



# Accountability Report 2020–21

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Agriculture



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Accountability Report 2020–2021

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## Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Agriculture for the year ended March 31, 2021 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 2020-2021 Business Plan.

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Honourable Greg Morrow  
Minister of Agriculture

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Loretta Robichaud  
Deputy Minister

## Message from Minister

I am pleased to present the Department of Agriculture's accountability report for 2020-21.

Nova Scotia's agricultural businesses continued to produce food and generate great economic activity, even when faced with the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 affected many aspects of the agriculture industry, but it remained strong through a combination of hard work, innovation and efficiencies. For example, new online resources were created to reach consumers, and food producers stepped up to meet the extra public health requirements.

Nova Scotia's agricultural businesses generate significant economic activity and food security for our province, as they have done for generations.

I encourage Nova Scotians to purchase food and beverages produced locally. That commitment to buying local helps farmers and supports our economy.

Agriculture remains the backbone of our economy, and its success is very important to us all.

Sincerely,

The Honourable Greg Morrow  
Minister of Agriculture

## Financial Results

	2020-2021 Estimate	2020-2021 Actuals	2020-2021 Variance
<b>Program &amp; Service Area</b>	(\$ thousands)		
<b>Departmental Expenses:</b>			
Senior Management	726	700	(26)
Policy and Corporate Services	26,913	31,494	4,581
Agriculture and Food Operations	14,436	13,753	(683)
<b>Total Gross Departmental Expenses</b>	<b>42,075</b>	<b>45,947</b>	<b>3,872</b>
<b>Additional Information:</b>			
Revenues	1,535	1,205	(330)
Fees and Other Charges	1,563	1,464	(100)
Ordinary Recoveries	6,403	5,237	(1,166)
<b>Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries</b>	<b>9,501</b>	<b>7,906</b>	<b>(1,595)</b>
TCA Purchase Requirements	3,010	5,412	2,402
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	169.6	151.8	(17.8)
<b>Departmental Expenses Variance Explanations:</b>			
Majority of increase related to the Agriculture Clean Tech Program, Emergency On-Farm Support (COVID-19), and 4H programming. These amounts were offset by operational savings due to the COVID-19 pandemic.			
<b>Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:</b>			
Net variance consists of a decrease in the federal portion of Disaster Mitigation and Adaption Fund (DMAF) revenues due to underspending in TCA, as well as decrease in federal contributions for Value Chain Management.			
<b>TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:</b>			
The DMAF Dykeland Upgrade project spans from 2019-2020 to 2027-2028. In the second year of the project there continued to be underspending as engineering and planning work continues to be completed. Additional TCA projects, which contributed to the increase in TCA spending, were approved and started during the year (Dykelands, Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition grounds and buildings, Harness Racing Grandstand, Agricultural Building Demolition and Design for Replacement).			
<b>Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:</b>			
Miscellaneous vacancies across the Department.			

## Measuring Our Performance

### Building Tomorrow Fund

The Province's investment in the Building Tomorrow Fund ended in 2020-2021. This fund committed an investment of \$9 million over three years to be split equally between agriculture, fisheries, and aquaculture projects. In 2020-2021, investments were made in four new projects, including three agricultural projects:

- \$300 thousand was invested in Nexus Robotics autonomous weeding robot to pilot the company's technology and develop new applications such as identifying diseases and pests and collecting data about crop and growing conditions. This contribution leveraged \$1.5 million in federal support and \$1.3 million in private sector support for Nexus Robotics through the federal Agriculture Clean Tech Program.
- \$268 thousand was invested in Buy Local marketing initiatives capitalizing on the public's desire to support local business and reduce reliance on imported foods during COVID-19.
- \$309 thousand to support expand the growing season and increase raspberry production using Long Cane Raspberry production techniques.

### Building on the Vineyard and Wineries Investment Program

Based on recommendations from an expert industry consultant, work has been underway to develop a regulatory framework for an independent Wine Authority and quality standards for 100% local wine to be included in a larger second phase development plan for this sector.

The Department also supported the development of a wild blueberry wine promotional video and continues to work with industry to develop the wild blueberry wine market in Asian countries.

In-province sales of Nova Scotia wine totaled \$23.4 million in 2020-2021. This amounts to an overall decrease of 3% from 2019-2020. Retail sales at Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation stores increased by 8.2%, for a total of \$13.6 million. Business-to-consumer sales were down by 16%, with COVID-19 public health measures restricting consumer access to direct sales at farm wineries.

