



Accountability Report

2018–2019

Agriculture

 **NOVA SCOTIA**

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Accountability Report 2018–2019
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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Agriculture for the year ended March 31, 2019 is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Department of Agriculture Business Plan for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the Department's outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by Department of Agriculture management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Department of Agriculture management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the Department of Agriculture 2018-19 Business Plan.

Honourable Keith Colwell, E.C.N.S.
Minister of Agriculture

Frank Dunn
Deputy Minister

Message from Minister

I am pleased to present the Department of Agriculture Accountability Report for 2018-19.

It is no secret that agriculture is the backbone of rural Nova Scotia. As we continue to look for ways to strengthen our economy and increase the jobs in rural Nova Scotia, I can see just how important the agriculture industry is and the growth potential it has in our province. Agriculture is a strong economic contributor that generated \$563.6 million in farm cash receipts in 2018.

As Minister of Agriculture, I want our farmers to be successful and making money. It's important to me that our farmers and producers receive the support they need in order to run their businesses successfully. When our farms are profitable, that means more economic opportunities for our rural communities and in turn, that means more young Nova Scotians can build successful lives in those communities.

Last year, the provincial and federal governments launched the Canadian Agricultural Partnership program, a five-year, \$3 billion investment aimed at supporting sustainable growth of our agriculture and agri-food sectors on a 60-40 cost-shared basis. For us, that means \$37 million will be invested through 11 provincially delivered programs to help our industry continue to grow and be successful.

Food security has quickly become a much talked about topic. As climate change and natural disasters become even bigger issues, as a province, we need to ensure that we can produce and harvest enough food to feed our families in case of an emergency. To have a secure food supply, we need a strong agriculture sector.

Educating Nova Scotians about the importance of buying locally grown and produced products is very important to industry's success. That's why we are reviewing our buy local initiative. Buying local, quality grown and made products benefits not only our producers, but also our communities.

Agriculture is an exciting global industry that is always innovating. Our farmers use modern, cutting-edge technology and we have a lot of very successful farming businesses in our province that are exporting their products all over the world.

Each day, our farmers and producers make great achievements and I am committed to helping them remain successful because I strongly believe that it is what is going to build us a strong, progressive province.

Sincerely,

The Honourable Keith Colwell, E.C.N.S.
Minister of Agriculture

Financial Results

| | 2018-2019 Estimate | 2018-2019 Actuals | 2018-2019 Variance |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Program & Service Area | (\$ thousands) | | |
| Departmental Expenses: | | | |
| Senior Management | 698 | 696 | (2) |
| Policy and Corporate Services | 34,855 | 45,281 | 10,426 |
| Agriculture and Food Operations | 14,062 | 13,239 | (823) |
| Total Gross Departmental Expenses | 49,615 | 59,216 | 9,601 |
| | | | |
| Additional Information: | | | |
| Revenues | 564 | 734 | 170 |
| Fees and Other Charges | 1,177 | 1,340 | 163 |
| Ordinary Recoveries | 6,410 | 4,687 | (1,723) |
| Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries | 8,151 | 6,761 | (1,390) |
| | | | |
| TCA Purchase Requirements | 1,308 | 1,093 | (215) |
| Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) | 169.6 | 165.0 | (4.6) |
| <u>Departmental Expenses Variance Explanations:</u> | | | |
| Increase due to Frost Loss Program expenses. | | | |
| <u>Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:</u> | | | |
| Decrease is a net result of ordinary recoveries decrease from federal government for Programs and Business Risk Management, decrease in miscellaneous rental income (Perennia Park) and increase in Crown Lending fees. | | | |
| <u>TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:</u> | | | |
| Decrease is due to delay in Lab purchase: CNS Elemental Determinator. | | | |
| <u>Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:</u> | | | |
| Miscellaneous vacancies across the department. | | | |

Measuring Our Performance

Canadian Agricultural Partnership

The Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a five-year agriculture policy and priorities multilateral framework, was first implemented in 2018-19. This agreement supports the agricultural sector in six priority areas: markets and trade; science, research and innovation; environmental sustainability and climate change, risk management; value-added agriculture and agri-food processing; and public trust. It includes a cost-shared budget of \$37 M over five years in federal and provincial funding and aims to increase competitiveness, productivity and profitability; increase environmental sustainability of agriculture and agri-food sectors; and expand domestic and international markets.

