



**ONTARIO MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,
FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS**



**WITH FIRST NATIONS WITHIN
THE ANISHINABEK NATION**



AUTHOR NOTE

ADAPTING TO ONTARIO'S CHANGING CLIMATE

**THIS REPORT IS BASED ON THREE ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS HELD BETWEEN
JANUARY AND MARCH 2017**

All summaries are designed to demonstrate actual discussion, feedback and questions as put forth by the Northern Superior Region (NS), Lake Huron Regions (LH) and the South East and South West Region (SEW)

ABSTRACT

The general agenda for each session included an introduction and overview of OMAFRA, proceeding presentations on 1) The Development of a Strategy for Northern Ontario Agriculture, Aquaculture and Food Processing Sector; 2) Developing Ontario Agriculture Soil Health and Conservation Strategy; and 3) the Proposed Changes to the Fish Food Safety Regulation.

An important part of each session was to increase knowledge and awareness of what OMAFRA is and the role they have in these very important areas. This was generally acknowledged to be the beginning of relationship development between OMAFRA and the Anishinabek Nation First Nations. OMAFRA also hoped to gather input and feedback that will help shape their strategies and regulations, broadening the scope and inclusion of their policies and practices to incorporate First Nations needs and goals.

Keywords: Relationship Development, Engagement, Awareness, Goals

**ONTARIO MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS WITH FIRST NATIONS WITHIN THE
ANISHINABEK NATION**

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Presented by Sharon Bailey, details on the Ministry Background, Agriculture and Food Sector and the Ministry at a glance were provided. Other areas presented included:

Ensuring Protection & Assurance in the Agri-food system with discussion about food safety and who is responsible for it, animal health & welfare, collaboration opportunities and pollination health;

Providing stewardship of Ontario's Capacity to provide food including sustainable agriculture, local food, jobs, water access & protection, extreme weather, greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, land-use planning, agricultural systems, current issues Nutrients & Lake Erie and Climate Change and environmental stewardship initiatives;

Fostering Economic Development of the Agri-Food Sector & Rural Ontario with agri-food economic development, programs & resources to address interests & objectives regionally, programs & services to support information technology transfer, research – partnerships with industry, academia, federal & provincial governments, and agencies;


Next Agricultural Policy Framework;

Summary OMAFRA Programs and Services with targeted audiences being Communities, Agri-Food Businesses, Farmers.

In general, discussion in all three regions indicated that there is a definite interest in food security within communities, economic development opportunities in agriculture, concerns around environmental issues and developing a relationship with OMAFRA.

NS: Does OMAFRA play a role in determining “wild” or non-traditional livestock farming? i.e. moose or bee farming. This was identified as an area with opportunity, especially if we can look at working with other ministries and agencies to assist First Nations or small communities in farming on crown land. It was also mentioned that the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund has some funding opportunities related to farming as well.

Concerns were raised with respect to the decline in non-traditional livestock such as moose. The spraying of chemicals “How does that affect First Nation traditional livestock and agriculture such as blueberries and medicines”? MNRF allows the spraying of chemical close to First Nation communities in different locations and the citizens are seeing a decline and loss of traditional food sources.



SEW: Does the Pollinator Plan only look at 4 stressors? OMAFRA indicated that they believe there are four main stressors but that adaptive management is how they look at it and work to monitor all stress, both recognized and new.

SEW: Some of the community's present offered examples of the work they are already undertaking. For example, a Native plant nursery wherein areas being developed around the community are visited and traditional plants are rescued, brought to the nursery and then replanted when the area is stable. They were directed to work with the ministries economic development arm to best identify areas for assistance, resources and sharing the model.

Regarding the Pollinator Health Action Plan, are there funding opportunities to support the development and creation of bee farms? Training?

Funding Opportunities: for First Nations: What are they? Are there funding sources to support new farming opportunities?

NS: Concerns were raised regarding whether or not actual percentages or funding pools were being put aside for First Nations to access and the lack of resources to be able to compete with larger or more experienced entities for what funding is available.