### Buy Local Program

The Get Your Hands on Local Program launched in February 2020 in partnership with Taste of Nova Scotia. A significant in store point of sale program including over 800 products across Nova Scotia was implemented. Nova Scotia grown and produced agri-food, seafood and beverage were highlighted in major grocery chains, including Sobeys, Atlantic



Superstore, Walmart, and Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation stores. Also included were independent markets and farmers markets. Nova Scotia grown or made agri-food products were highlighted in over 180 retail locations throughout the province.

In March of 2020, the program made a substantial pivot for the COVID-19 initial lockdown. Local producers were supported by the program with a quick creation of a directory where consumers could go to find Nova Scotia products to order directly from producers. This change in program was supported by a media campaign where Nova Scotians were asked to Get Your Hands on Local at Home. The program also supported local restaurant's takeout model. There were 26,060 visits to this directory during the campaigns.

During the end of 2020 and early 2021, the Get Your Hands on Local program conducted four seasonal media campaigns to highlight the abundance of Nova Scotia agri-food, seafood and beverages available in every season of the year. These media campaigns further promoted the Get Your Hands on Local brand in retail. These campaigns received over 16 million digital impressions and 850,000 completed commercial views.

### Disaster Mitigation Adaptation Fund

In 2020-2021, the Department implemented year two of the nine -year, \$50 million Disaster Mitigation Adaptation Fund (DMAF) project. Design work continued for two large aboiteaux upgrade projects progressing through to 90% design. As well, two dykeland system sites were tendered for design and reached the 60% design phase. Construction was started on two dykeland systems and continues into 2021-2022. Consultation with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia was ongoing throughout 2020-2021. Stakeholder engagement with Marsh Bodies and landowners has begun at all DMAF sites. In 2021-2022, the Department expects to finish the four sites currently under design, begin construction on those four sites, and initiate design on additional identified sites. Consultation with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia and stakeholder engagement will continue through each year of the project.

### Wild Blueberry Market Development

Wild blueberries are Nova Scotia's top agriculture export crop. In 2020, poor weather-related growing conditions resulted in a lower-than-average harvest for Nova Scotia wild blueberry producers. The reduced harvest levels led many producers to concentrate on filling existing domestic and international orders instead of seeking additional market development opportunities.

Despite lower yields in 2020 compared to previous years, consumer demand for wild blueberries during the COVID-19 pandemic increased at retail channels, resulting in wild blueberry exports from the province increasing 8.8%; \$151.9 million in 2020 compared to \$139.5 million in 2019. The Department will continue to seek new ways to grow domestic sales while pursuing new high value diversified market opportunities in the United States, Asia and the European Union based on the availability of supply of wild blueberries.

The COVID-19 pandemic also resulted in disrupted school operations and has delayed the delivery of wild blueberry initiatives within our learning institutions.

### Climate Change Adaptation Work Plan

The Department's Agricultural Champions for Environmental Sustainability (ACES) team has developed a Climate Change Adaptation Workplan. Over the past year, ACES has initiated a jurisdictional scan of climate data services and tools, developed a lens to identify climate change opportunities and risks in programs, led the development, design, and launch of Department-wide baseline awareness survey, and began development of a climate change risk register for Department services. In addition, three agricultural commodities were selected to take part in the Climate Adaptation Leadership Program: Horticulture, Cattle/Sheep, and Christmas Trees. The Christmas Tree and Cattle/Sheep industries have initiated the climate scan and Climate Adaptation Strategy development process to help prepare them for the impacts of climate change. The Horticulture sector will start in the Fall of 2021.

### Environmental Farm Plan Program Enhancements

The Department has launched a new Agri-Environmental program that builds on the success of the past 20 years of the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program. It is a new 3-way partnership building on the strengths of the Department, the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, and Perennia Food and Agriculture Limited (Perennia). This new enhanced program has four foundational pillars:

- 1) Environmental Farm Plan
- 2) Research and Forward Thinking
- 3) Resources and Information Sharing
- 4) Market Access

There is a focus on monitoring and evaluation to help demonstrate risk reduction and increasing environmental benefits on the farm. An Agri-Environmental Program Steering Committee has been established and the program has a new website at [www.nsaep.ca](http://www.nsaep.ca).

