New Brunswick's agriculture sector, but balanced with respect to individual rights and societal needs.
- Security for investors in that their investments in agriculture will not be eroded by conflicting land uses and development.
- A viable and expanding agricultural industry that takes advantage of New Brunswick's farmland potential and its climate and water, which creates greater opportunity for growth in agriculture for both domestic and export markets, as well as value-added opportunities.
- Clarification for land use planners, developers and land owners regarding what is important and necessary for a sustainable agricultural land base.
- The Agricultural Land Policy and the resulting outcomes will be linked to acts and regulations where applicable.

5 Policy Statements

Policy Statement #1 – Protection and Preservation of Agricultural Land

It is the policy of the Province of New Brunswick that agricultural land will be:

- **Preserved for long-term use for agriculture;**
- **Protected from non-agricultural development and topsoil stripping; and**
- **Protected from encroachment and other non-compatible activities.**

Policy Statement #2 – Enhancement and Development of Additional Agricultural Land

It is the policy of the Province of New Brunswick that additional agricultural lands will be brought into production by:

- **Supporting investments in farmland;**

¹ Topsoil stripping is the act of removing topsoil from farmland and using it for purposes other than farming. Once this topsoil is stripped off of the land, it becomes useless for agriculture for generations to come.

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- Encouraging new entrants into New Brunswick agriculture; and
- Facilitating the return of under-utilized farmland into productive farmland.

Policy Statement #3 – Guiding Principles for Land Use Planning

It is the policy of the Province of New Brunswick that land use planning shall reflect the importance of agriculture to New Brunswick by adhering to:

- The Agricultural Land Policy of New Brunswick;
- A guidance document outlining activities, which are acceptable and compatible with agricultural operations and ones that are not compatible in order to prevent conflicting land use issues; and
- An understanding that both agriculture and societal needs must be considered and balanced, so both can develop in harmony.

6 Scope/ Application

The Agricultural Land Policy applies to all free-hold **agricultural land** in the Province of New Brunswick.

7 Inquiries

The Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries
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Attachments: *The What Was Said Report*