LH: Is there a process to start a farm? OMAFRA indicated that there were specific steps and resources available for farm start-ups. The Indian Agriculture Association of Ontario was identified as a good resource. OMAFRA also identified using their regional offices and resources to make headway in this area. For example, one community asked about Shrimp farming. OMAFRA was able to identify a Shrimp farm near Sudbury and stated that they could set up workshops to show how they started, road blocks, learning models and resources.

SEW: With reduced habitat, is OMAFRA working with farmers to identify opportunities for better profits with the space available, to improve or increase pollinator habitats and are their regulations in place to monitor what they do to improve these habitats? OMAFRA is also looking for ways to improve habitat health through practice, sharing information and research. Regulations are more often encouraged rather than imposed. They work with farmers and have multiple layers of outreach through working groups to this end.

NS: What percentage of revenues from farming activities are generated by First Nations much of the agricultural involvement are First Nations as the information is mainly generated based on Statistics Canada which does not have this breakdown.

Are there funding opportunities to support agriculture development in Northern Ontario?


NS: Specific area of interest identified was in greenhouses which did have funding programs in previous years. These programs have since been cut, however, there is still interest in greenhouses but also in generating knowledge about and promoting less expensive options that communities can look at. First Nations want to seek opportunities for Greenhouses in Northern Ontario. For Instance, Red Rock Indian Band was interested in a Greenhouse project, the community was ready to go and then the funding was pulled back by INAC. The purpose of the greenhouse was to provide area communities with cheaper food grown locally. In the North the people feel the cost of food is very expensive (e.g. Lettuce is \$ 6.00 and as you go up north is get up to \$ 15.00). The response provided by OMFRA was that there is a lot of interest in Greenhouses and other technology. Research has provided opportunities to find suitable in areas with undesired climates such as Northern Ontario. Some projects are underway in Ontario (e.g. MNRF and Whitesand First Nation). OMAFRA does have greenhouse specialists that could provide advice.

NS: What chemicals are being used in southern farming activities? What is causing the increase of phosphorous production in southern Ontario lakes? It was explained that the increase in phosphorus production comes from both animal excrements and commercial products. There are concerns about the further use of chemical spraying to control pests and feeling that chemicals are affecting the moose and other wild animal populations. Phosphorus is a nutrient that comes from manure and fertilizers and is causing much concern and impacts to Lake Erie. The excess rain events and effect from climate change is the main cause for nutrient loading in Lake Erie. Soil Health is also a priority for agricultural sustainability in Ontario but also in addressing the issues with Lake Erie. Herbicide and pesticides are used and are regulated under both Federal and Provincial law. The application must be in accordance to the regulation.

When it comes to farmers and the use of chemical and pesticides, they want to be stewards and do not use them unless there is a reason such as a pest infestation causing crop loss.

LH: Concerns about the health of Lake Erie, questions raised about working with the United States in achieving goals to improve health of the lake. OMAFRA was able to clearly identify good working relationships with the states of Michigan and Ohio and federal partners, both Canadian and American, as they strive to protect Lake Erie and reduce phosphorus levels.

LH: Expressed concern over climate change and who is the lead on that. OMAFRA identified MOECC as the lead and they are supposed to establish a modelling collaborative in terms of climate change impacts. There is coordination there and is a high priority to work collaboratively for best results. LH leadership and experts identified a disconnect between government and First Nations on this issue, specifically identifying First Nations models that could work if the collaboration was there.



NS: In regards to Animal Welfare and Safety, does OMAFRA have a role in determining non-traditional farming form of stock? First Nation food security is a priority and First Nations are looking into non-traditional farming such as elk, and there is a need to develop opportunities and feasibility to non-traditional farming for harvest. “OMAFRA is in the early stages of this discussion”.

NS: The pollinator action plan is another initiative OMAFRA has implemented. This program needs funding, as some First Nations are interested in small scale bee farming in Northern Ontario. “OMAFRA continues to discuss and consult on practices and improvements to the health of the pollinators”.

NS: I was stressed that partnership and funding need to be included for First Nations to participate. In addition, the gaps between MNRF and OMAFRA need to be addressed. MNRF will need to come to the table with OMAFRA and First Nations as the use of Crown owned “Treaty Land” will be required for the agriculture opportunities.