### Labour Initiatives and Developments

In 2020-2021, the Department worked diligently on labour issues arising from COVID-19 pandemic. The Department collaborated closely with Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, Perennia, the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, and the Department of Health and Wellness to develop safety protocols for employers and workers and to obtain approvals for isolation plans for all Temporary Foreign Workers entering the province. As of March 31st, 2021, over 1,772 Temporary Foreign Workers (1,456 in Agriculture and 316 in Fisheries) entered Nova Scotia using these processes.

### Mink Market Opportunities

The Department explored partnerships and built relationships in Canada and abroad to promote and support diversified sales channels for Nova Scotia mink. Working closely with industry stakeholders, the Department supported the development of a digital marketing profile translated in multiple languages to maximize the value of the resource and economic return to rural Nova Scotia.

### Improvements to the AgriStability Program

Federal, provincial, and territorial governments are conducting a review of business risk management programming and are looking to make some short-term changes while a more comprehensive review to be completed.

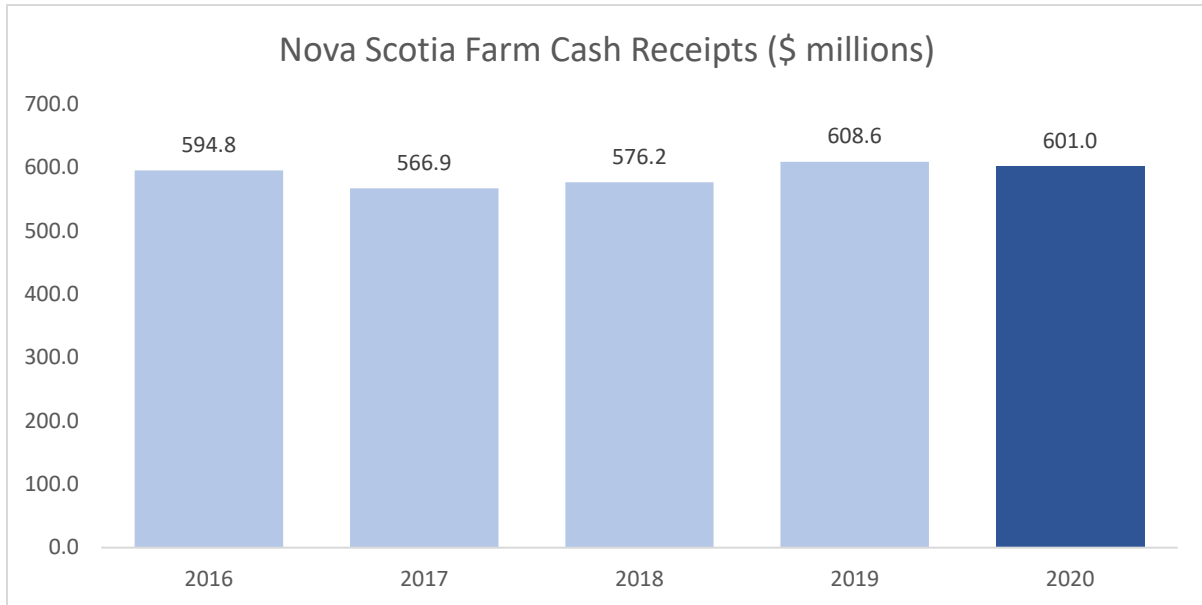
### Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board

The Farm Loan Board (FLB) expanded its lending in the value-added sector and buy local initiatives with dedicated resources and lending programs which represented about 10% of loans that were financed last year. There was a wide range of projects under this program from abattoirs and beverage production equipment to dairy vending machines. FLB was pleased to partner with FarmWorks Investment Co-Op on several of these initiatives, to compliment work that was already been undertaken in this space and increase opportunities for financing of local food production. The FLB's promotional campaign work continued through 2020-2021, correlating with 50% increases in lending over the 2019-2020 year.

COVID-19 required the FLB to adjust some business practices such as in-person meetings. With a variety of tools such as video calls and photographs were able to meet delivery timelines for clients.

### Agriculture Industry Performance

Farm cash receipts decreased in 2020 by approximately 1.2% to \$601 million. COVID-19 outbreaks closed processing facilities across North America, correlating with a \$19.2 million drop in livestock receipts, and declines were seen in direct payment programs (-\$18.2 million) and stability and support payments (-\$15.4 million). These substantial decreases were bolstered, however, by a \$53.7 million increase in cannabis, which is now Nova Scotia's third largest source of farm cash receipts.



