



Business Plan

2020–21

Department of Agriculture

**NOVA SCOTIA**

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Budget 2020–21: Business Plan
Finance and Treasury Board
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Contents

- Minister's Message 2
- Mandate..... 3
- Department Priorities 3
- Core Functions..... 5
- Departmental Expenses Summary..... 7

Minister's Message

Agriculture is how Nova Scotia started. It's been a central part of our existence here for centuries, and as a significant driver of economic opportunity for our rural communities, it will surely be a key part of our future.

Nova Scotia's quality apples, blueberries and now wine are known around the world. We are seeing benefits of investments that promote efficiency and innovation in the sector through programs such as the Apple Industry Growth and Efficiency Program, the Wild Blueberry Solutions Challenge and the Vineyard and Wineries Investment Program.

Working in agriculture-related sectors can be very exciting but also challenging in a changing world market, with changing consumer preferences and new ways people buy and prepare their food. In 2020, the first Agriculture Minister's Conference will be held to discover new opportunities to address challenges and grow Nova Scotia's agriculture sector.

When Nova Scotians buy local, the money they spend stays in our communities, we grow our dynamic food culture and promote a healthy lifestyle. We are now making it easier to access homegrown products. We've partnered with Taste of Nova Scotia, major retailers, independent retailers, and farm markets to help Nova Scotians to find and buy local food products.

To build public trust in the safety of Nova Scotia food, we are working in partnership with producers on traceability. These initiatives add to the assurance of quality that Nova Scotia is known for locally, regionally and internationally.

In recent years, the agriculture sector has been impacted by more frequent severe weather events and other impacts of climate change. To help protect important farmland and communities against hazards caused by climate change, government is improving dykes and aboiteaux along 60 kilometres of Nova Scotia's shoreline. Partnering with Efficiency Nova Scotia, we will continue to help farmers look for opportunities and make decisions around energy efficiency that are right for them and their businesses.

I look forward to working with industry to see continued growth and economic opportunities for Nova Scotians.

Sincerely,

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

Mandate

The Department of Agriculture's mandate is the development of competitive, sustainable and profitable agriculture and agri-business industries that contribute to the economic, environmental and social prosperity of Nova Scotia's rural and urban communities.

The Department works to connect local consumers to the farm and supports goals of increasing food supply, food security and buy-local initiatives.

The Minister is committed to develop the farming and fishing sectors through the Building Tomorrow Fund and to work with the Department of Finance and Treasury Board to develop policies that encourage further growth in our local wine, distilling and craft beer industries.

The priorities and core functions of the Department of Agriculture are driven by five strategic themes:

- Enabling responsible economic growth
- Supporting research and innovation
- Building public trust and market acceptance
- Increasing trade and market access
- Encouraging quality initiatives and value added opportunities

Department Priorities

The Department will undertake the following priority initiatives in 2020-21:

- Implement the third and final year of the *Building Tomorrow Fund*, a \$9 million provincial investment into agriculture and fisheries, which supports the creation of new products and new market development to further drive export growth. Current projects include research and development to grow the maple industry; innovations and market development for fresh and frozen wild blueberries, the research field trials, quality standards and marketing of Christmas trees and the development of analytical tools to aid farmers in understanding their costs of production.
- Build on the success of the *Vineyard and Wineries Investment Program* through the implementation of a quality standard and design a governance model for 100% Nova Scotia-produced wine. The Department will also continue to work with industry stakeholders to identify new domestic and export market development opportunities in the wine, distilling and craft beer industries.
- Partner with Taste of Nova Scotia to develop a retail focused buy local initiative which will include the major retailers, farm and farmers markets and the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation. In 2020-21, work will target increasing the ease of identification of Nova Scotia products in order to increase purchases. Strong marketing, promotion and communication plans will support the Buy Nova Scotia initiatives.

- Undertake priority upgrades of the provincial dyke system under the federal Disaster Mitigation Adaptation Fund. Over this 9-year program, the Department will focus on strategic engineering upgrades to 60 km of dykes and 5 aboiteaux structures in the Cumberland Basin, Cobequid Bay, Southern Bight and the Annapolis River System regions of the Nova Scotia Bay of Fundy dykeland system. These regions are vulnerable to increasing coastal hazards such as storm surge, coastal flooding and erosion brought on by climate change and an associated rise in sea level.
- Continue the focus on wild blueberry market development. Wild blueberries are Nova Scotia's largest agriculture export by value at \$139.5 million in 2019. The Department will work with the wild blueberry industry on new innovative packaging methods and value-added consumer products. It will also seek new ways to grow domestic sales, while pursuing new export markets and business opportunities in Asia and the European Union. Market development efforts will focus on education, increasing consumer awareness and developing new distribution channels such as retail, food service and e-commerce. In 2020-21, the Department will work with key stakeholders to develop a wild blueberry school kit and will also work with industry to develop the wild blueberry wine market in Asian countries.
- Lead and coordinate the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a Climate Change Adaptation Work Plan previously developed with Nova Scotia Environment's Climate Change Unit. A cross-departmental team will build on existing activities within the Department to capitalize on potential opportunities of a changing climate, while minimizing the challenges and economic impacts to the agricultural industry and infrastructure.
- Build on last year's review of the Environmental Farm Plan program, by working with the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture and Perennia Food and Agriculture Inc (Perennia) to launch an enhanced program to meet revised deliverables and measured outcomes.
- Continue to champion labour issues with other departments and the federal government to address persistent workforce challenges facing the agriculture industry. Labour is also one of the four key pillars supporting the overarching theme of 'Quality' at the first Agriculture Minister's Conference scheduled for March 2020. This two-day event will bring together industry, government, academic partners and businesses serving the agriculture sector.
- Work with industry stakeholders in the mink sector to identify new domestic and international market development opportunities.
- Participate in a Federal, Provincial, and Territorial process to strategically review business risk management programs available to farmers. In this coming year, work will focus on improvements to the AgriStability program.
- Through the Farm Loan Board, expand the focus in value-add and high value financing to support the processing sector, and work to offer a lending program to support Buy Local initiatives. The Farm Loan Board will also continue with its promotional campaign into 2020-21 to raise awareness of our lending products and the advantages of working with a lender based here in Nova Scotia.