OMAFRA is looking at transforming some programs and is seeking advice on how to best design those programs. Most business are small scale and some producers are First Nations. All sizes of farms are profitable. It was stated that NOHFC provides some funds in these types of projects and it is under the MNDM umbrella.

OMAFRA committed to creating a list of funding opportunities that is more manageable for First Nations and easily shared as information changes.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN ONTARIO AGRICULTURE, AQUACULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING SECTOR

The development of a Strategy for Northern Ontario Agriculture, Aquaculture and Food Processing Sector was presented by Barb Alves. The discussion included:

Purpose as being their intention to build & strengthen relationships, provide overview of strategy development under the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, get feedback/input on this sector strategy;

Context being that strategy guides decision-making & investment planning in Northern ON until 2036, ways to contribute to the growth & diversification of the Northern ON economy;

Northern Agriculture Sector Profile & Opportunities for Growth, Discussion Paper and Engagement;

Agriculture, Aquaculture & Food Processing: Proposed Strategy Framework, goals, principles, objectives, government supports and What We Heard, opportunities, challenges & barriers;

Specific to Northern Indigenous Communities was Economic Development & Jobs, address food security issues, opportunities in traditional practices, capacity building & educational opportunities.

PROVIDED QUESTIONS

- 1) Do you have comments on the revised framework?
- 2) What is your community's interest in agriculture, aquaculture and food processing?
- 3) What do you or your communities need to explore agriculture, aquaculture and food processing opportunities?

Agriculture is dispersed across Ontario, and where there is agriculture production there is food processing. Approximately 65% of agriculture produced food is processed in Ontario.

There are opportunities for growth in Northern Ontario. There is potential for aquaculture in Lake Superior and possibility for growth. Other possibilities are Maple or Birch syrup, forest and freshwater foods (e.g. horticulture or mushrooms). Bio economy is also another possibility, by using crops such as oil seed and others. There is also an artisanal poultry program for small scale poultry production which is growing in Ontario. There was a discussion paper released in May of 2016. In 2016, OMAFRA engaged some First Nations and to find out what their interest in the agriculture sector is and to identify the community's needs.

- 1) The proposed Strategy Framework is to be proponent driven and to be responsive to regional challenges and opportunities. The strategy expands the opportunity with First Nation communities. Some First Nations have expressed:

- Need new crop varieties

- Warming climate is providing more options
- Increasing export demand of rainbow trout and maple syrup
- Lack of infrastructure such as broadband (faster internet)
- Need of economic development and jobs
- Potential to address food security
- Freshwater and non-traditional livestock
- Education opportunities as the sector is increasing across the globe

2) OMAFRA is seeking “What are the First Nation community interests?”

There was significant interest in opportunities for economic development and sector growth in all three regional sessions. In the Northern Superior and Lake Huron regions, while the interest was high for new development, it was a priority to explore ways to do so without incurring the same environmental impacts that the south has experienced. Assistance with funding and creating community awareness of development strategies, including community information sessions were also a focal point.

Northern Ontario Agriculture, Aquaculture and Food Processing Sector Strategy - Discussion Paper: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/policy/northernagrifoodpaper.htm>

NS: There is a need for funding for greenhouses. Red Rock Indian Band had interest in greenhouse development 5 years ago, but a partnership was needed. The community needed assistance in the cost of startup that would support the long-term.

OMAFRA needs options that will work, to move forward with First Nations: i.e. sources of energy and education.

LH: Expressed concerns land base and opportunities for development. For example, in the harvesting of sap for maple syrup the communities highlighted the need to ask permission of MNRF to tap trees on crown land. Access to this land for agricultural pursuits of First Nations should be a priority for OMAFRA and the ground work for easier processes should be in place. To follow this, a very clear understanding of what OMAFRA can help with for start-up, business planning and support should be presented. The need for First Nations to go back to the land is necessary in our communities.

It was stated again that there is NOHFC funding available through the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines (MNDM). The funds have been used for feasibility studies that look at the types of technology needed or to take on specific programs.

