

Section 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The **Regional Agricultural Economic Impact Study** was completed for the Region of Niagara in July, 2003. The study provided a profile of the agricultural sector in Niagara based on Statistics Canada data from 1976 to 2001. With the release of the 2006 census it is timely to update this agricultural profile and assess the changes that occurred in the Region between 2001 and 2006.

Section 2 of this report contains the statistical update. Section 3 updates the economic impact of agriculture on the Niagara economy and Section 4 contains comments on the implications of the identified changes and the actions the Region is taking to support agriculture.

1.2 Study Area

As in the 2003 report, the study area as shown on **Figure 1** is the Region of Niagara. Reporting is done on the basis of the Statistics Canada Census divisions which are based on the twelve area municipalities of:

- Town of Fort Erie
- Town of Grimsby
- Town of Lincoln
- Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake (NOTL)
- Town of Pelham
- City of Niagara Falls
- City of Port Colborne
- City of St Catharines
- City of Thorold
- City of Welland
- Township of Wainfleet; and
- Township of West Lincoln.



1.3 Issues

The five years between 2001 and 2006 were dynamic ones for agriculture in Niagara. With the completion of the 2003 Regional Agricultural Economic Impact Study and in response to pressures impacting the regional agricultural community at the time, the Regional Chair established an Agricultural Task Force to prepare a strategy to support agriculture in the Region.

In 2004 the Task Force prepared “A Vision from One Voice” articulating a vision for the future of agriculture in Niagara which was adopted by Regional Council. Working with this vision, the Task Force prepared a Strategic Plan outlining the steps required to support a profitable agricultural sector. This plan was approved by Regional Council and the Task Force has been working on implementation since then.

The timing of this activity was excellent. When the Province implemented the Greenbelt initiative, Niagara had a plan as a basis on which to respond.

With the Greenbelt Plan in place, supported by the Growth Plan for the Golden Horseshoe, the period since 2005 has been a challenging one for agriculture in Niagara. Ongoing



changes to the agricultural sector resulting from the new legislation were inevitable. In addition, agriculture has been subject to other challenging issues unrelated to implementation of the Greenbelt Plan. In order to understand these changes, monitor their impact and be prepared to respond to them, it is important to track the state of agriculture on an ongoing basis. This update, by adding the findings of the 2006 Agricultural Census to those reported in the 2003 Regional Agricultural Economic Impact Study, will help achieve this.