Core Functions

Highlights of the Department's core functions and programs supporting its mandate, strategic themes and government priorities include:

- Implementing year three of the *Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP)*, the five-year agriculture policy and priorities framework. This multilateral agreement includes all provinces and territories and 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. Under CAP, the Department participates in several pan-Atlantic collaborations, providing financial assistance for projects of regional benefit to improve the profitability, competitiveness and sustainability of the agriculture and agri-food sectors.
- Business Risk Management programs to mitigate producer income losses stemming from production losses, severe market volatility and extreme events or disasters. This includes a robust Crop and Livestock Insurance Program, delivered by the Department. The Department also supports the industry with access to the federally delivered programs: AgriInvest, AgriStability and AgriRecovery.
- Continuing to work on enhancements and additions to the Client Relationship Management System and Grants Management System. These systems will continue to streamline the delivery of programs and interactions with our clients, improve the client experience with faster turnaround times and enhance performance reporting of programs.
- Through an annual grant of \$2.5 million and additional project-based funding, working with Perennia to help farmers, fishers and food processors be more competitive and profitable by offering services in the field, in quality and food safety and in product development and commercialization.
- Establishing a dykeland system operational and maintenance program to target the protection of highly productive agricultural lands. This work also provides additional protection for valued heritage sites, indigenous and Acadian cultural sites, businesses and homes that lie behind the 240 kms of agricultural dykes.
- Championing industry interests in domestic and international market development and trade issues, while supporting efforts to ensure Nova Scotia businesses are prepared to take advantage of increasing market access opportunities due to reduced tariffs through free trade agreements.
- Focusing efforts on innovative, value-added strategies that will increase the value and competitiveness of Nova Scotia's agri-food sector. Working with Perennia, universities

and other partners within the agri-food ecosystem, the Department will participate in industry-lead research and development and initiatives that open and respond to new markets for innovative products.

- Working collaboratively with industry to support sector development and knowledge transfer initiatives that encourage the adoption of new practices and technologies. Through special projects in Christmas trees, wild blueberries, pork, beef, wine, craft beverages and other sectors, the Department will build on the strengths of new and established industries while building industry capacity to access new resources.
- Supporting long-term community sustainability by building leadership capacity that empowers skilled, engaged and responsible youth, adult volunteers and organizations through partnerships with groups like 4-H Nova Scotia.
- Providing an array of information and outreach events focused on youth awareness of agriculture and agricultural careers, as well as supporting industry-led initiatives relating to build public trust and confidence in the agriculture sector to meet the growing consumer demands for transparency in food production.
- Through a coordinated approach of six regional offices, delivering services to agriculture clients and rural organizations that are focused on making our rural communities and agricultural producers more sustainable and profitable across the province. The regional offices work directly with producers, rural organizations, agri-food businesses and educational facilities to provide information and assistance on government programs and regulations, coordinate educational events, and assist in forming strategic partnerships to strengthen their industries.
- Continuing to provide ISO accredited laboratory testing to support public and animal health and inform industry on production management decisions. The laboratory will work with clients to improve client services ensuring services meet industry needs.
- Offering veterinary services in animal diagnostics and disease surveillance and administering the Livestock Health Services and Herd Health Services programs to support healthy livestock management in the province.
- Working to support the safety and security of food production through the delivery of traceability and biosecurity programs, the sustainability of the blueberry and honeybee industries and initiatives related to agriculture pests.
- Through the Natural Products Marketing Council (Council), regulating the production and marketing of pork, cattle and potatoes and manages the effective functioning of the supply managed sector in Nova Scotia which includes dairy, eggs, hatching eggs, chicken and turkey. This sector represents approximately fifty percent of Nova Scotia's farm gate value. Significant regulatory changes will occur throughout the year, strengthening the legislative framework to support the commodity groups under the Council's jurisdiction.

Departmental Expenses Summary

(\$ thousands)			
<u>Programs and Services</u>	<u>2019-2020 Estimate</u>	<u>2019-2020 Forecast</u>	<u>2020-2021 Estimate</u>
Senior Management	703	703	726
Policy & Corporate Services	31,138	37,813	26,913
Agriculture & Food Operations	14,586	13,781	14,436
Total - Departmental Expenses	46,427	52,297	42,075
Ordinary Recoveries	6,447	5,763	6,403
<u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u>			
Department Funded Staff	169.6	163.2	169.6

Note:
 For Ordinary Revenues, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2
 For TCA Purchase Requirements, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 1