NS: Inquiry regarding the engagement that occurred in the Fall of 2016 hosted by OMAFRA. There was concern raised as they did not see prior engagement other than OMAFRA's fall session. The Northern Superior communities expressed that this is only information sharing and that the Chiefs and technicians sitting at the table need to bring this back to the community to further discuss. True engagement is going right to the community. OMAFRA expressed they are very new to engaging First Nations and that on-going

conversations with First Nation will continue. OMAFRA also knew their ministry would not get much response from First Nations because they are new to the relationship. OMAFRA stated that they will continue to improve what is needed by First Nations in the area. There was also concern on the timelines to respond. However, it was stated by OMAFRA there is some time to respond as there is not strategy developed as of yet, and are willing to go to First Nations if they are invited.

NS: **Action Item:** UOI to set up meeting with Rocky Bay and OMAFRA in the community – work with Richard Thompson.

OMAFRA wants the resources and programs available for First Nations and provide opportunities in Northern Ontario to the communities, but would need to identify specific opportunities of the North. There is potential for more crops as the Climate is changing. Identify areas that have good soils and unknown soils and there is potential for agriculture and livestock. In addition to commercial small scale biomass and bio economy opportunity.

NS: The communities expressed that they want to be involved in a pilot project. However, there are issues with land base, but want the opportunity.

Action Item: Pic Mobert has interest in being involved in a pilot project with OMAFRA and that they will be in touch.

NS: The First Nations stated that education and employment is a step up in any First Nation. As the initiative moves forward the First Nations can identify opportunities for the long-term. Stressed by Red Rock – Greenhouses and opportunities to grow. However, each First Nation is unique and the opportunities or needs may differ.

It was heard that there is opportunity to identify the short, medium and long term needs, interest and opportunities as the Union of Ontario and OMAFRA will continue to build on the relationship and the action item will be discussed in the region again in April or Early May 2017. Chief want specific plans and opportunities to connect with each other.

LH: Agriculture planning and development is an area of interest and need however the red tape involved is always problematic, especially when having to deal with more than one ministry or department such as NOHF and MNRF. MNRF itself is a huge barrier in any matter involving land and resources, agriculture and aquaculture alike, ending discussions before they can truly begin. OMAFRA needs to use the example of First Nations relationship with MNRF as how not to do it if the goal is to make development and growth viable.

OMAFRA was adamant about starting this relationship off on the right note and building it to make it work for First Nations and the province, developing best practices and processes that lead to growth. The First Nation governance framework of fish farming was highlighted as a community-based model that can be built upon.

DEVELOPING ONTARIO AGRICULTURE SOIL HEALTH AND CONSERVATION STRATEGY

Presented by Therese Festin, soil health and conservation strategy discussions focused on general information sharing, identification of theme areas for concentration and a series of questions intended to gather feedback and generate discussion. The main presentation outline included:

- Background & soil strategy development process outline 4 theme areas within the soil strategy & the draft vision, goals & objectives for each theme;
- Linkages to show where soil health fits;
- Why Develop a Soil Strategy? This identified the agriculture sector growth & sustainability, environmental protection & address issues around resilience to climate change;
- Soil Strategy Development Process, Benefits of Soil Health, Pressures on Agricultural Soils, Crop Trends, what practices Conserve & Build Soil Health, Building on Current Activities;
- Draft Vision: Healthy agriculture soils contribute to a productive economy, sustainable environment and thriving society: Soil Management, Soil Information & Mapping, Soil Monitoring & Modelling, &, Soil Knowledge & Innovation;
- What each pillar is, what it includes, goals & objectives;
- Process/Next Steps and How to set up Strategy with 4 Pillars.

PROVIDED QUESTIONS

- 1) Do you think the draft vision, goals & objectives will lead us in the right direction regarding soils? If not, how might they be improved?
- 2) What top 3 actions could government, farm organizations & the research & education community take to protect & conserve soil health over the long term?
- 3) What trends have you noticed in agricultural soil management practices over the past 10 years (tillage, cover crops, etc.)?
- 4) What do you think are the best practices for conserving soil health? How can government & soil experts best assist farmers in adopting best management practices?
- 5) What specific types of information & tools are needed to help farmers, agri-businesses, municipalities, conservation authorities and governments make decisions about soils?
- 6) What kinds of tools do you think are needed to assess & monitor soil health & conservation in Ontario?
- 7) Beyond what is currently available, what kind of research, education & training should be put in place to produce the expert people & knowledge needed to help improve soil health?