Dairy continues to be the top revenue-generating sector at \$150 million, and total receipts for the supply-managed industries account for approximately half of all farm cash receipts. Fresh fruit was the second largest source of cash receipts (\$65.7 million). Other major contributors to farm cash receipts include field vegetables excluding potatoes (\$30.6 million), fresh blueberries (\$29.8 million), floriculture and nursery products and sod (\$29.2 million), and cattle (\$27 million). Apple farm cash receipts were \$19.9 million in 2020.

## Key Core Functions

Primary Departmental functions advanced in 2020-2021 that supported its mandate, strategic themes and overall government priorities include the following:

### Canadian Agricultural Partnership

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

In addition to the full program suite, in 2020-2021, the Department introduced new cost-shared programming to support Nova Scotia’s agricultural industry in mitigating impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic and provided \$1.6 million dollars to farmers to support competitiveness, production, and profitability of the agriculture industry. This allowed

farmers to address the immediate needs resulting from new safety protocols and make other necessary business adjustments. The Department invested a total of \$7.03 million, broken down by priority areas as follows:

- Markets and Trade: \$2.46 million
- Science, Research, and Innovation: \$1.67 million
- Risk Management: \$461 thousand
- Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change: \$862 thousand
- Value-Added Agriculture and Agri-Food Processing: \$1.25 million
- Public Trust: \$329 thousand

### Pan-Atlantic Agricultural Project Partnership Initiative

Pan-Atlantic projects are funded through CAP in partnership with other provinces for regional benefit. These initiatives can be developed and supported in any of CAP's six priority areas. Nova Scotia is the provincial lead on the following three Pan-Atlantic projects, for which \$423 thousand was invested in 2020-2021:

- Atlantic Technology Transfer in Apiculture Project (Perennia – project lead)
- Improving the Production and Storage of High-Quality Apple Cultivars (Nova Scotia Fruit Growers' Association - project lead)
- Advancing Poultry Research in Atlantic Canada (Atlantic Poultry Research Institute – project lead)

Eight additional projects with more than \$224 thousand in funding commitments for 2021-2022 through the Pan-Atlantic partnership have been established to support an Atlantic-wide approach to developing grain, beef, and dairy initiatives.

### Programs and Business Risk Management

Business Risk Management programs continued to offer mitigation against producer income losses stemming from production losses, severe market volatility and extreme events or disasters.

The Department supported industry with access to the federally delivered AgriInvest and AgriStability programs. These programs are cost-shared between the Province and the federal government on a 60/40 basis. In 2020-2021, \$2.89 million of provincial contributions supported farmers through these programs.

A provincial program called the Emergency On Farm Support Program was developed to assist on-farm mitigation activities to improve the health and safety of all workers (domestic and Temporary Foreign Workers) by limiting the spread of COVID-19 in

agriculture operations. In 2020-2021, \$510 thousand was extended to farmers to allow for necessary adjustments to ensure worker safety.

Since December of 2019, the spread of COVID-19 has drastically impacted many economies around the world, including the economy here in Nova Scotia. The Programs and Business Risk Management division was able to adapt its program delivery through alternative work arrangements, social distancing and use of personal protective equipment to meet all public health guidelines. Existing and new programs were delivered with minimal interruption to clients.

### Crop and Livestock Insurance Commission

Business Risk Management includes a robust AgrilInsurance program delivered on behalf of the Department through the Crop and Livestock Insurance Commission. AgrilInsurance continued to support responsible economic growth and income stability in the agricultural industry through its cost-shared crop and livestock insurance plans and a wildlife compensation program.

The 2020-2021 fiscal year included direct indemnity and wildlife compensation payments to producers of \$2 million with significant crop insurance payments in the blueberry, tree fruit, vegetable, soybean, and maple sectors. Federal and provincial crop insurance premiums and administrative cost sharing totaled an additional \$2.833 million, for a program total of \$4.84 million.

### Client Relationship Management System and Grants Management System Improvements

In 2020-2021, the Department continued to improve its Client Relationship Management System and Compatible Grants Management System. These systems streamline the delivery of programs and interactions with our clients by improving the client experience with faster turnaround times and enhancing performance reporting of programs. The process to identify opportunities to extend the benefits of the systems in other areas in the Department.