In 2018-19, the Department spend its annual allotment as follows:

- Markets and Trade - 122 projects
- Science, Research and Innovation - 42 projects
- Risk Management - 17 projects
- Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change - 105 projects
- Value-Added Agriculture and Agri-Food Processing - 117 projects
- 30 additional projects with overlapping themes.

Pan-Atlantic Agricultural Research Innovation Research Initiative

Pan-Atlantic projects are funded through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership in partnership with other provinces for regional benefit. These initiatives can be developed and supported in any of the six priority areas. Nova Scotia was the lead province for three of the six multi-year Pan-Atlantic projects funded in 2018-19:

- Organic sector strategic planning, communications, marketing and climate adaptation support
- Grain and oilseed research including field trials, a yield enhancement network and knowledge and technology transfer
- Regional Atlantic Technology Transfer Team for Apiculture focussing on honey-bee research to meet the pollination demands of the wild blueberry sector
- Science coordination and research to provide apple producers with alternative control measures for pests and summer fruit diseases, as well as extend the harvest window on high value cultivars
- Support of the maritime beef industry with the development of learning modules for the beef school, a leadership workshop and a maritime industry conference
- Poultry research on nutrition, feed, disease, alternatives to antibiotics and preventative health practices with the Atlantic Poultry Research Institute.

Small Farm Acceleration Program

The Small Farm Acceleration Program was launched in 2018-19 under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership to focus on supporting the growth of small farms in Nova Scotia through the implementation of business planning and farm growth strategies. This program was designed for farms with farm income under \$60,000. The Small Farm Acceleration Program consists of two phases to be completed sequentially:

- Phase 1 which requires applicants to explore their farm growth goals, with the completion and submission of a business plan and detailed Farm Growth Action Plan; and
- Phase 2 where farmers focus on projects that will allow them to fulfill their farm growth goals as laid out in their Farm Growth Action Plan.

A total of 85 farms applied to the program in 2018-19 and completed their business plan and farm growth action plan.

Business Risk Management

AgriRecovery, AgriInvest, AgriStability programs

The Department supported industry access to the federally delivered AgriInvest and AgriStability programs. There were no AgriRecovery programs funded for Nova Scotia in 2018-19. These programs help protect agricultural producers against income loss during times of uncertainty and/or disasters. In 2017, Nova Scotian farmers protected almost \$230 M in market revenue through the AgriInvest program and almost \$150 M in market revenue through and AgriStability program. These figures represent declines of 6% and 24% respectively, from 2016. The 2018 figures are not yet available.

Crop and Livestock Insurance

The Crop and Livestock Insurance Commission marked its 50th anniversary and continues to support responsible economic growth in the agricultural industry through its cost-shared insurance plans and a wildlife compensation program. The 2018-19 fiscal year included record indemnity payments resulting from an extreme spring frost event which affected insured commodities such as tree fruit, blueberry, grapes, vegetables, corn and soybean.

Frost Loss Program

Devastating crop losses occurred due to a severe frost/freeze event in early June 2018. The most severely impacted crops were wild blueberries, strawberries, Christmas trees and apples. The Department of Agriculture developed a Frost Loss Program to help farmers recover from unexpected production loss due to this event. Applications were received from 306 farms covering 48 commodities which resulted in over \$10.1 M in payments.

Building Tomorrow Fund

This fund commits a provincial investment of \$9 M over three years to be split equally between agriculture and fisheries/aquaculture projects. In 2018-19, \$750 K was committed over three years for research field trials, quality standards, and marketing of Christmas trees. Projects in other key sectors are being finalized and will be announced in 2019-20.

Dykeland Renewal and Marshland Conservation

The Department continues to modernize the management and protection of 43,000 acres of marshland and 241 kilometers of dykes to respond to climate change pressures and rising sea levels. In 2018-19, the Department completed the second year of the Truro Agricultural Dyke Re-alignment Pilot Project. In partnership with Public Safety Canada, under the National Disaster Mitigation Program, \$998 K in upgrades were completed on flood control infrastructure along the Salmon and North River estuary. This work will provide continued flood protection for the Town of Truro and Municipality of the County of Colchester. Ongoing work in this area will allow for the restoration of 170 acres of natural floodplain.