- 8) What are the best ways to make information available to farmers to help them adopt best management practices for healthy soil & soil conservation?

This presentation stressed the many benefits to having healthy soils, to help keep the agricultural sector strong, sustainable as well as protect the environment. However, there are many pressures on agriculture soils. There have been changing crop trends in the last 30 years, illustrated by a study covering from 1976 to 2011. The study revealed a decrease in pasture land and perennial crops and an increase in annual crops such as corn and soy. The development of a soil conservation strategy will also complement ongoing work to help reduce phosphorus to Lake Erie. OMAFRA is promoting practices that will conserve and build on soil health, including crop diversity and encouraging roots systems that are present all seasons. However, commodities grown and agriculture system practices will differ by regions and communities. There was also an example of a farm using good soil health practices (keeping the soil covered, using cover crops, having livestock within their operation, etc.). Within the soil conservation strategy there are four themes: soil management, soil information and mapping, soil monitoring and modelling and soil knowledge and innovation.


Detailed Soil Mapping and addressing the right to access to soil data to make informed decisions. It will be a centralized data base based on recommendations heard throughout the Ontario's engagement process.

Western science consideration was to use and promote remote sensing where the bands could be used to determine soil saturation, change detection analysis, crop yield, etc. Ontario will need to rely on Soil modelling and monitoring and find out if there are tools in place to help monitor. For example, the soil health test is a parameter (measurement) and will spit out a number show how healthy a soil is and allow tracking over time. There is a need also to look into watershed analysis that can track some indicators and provide users information on the policies and programs available. Certain tools are needed to monitor soil health. Soil knowledge and Innovation is looking at ways to provide education and tools needed, look at the best way and resources on the ground to do this. Ontario has fewer post-secondary programs focusing on soil science than before and as a result, there are fewer soil experts and scientists to provide knowledge and do soil-related research.

All regions expressed interest in following up to gain more information and encourage education within their communities in this field. Garnering feedback to the proposed questions in the presentation has been difficult, mainly due to the technical nature of the questions. There was an interest in taking this information back to their communities for discussion. Again, long term environmental concerns were a main issue and concern, as well as having access to information as to how to better work land, remaining profitable, sustainable and addressing food security issues.

Development of an Agricultural Soil Health and Conservation Strategy – Discussion Document : <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/landuse/soil-paper.pdf>

NS: Is there certification for agriculture? Example Forestry. The answer provided was that there are different certifications available such as nutrient management and planning certificate, certified crops advisors (CCA), etc. There are also programs such as Environment Farm Plan where farmers complete the plan to reduce environmental risk. How is this kept track of? Peer review and it is updated every 5 years. The farmers can apply for funding to help remediate.



LH: Is there a movement by the province to tighten the use of chemicals if they are damaging our soil and ending up in our watersheds. In this region, focus has been largely on aerial spraying but the same things can be said about the use of chemicals in farming. In response, OMAFRA representatives answered that by building soil health, we could be lessening the need for chemical inputs. In doing so, we need to encourage a change in the mindset of the farmer to get away from chemicals. Best-management practices that support the reduction of use of and need for pesticides. MOECC regulates pesticide use in the province and the federal governments sets broad national standards and evaluates the impacts of pesticides and sometimes bans them.

LH: Concerns were raised regarding how pesticides and chemical use is monitored. If the mishandling of aerial spraying occurs, can it happen in other sectors? Is there a way to know what our neighbors are adding to the soil?

SEW: The impact of wind farms should be considered.

NS: Rocky Bay

FN: Would Ontario assist in the correcting environmental effects in the soils? The communities' needs assistance to see what is in the land, to see if it is good for the future farmers in the communities. OMARFA provides an answer that "they would assist the First Nations".

NS: The inclusion of Traditional Knowledge from First Nations, while updating the soil mapping, as there are First Nations that do have traditional knowledge around agriculture practices. Provide opportunities for First Nations in soil sampling and looking at the soil make up information will be provided on what types of crops can grow.

NS: Rocky Bay has interest in an experimental or research farm. Research the unorganized to traditional farming in the territory and define eg. Blueberries as a traditional food source. OMAFRA is interested in non-traditional farming and don't want to repeat the soil issues that we see in the south. There are opportunities to increase traditional food sources such as blueberries, maple syrup, etc.

SEW: In terms of soil mapping, will First Nations be involved? Concerns over access to mapping information in a timely manner were also expressed. Timelines and mechanisms for data delivery to First Nations is important.

SEW: For farmers, especially those near watersheds and waterways, regulations about what a buffer is and when it is required, what sediments are in the soil and what contaminants come from agricultural run-off are needed, with education and enforcement. Also, when looking at agricultural growth in the north, there was a strong sentiment that learning from the mistake in the south should be a focal point.

NS: Comments were made that the presentation focused on Southern Ontario. Recommendation here would be to highlight the opportunities in the North and provide examples that may reflect the region. Eg. Verner, Ontario or Northern Farms or greenhouses that have been successful.

NS: Questions posed by OMAFRA throughout the presentation were directed to the farmer. First Nations need an opportunity to respond at a later time. Would like comments to be centered around a First Nation perspective specifically to the region to fit their needs. General comment was to refine and provide focus on the opportunities. As well the Soil health decline is happening in the south, need to identify the issues in the North and provide recommendations to address them.

NS: **UOI Action item:** OMAFRA to be kept on the table as they need to hear the voices from the North and the recommendations. As well First Nations should be participant to any work group or committee that is deigned to move forward and established by OMARFA.



PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE FISH FOOD SAFETY REGULATION

For discussions related to the proposed changes to the Fish Food Safety Regulation, Patrick Thornton took the lead as presenter, although additional staff was available at both the Lake Huron and South East/South West sessions. The presentation included:

Purpose was to present an overview of the proposed fish food safety regulations that apply to fish processors and provide an opportunity for input. Part of the background is that the responsibility of the current provincial Fish Inspection Act was transferred to OMAFRA from the Ministry of Natural

Resources and Forestry in 2014. This gives OMAFRA responsibility to oversee approximately 100 fish processing plants that process and sell only in Ontario as opposed to federal fish processing plants that process and export (Regulated by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency). The Fish Inspection Act and its regulation are more than 60 years old and have not evolved to address the food safety risks of more modern processing (e.g, smoking fish and vacuum packaging).

Subject to the approval of the Legislature, OMAFRA proposes to replace the current Fish Inspection Act and its regulation with a new regulation under the Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001. of processors, regulations, OMAFRA Role;

The new regulation would focus on Businesses Processing Products for Distribution – business to business distribution (if processing over 25 000 kilograms annually or distributing smoked product to other businesses) as opposed to business to consumer. The regulation would NOT apply to;

- Federally registered fish processors;
- Businesses processing only food products (food containing 25% of fish or less)
- Any business that processes fish and only sells directly to consumers as long as it's not also a licensed meat plant under Ontario Regulation 31/05.
- Commercial fishing businesses, if all they do is eviscerate/dress and ice fish for shipping
- Other Changes including Modern Compliance Framework: compliance tools & processes, i.e. compliance orders, suspension or revocation of licensing, Removal of outdated provisions – items outdated or no longer relevant removed, federal product standards would not be included.

PROVIDED QUESTIONS

- 1) Is the 25% fish content by weight threshold an appropriate way to distinguish fish products from other food products containing fish?
- 2) What other thresholds could be used and why do you think any suggested threshold would be preferable to the proposed threshold?

- 3) Are there other products that should be considered fish food products & should come under the provincial regulation, despite the 25% content by weight threshold?
- 4) Are there circumstances that should require businesses that only sell fish products directly to consumers (e.g. restaurants and grocery stores) to be included in the proposed regulations? Why?
- 5) Is the limit of 25,000 kg annually an appropriate way to exclude businesses from the regulation? If not, why?
- 6) Taking into consideration the possible changes discussed, how would you be impacted if your business requires registration?
- 7) Do you currently have written food safety programs and/or process controls?
- 8) What changes would have the most impact on you? Why?
- 9) Should all provincially license meat plants processing fish or fish products also be licensed & registered as fish processors? Why or why not?
- 10) Are there areas where the requirements for Registered Vs Licensed should be different? For example, facility requirements. Are there any other things OMAFRA should be considering in the development of the regulatory changes for food processing businesses involved in the processing of fish for sale in Ontario?