Following a successful expression of interest submission, the Department was invited to apply under Infrastructure Canada's Disaster Adaptation Mitigation Fund to jointly fund \$50 M in upgrades to 60 kilometres of dyke and 5 flood control structures along the Bay of Fundy over the next nine years. The submitted application addresses the some of the Province's most critical dyke infrastructure and supports a continued strategy for climate change adaptation.

Grape and Wine Industry

Nova Scotia continues to build on its long tradition of growing grapes for wine. Varieties such as the white L'Acadie Blanc are known for their flavor contribution to Nova Scotia's signature Tidal Bay appellation wine. Since its official launch in 2012, Tidal Bay's success with consumers continues to grow. This year, Tidal Bay held a 17% share of all Nova Scotia wine sales and generated the largest growth in sales of all Nova Scotia wines.

In 2018-19, the Department invested just over \$3 M in year three of the four-year, \$12 M Vineyard and Wineries Investment Program. The Vineyard Development and Expansion Program, which aims to increase vineyards in production, funded projects for over \$750 K. This program has supported the development of over 260 acres of grapes to date, mainly in the varieties of L'Acadie Blanc, Chardonnay and Riesling. The Department also continued to work with industry and other partners to identify strategic investments in research, development and innovation, national and international market development, and quality enhancement. In 2018-19, the Department invested just over \$1 M each in research and quality enhancement, as well as \$226 K on marketing initiatives.

In 2018-19, the Minister's Wine Development Board, with support through its operational committees, continued its work in the areas of market development, research and development, and wine quality standards development. For example, the Market Development Committee

partnered with the Wine Association of Nova Scotia (WANS), Taste of Nova Scotia, Select Nova Scotia and the NSLC with the aim to expand markets for Nova Scotia wines domestically, nationally and internationally. The Board supported the development of the Nova Scotia Wine Marketing Strategy to deliver a series of market development and promotional activities. In 2018-19, the value of international wine exports was \$472 K.

In April 2018, the Department of Agriculture hosted the first annual Minister's Grape and Wine Networking Conference for growers, wineries and other stakeholders, including researchers, to engage on industry opportunities and challenges.

Market statistics indicate that grape harvest decreased from 2,132 metric tonnes in 2017 to 1,072 metric tonnes in 2018, an almost 50% decrease, representing almost 1 million liters of production. Grapes were the 7th hardest hit commodity, out of 48 that claimed crop loss, due to the late frost event in June 2018 contributing to the decreased harvest. Sales of Nova Scotia wine from NSLC retail outlets and farm gate sales increased from \$20.5 M in 2016-17 to \$23.6 M in 2018-19, representing a 15% increase over two years.

Craft Cideries, Distilleries and Breweries

In 2018-19, the Department engaged with Nova Scotian craft cideries, distilleries, breweries and intergovernmental stakeholders to identify opportunities for sustainable growth. Sector Development staff facilitated industry development activities such as an industry roundtable for Nova Scotia craft cideries and fruit growers.

Wild Blueberry Industry

Wild blueberries were Nova Scotia's largest agricultural export at \$104.4 M representing an increase of 27% from 2017. Last year, the Minister's Nova Scotia Wild Blueberry Advisory Board was established to address wild blueberry oversupply, declining prices and increased global competition. The main objective of the Board is to provide a regular forum for government and industry to come together to identify development opportunities and initiatives to guide the growth of our wild blueberry sector. To date, these initiatives include:

- Supported a series of market development activities internationally with a focus on China by:
 - Working with Nova Scotia companies to establish new distribution channels
 - Supporting in-store promotions at key retail supermarkets and on e-commerce platforms
 - Participating in the Food Hotel China Expo; Shanghai Bakery China Show; China International Import Expo, November 2018; and Canadian Export Cafes in Shanghai with Nova Scotia companies featuring value-added wild blueberry products
- Continued to work with industry, the Province and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada:

- to develop the Nova Scotia wild blueberry solutions project in partnership with the Nova Scotia Wild Blueberry Producers Association supporting the creation of two new wild blueberry innovative packaging and value-added consumer products for the domestic and international marketplace
- by partnering with key stakeholder on a pilot project to support the introduction of wild blueberries into the Nova Scotia school system.