The proposed changes to these regulations garnered some concerns, mainly in the northern communities in terms of how it may impact commercial fisheries and suppliers. The consensus in all three sessions was that improvements to food safety was beneficial and that education was a priority in making this feasible. Questions about applicability on reserve lands were put forth without clear answers provided about the implementation. In response to the question, OMAFRA mentioned that provincial regulations generally apply across Ontario; however, whether a particular regulation applies on First Nation Reserve will depend on such facts as Treaty Rights and specific facts of the situation or activity that is regulated. There were also concerns raised about having the information presented to communities and fishery operators prior to providing feedback or for consultation to be considered complete.

Fish Food Safety Modernization – Discussion Paper:


<http://www.ontariocanada.com/registry/view.do?postingId=21982&language=en>

<http://www.ontariocanada.com/registry/showAttachment.do?postingId=21982&attachmentId=32380>

NS: Rocky Bay FN indicated that this issue needs to be brought back to the community for input prior to their taking any position or offering opinions. There are concerns about the consequences on their community and its economy that may show up down the line.

NS: There are concerns in the region about policies and regulations reflecting the needs and issues in the south. The supports, services and regulations are not always reflective of the north.

Action Item: UOI and OMAFRA will work together to follow up with Richard of Rocky Bay Council to plan an OMAFRA visit to the community.



LH: Who applies for the license? What is being done to avoid making the process harder for those who need to be licensed?

OMAFRA indicated that it is the business, the incorporated business, that would be licensed and the operator would be responsible. Through the changes in the regulations it is hoped that the processes will be easier on the businesses, more streamlined and meeting the needs of the business and consumer. Food safety is the priority, as opposed to over regulating an industry.

LH: We need clarification as to what and when is a facility considered a processing plant. This is the integral starting point for our businesses to know how this regulation will affect them. They also recognize that a licensing system can provide public assurances that their products and facilities are safe, improving their success.

LH: In the case of commercial fishermen who do no more processing than catching and cleaning the fish. Most work out of a shed, which is clean and the fish is packaged according to customers' preferences. If they are not required to be regulated, are there options for help in making their business better and safer?

OMAFRA stated that there are resources and a team that wants to help operators operate better and safer. Funds may not be tied to it, but resources and educational information is absolutely available.

SEW: One of the realities for First Nations is that the relationship between Ontario and First Nations have not been a priority. There is a need for funding opportunities to be made available. It is important to target discussions such as these to communities and develop an understanding of the needs. We already have a forum for economic development. These issues should be brought to that table to look at economic options and impacts. Incorporating sharing of knowledge would also be beneficial, bringing together the north and south to share understandings and lessons would be beneficial in looking at how regulations may affect our commercial fisheries.

LH: The main priority for discussions about the proposed regulatory changes are how to make change and growth feasible, safe and profitable for business owners. The work has to extend beyond one type of regulation as food safety includes water and environmental health, and it has to include education resources. Anyone can go out, get a boat and start fishing for business. They need to make sure that they have the knowledge about how to treat the catch, clean and prepare the fish and store it. Perhaps this regulation should include some type of certification for safety and environmental matters, with standards that are acceptable to our First Nation leadership.

NS: There was a request for a non-derogation clause in the new regulations and an opportunity to preview the regulations before it is released as has been the practice with some other ministries (i.e. MOECC).

GENERAL CONCERNS, COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

In all three sessions, there was a definite expression of willingness to develop a working relationship that will benefit both First Nations and the province as a whole. There concerns raised were mainly about developing this relationship recognizing First Nations as equal partners and with acknowledgement of treaty rights and their status as nations within the government to government dynamic. Education, encouragement of agricultural development and environmentally responsible practices were the main priorities. Continued information sharing, introduction of opportunities for funding and supports, as well as improving access to this information for communities with taxed resources, both financial and human were identified as main focus points moving forward. The following statements are directly from feedback during the sessions:

The treaties cannot be forgotten; they are important to stay at the table. There is opportunity for OMAFRA as there is not a long standing relationship with First Nations. This instance is not consultation more to build the relationship and to find out what is the relationship to collaborate with the Anishinabek Nation and member First Nations. In addition, there is a significant difference that needs to be acknowledged to understand the relationship.