Apple Industry

The Department continued with the fifth year of the six-year \$2.2 M Apple Industry Growth and Efficiency Program in partnership with the Nova Scotia Fruit Growers Association for orchard renewal with higher value varieties of apples such as Honeycrisp, Gala and Ambrosia. Almost 497,000 new apple trees of higher varieties, the majority of which are Honeycrisp, have been planted since the Program started.

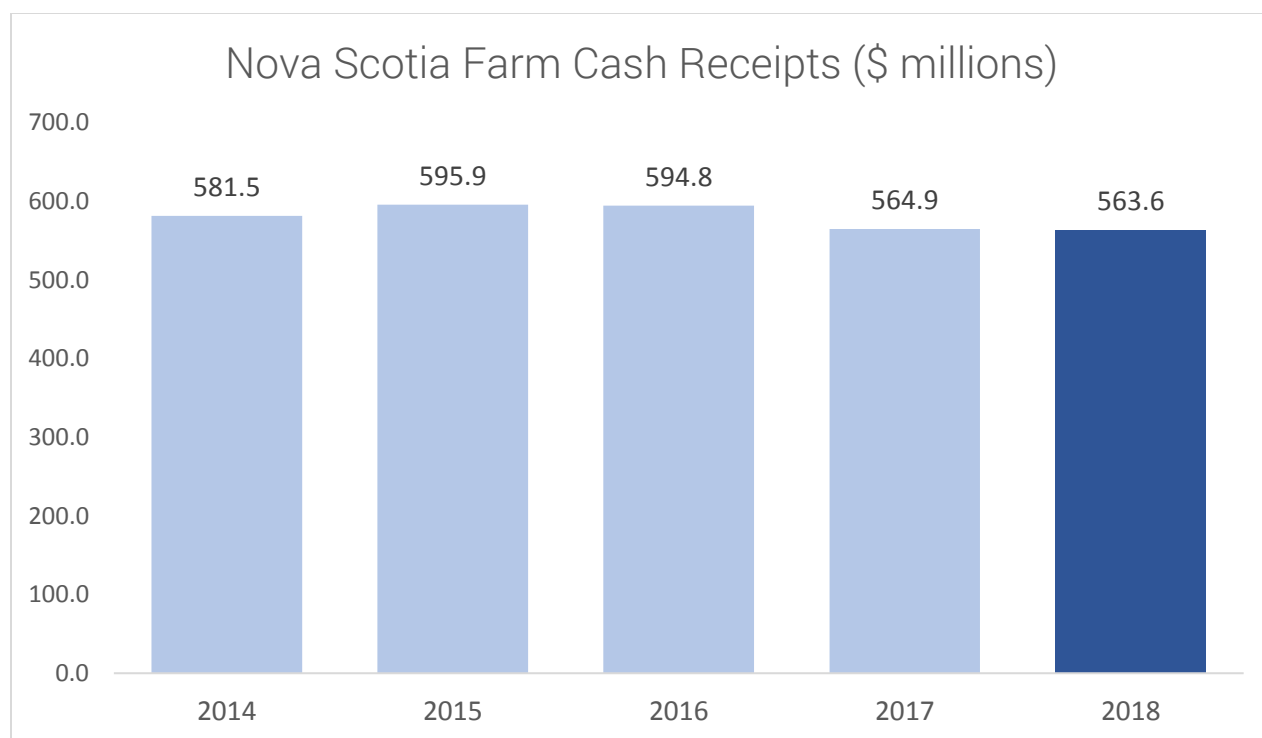
The value of Nova Scotia's apple industry was \$18.8 M in 2018, a 12.6% decrease from last year, being the second hardest hit commodity by June 2018's devastating frost event. International exports were also down 44% at \$8.9 M in 2018.

Minister's Advisory Board on Horticulture

In 2018-19, the Minister's Advisory Board met to further develop the horticulture sector in Nova Scotia. Board members include representatives from Horticulture Nova Scotia, Government of Nova Scotia, Perennia and Agriculture and Agri-Foods Canada. The Board is identifying opportunities to enhance coverage for the sector from business risk management programs to exploring new funding programs that could cover larger projects, among other needs, and working with Select Nova Scotia on developing provincial marketing programs.

Nova Scotia Farm Cash Receipts

This metric shows the combined cash receipts for all farming operations in Nova Scotia, excluding government payments. Values can vary based on several factors, including the growing and economic conditions of a given year and the value of the Canadian dollar. There was a slight decrease in the overall total in 2018 to \$563.6 M, a decline of \$1.3 M from the previous year. Although there was a significant crop loss due to a frost event in June 2018, losses in farm cash receipts were offset by inventories held in storage, as well as an increase in total livestock receipts.



Client Relationship Management System and Compatible Grants Management System

The Department completed the initial implementation of the Client Relationship Management and Grants Management System in 2018-19. All agriculture grant programs will now be managed in these systems.

Labour Issues

The Department continued to lead an inter-departmental working group comprising of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Labour and Advanced Education, Community Services, and Immigration to collaboratively research labour challenges facing the agriculture and seafood sectors in Nova Scotia. In 2018-19, a one-day symposium for each of agriculture and fisheries and aquaculture industries was organized to coordinate knowledge transfer around labour challenges in each sector. Participants from industry, government and non-profit organizations addressed topics such as attraction and retention of workers, automation and productivity, and skills development. A summary of findings, analysis and recommendations will inform continued action on labour issues in the province.

Agricultural Climate Change Lens

The Department continued to partner with the Climate Change Unit of Nova Scotia Environment through the Climate Adaptation Leadership Program. In November 2018, the Department established the Agricultural Champions for Environmental Sustainability to lead the implementation of the Agriculture Climate Readiness Plan (Ag Plan) to help the Department to effectively address risk and opportunities associated with climate change. The Leadership

Program will continue to support the Department through capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, and dedicated staff and interns. The Ag Plan strategic areas include climate data and information, Department of Agriculture programs, minimizing service disruptions, staff awareness and knowledge, and industry preparedness.

Key core functions

Central Departmental functions advanced in 2018-19 that supported its mandate, strategic themes and overall government priorities include the following:

Perennia Partnership

The Department provided an operating budget of \$2.5 M in 2018-19 to Perennia Food and Agriculture Inc. (Perennia) to support its mandate to farmers, seafood producers and food processors for the delivery of food safety, product development and commercialization programs. Perennia also facilitates collaborations between industry, the Department, and research institutions to provide opportunities for research, knowledge and technology transfer. Specific projects in 2018-19 totaling included:

- Initiation of quality wine standards development and implementation project - \$233 K
- Year two of three years for a terroir analysis to evaluate what wine varieties can best be produced in Nova Scotia and what types of wine are demanded by the market - \$260 K
- Year two of three years for an automated mobile bottling line that assists with the demand for extra bottling capacity due to present and future increases in grape acreage and wine production volumes - \$260 K.

Sector Development and Innovation

The Sector Development and Innovation unit provides business advisory services to support industry development and competitive transition, as well as to facilitate access to federal and provincial resources for clients across the agri-food value chain. The focus of these activities is to mitigate business risk, build industry capacity, and support sector development through research and development, and innovative initiatives.

In 2019, existing resources were realigned to allow this unit to enhance client service. This included an increased number of Business Development Officers and the formation of new roles that include: a Knowledge and Technology Transfer Specialist, a Business Opportunity Strategist, a Business Development Program Analyst and a Business Resource Development Specialist. These changes will allow an increased focus on identifying and recommending key growth and innovation opportunities.

Select Nova Scotia

This buy local program uses strategic partnerships to raise consumer awareness regarding locally made food and goods, and helps consumers understand the importance of buying local. In 2018-19, \$267 K was committed in the Program, funding multiple projects such as: research on consumer attitudes toward buying local products; retail initiatives such as Air Miles promotions with Sobeys Inc., and the Nova Scotia Liquor Commission; promotional initiatives with the Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia; and sponsorship of local events and programs. Select Nova Scotia also partners with Communications Nova Scotia in a comprehensive buy local marketing campaign.