There is caution to OMAFRA not to revert to the NOHFC funding. First Nations have been applying but there are competing against other stakeholders. Funding opportunities by OMAFRA need to be tailored to First Nations.

It was also stressed that it is difficult for Chiefs to decided what to attend, as they have so much on the table. Resources, time and sometimes expertise is limited. If OMAFRA comes with that understanding there is opportunity to truly collaborate with the First nation and create economic of scale. The opportunity for First Nation involvement has the potential to reduce the cost of food. Look at this as collaboration.

In was mentioned that aquaculture opportunities have the potential to be in the North. Wabitec has also been involved. However, when developing partnerships funding needs to come with it.


Need to shift thinking from South to North, what will work and not work.

Implement traditional protocols to engage. As you build the relationship and get know each other we will learn each other's boundaries, or where to build boundaries or take them down.

Aerial spraying is causing the kill offs of blueberries, raspberries and medicines. It is contributing to the moose decline, as their food source is disappearing. The toxic substances are getting into the waterways. The spray is killing the soil.

Like to see research on organic farming vs non organic, and the effect on human when farmers use genetically modified seeds, and how they impact the soil. Higher rate of people has developed allergies to foods.

Encouraged OMAFRA to go to career and education fairs with First Nations to promote studies in areas of agriculture and related research. Communities suggested that they would support and encourage their citizens in pursuing these educational fields, recognizing the value and contributions that they could make to their communities. It was also suggested that this matter should be brought



to the UOI Grand Council to see how to make this a priority for youth and within communities. There are specific goals and objectives. In the discussion it was stated that the knowledge food and soils be taught early and provide connections for urban and rural.

Action Items

The action items that have been identified for next discussion are set out below. Each region had different and similar questions, therefore all action items will be discussed at each round table.

Northern Superior Region

- NS: Does OMAFRA play a role in determining “wild” or non-traditional livestock farming? i.e. moose or bee farming.
- NS: In regards to Animal Welfare and Safety, does OMAFRA have a role in determining non-traditional farming form of stock?
- NS: Action Item: UOI to set up meeting with Rocky Bay and OMAFRA in the community – work with Richard Thompson
- Action Item: Pic Mobert has interest in being involved in a pilot project with OMAFRA and that they will be in touch. It will be a centralized data base based on recommendations heard throughout the Ontario's engagement process.
- OMAFRA provides an answer that “they would assist the First Nations”.
- NS: UOI Action item: OMAFRA to be kept on the table as they need to hear the voices from the North and the recommendations. As well First Nations should be participant to any work group or committee that is deigned to move forward and established by OMAFRA.

Lake Huron Region

- LH: Is there a process to start a farm? OMAFRA indicated that there were specific steps and resources available for farm start-ups
- LH leadership and experts identified a disconnect between government and First Nations on this issue, specifically identifying First Nations models that could work if the collaboration was there.
- NOHFC funding available through the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines (MNDM). The funds have been used for feasibility studies that look at the types of technology needed or to take on specific programs.

Southeast / Southwest Regions

- Involvement in career and education fairs with First Nations to promote studies in areas of agriculture and related research. Communities suggested that they would support and encourage their citizens in pursuing these educational fields, recognizing the value and contributions that they could make to their communities. It was also suggested that this matter should be brought to the UOI Grand Council to see how to make this a priority for youth and within communities. There are specific goals and objectives. In the discussion it was stated that the knowledge food and soils be taught early and provide connections for urban and rural.
- Regarding the Pollinator Health Action Plan, are there funding opportunities to support the development and creation of bee farms? Training?
- Funding Opportunities: for First Nations: What are they? – follow up needed OMAFRA committed to creating a list of funding opportunities that is more manageable for First Nations and easily shared as information changes.

The Mission of the Lands & Resources Department is to foster a better quality of life by ensuring access to natural resources in support of the goals, principles and values of the Anishinabek Nation.



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