In 2018-19, Select Nova Scotia sponsored 21 regional events and 13 larger provincial events focused on consumer awareness for the buy local program. The Program also partnered with Communications Nova Scotia on a booklet of craft beverage recipes created by local mixologists; the production of a video series for the Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia; and on sponsorship of a province-wide school fundraiser promoting farm local produce.

In early 2019, Select Nova Scotia entered into a program review. The program review was intended to look for ways to strengthen Select Nova Scotia's impact in increasing the value of local farm and food products purchased by Nova Scotians.

ThinkFarm

This new entrant program for farmers continued with its online presence and resources were distributed to farmers who sought advisory services from extension staff. As anticipated, no new initiatives or program resources were developed in this business year.

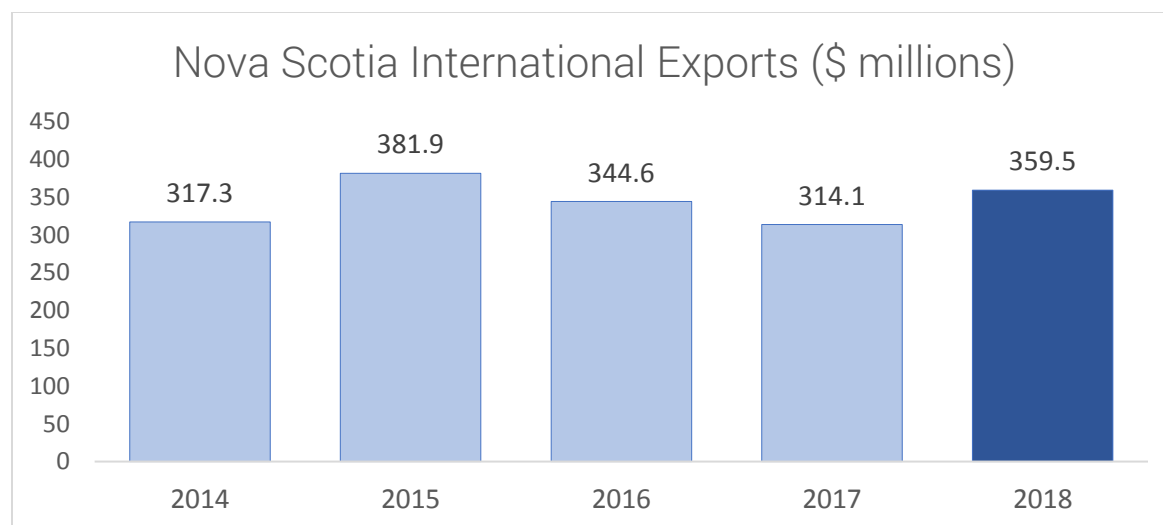
Trade Development

The Department continued to actively work to ensure international trade issues and market access opportunities are pursued in alignment with industry priorities. Tariff reductions, access to new markets, reduction of non-tariff barriers and modern and fact-based dispute settlement mechanisms will help Nova Scotia achieve the goal of doubling agriculture and fishery exports.

In November 2018, Canada, the United States and Mexico signed the new Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement. Under this Agreement, Canada has agreed to grant additional market access of 3.59% to its domestic dairy market as well as other concessions in the form of tariff rate quotas that impact our supply management industries (dairy, poultry and egg products). Our supply management industries represent approximately 50% of Nova Scotia agriculture farm cash receipts. The Department of Agriculture is committed to working with industry stakeholders and our federal colleagues to minimize the impact on businesses.

Agri-food products are Nova Scotia's third largest export category accounting for 6% of the province's exports in 2018. Overall, agri-food exports increased in 2018 to \$360 M, up 14% from 2017. Our main agriculture export destinations in 2018 were the US (44%), Netherlands (10%) and China (8%). Wild blueberries topped agri-food exports again with a value of \$104 M,

comprising 29% of all agri-food international exports. Furs followed with a value of \$49 M and miscellaneous food preparations with a value of \$45 M. Blueberry exports in 2018 increased by \$29 M (39%) over the previous year, contributing to the increase in overall agri-food exports.



Animal Health Services

The Animal Health Lab provides diagnostic services to agricultural clients, veterinarians and members of the public. In 2018-19, the Animal Health Lab completed 442 post-mortem examinations on several different species, primarily agricultural in nature, and completed assessments of 217 biopsy submissions, primarily from companion animals and meat inspections. The post-mortem examinations provide scanning surveillance information for industry.

Efforts continued in 2018-19 to promote the use and value of the lab to veterinarians and producers and increase awareness of new diseases or changing prevalence of diseases in Nova Scotia, including the completion of 30,390 tests.

Livestock Health Services Program spent \$1 M in 2018-19 to support veterinarians providing herd health and livestock health services to registered farms across the province. Animal Health also welcomed the addition of a Chief Veterinary Officer in January 2019.

Animal and Plant Laboratory Services

The Animal and Plant Laboratory Services supported industry growth and protection through the many laboratory tests conducted. Results from Laboratory Services allows the agriculture industry to make sound decisions to support sustainable agriculture production, from supporting plant production and environmental protection to supporting the health of animals and protection of our food systems, as in the case of dairy testing. In 2018-19, Laboratory Services successfully completed their bi-annual ISO 17025 accreditation site visit, conducted a client service survey and completed 20,811 laboratory tests.

Animal and Crop Services

The Department continued to offer services to support the growth, safety and security of food production by supporting programs and administering regulations to protect honey bees, livestock and plant pests. In 2018-19:

- 906 livestock premise identifications were issued
- 631 beekeepers were registered
- Borders were closed to the import of honey bee hives to protect the industry from small hive beetle
- 672 honey bee colonies were inspected in Nova Scotia to support honey bee sales and disease surveillance and 145 small hive beetle traps were monitored for the unwanted small hive beetle pest
- Wild chervil was treated under the *Agriculture Weed Control Act* on 55 properties and 12 dyke structures
- 45 dairy farms received full on-farm dairy inspections and 234 on site extension visits
- 27 farm winery inspections occurred under the *Nova Scotia Wine Standards Regulations*.

Natural Products Marketing Council

The Natural Products Marketing Council regulates the production and marketing of pork, beef and potatoes and oversees all supply-managed commodities in Nova Scotia, including dairy, eggs, chicken and turkey. This past year, Council worked with the Hatching Egg Farmers of Nova Scotia to develop a marketing plan, which came into force in 2018. This is a big step in the path to Nova Scotia being a signatory to all five Supply Managed commodities Federal Provincial Agreements in Canada. Council completed an additional 16 regulatory amendments in the year, with several more nearing completion. The majority of this work is as a result of changes requested from the producers. Council also conditionally approved three new dairy processing licences, soon to offer new and innovative dairy products to Nova Scotian consumers.

Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board

The Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board, a Crown lending agency, continued to provide support to agriculture in Nova Scotia through financing and credit counselling. In 2018-19, the Loan Board updated regulations, enhancing their ability to meet industry requirements, improve service quality, address risk issues and allow for sustainable funding options. The Loan Board approved 72 new applications with total funds authorized exceeding \$30.1 M, bringing the Boards total commitment to over \$187 M. Compared to 2017, loans to poultry, fruit and greenhouse producers showed increases. The Board is pleased to offer a new micro-loan lending program to assist new entrants and small farms with a streamlined loan process. The Board has expanded our staff compliment to better serve the industry with a development officer in the central/eastern region and additional capacity in the western office.

Annual Report under Section 18 of the *Public Interest and Wrongdoing Act*

The *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act* was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011.

The Act provides for government employees to be able to come forward if they reasonably believe that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed and they are acting in good faith.

The Act also protects employees who do disclose from reprisals, by enabling them to lay a complaint of reprisal with the Labour Board.

A Wrongdoing for the purpose of the Act is:

- a) a contravention of provincial or federal laws or regulations
- b) a misuse of gross mismanagement of public funds or assets
- c) an act or omission that creates an imminent risk of a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons or the environment, or
- d) directing or counseling someone to commit a wrongdoing.

The following is a summary of disclosures received by the Department of Agriculture:

| Information Required under Section 18 of the Act | Fiscal Year 2018-2019 |
|--|-----------------------|
| The number of disclosures received | 0 |
| The number of findings of wrongdoing | 0 |
| Details of each wrongdoing | N/A |
| Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing | N/A |