### Perennia Partnership

The Department provided an operating budget of \$2.5 million in 2020-2021 and additional program-based funding to Perennia. These funds support Perennia in helping Nova Scotia Farmers develop the understanding and skills essential to solve agricultural-related problems, and to create new opportunities to support sustainability and profitability.

The Department also granted \$125 thousand to Perennia to co-ordinate options to support producer and seafood processors in successfully isolating their Temporary Foreign

Workers. Perennia supported the isolation process for Temporary Foreign Workers in the agriculture and seafood sectors as they arrive in Nova Scotia.

### Establishment of a Dykeland System Operational and Maintenance Program

In 2020-2021, a transition was made to a digital system for reporting and recording on dykeland inspections, monitoring activities, and work activity resulting in improved efficiencies. Field inspection reports and photo documentation are submitted directly through an online application, and stored with reports and documentation retrievable and displayed via cell phone, tablet, or PC from anywhere. Land Protection Staff can access important data in the field and can make notes directly into a map. The use of this system helps in the prioritization of maintenance activity and in directing resources.

### Trade Development

The Department continued to champion 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 reduce tariffs through free trade agreements.

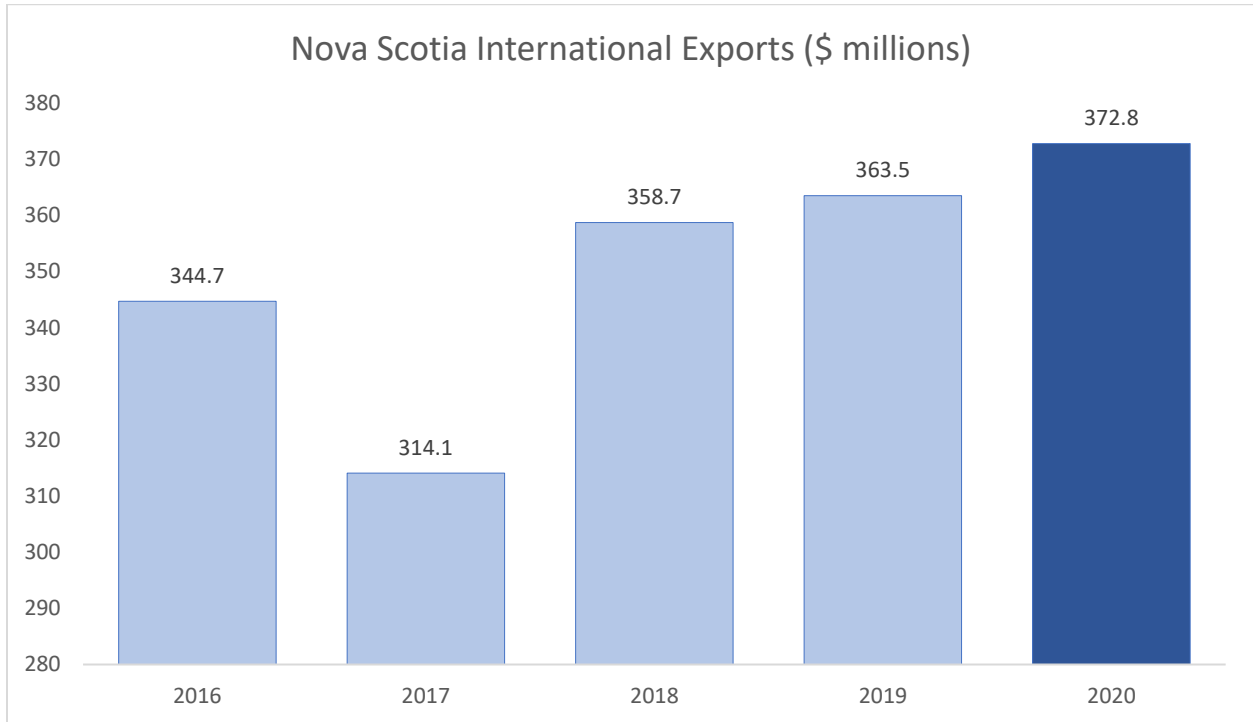
The new Canada-US-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA), which came into effect on July 1, 2020, preserved access to Nova Scotia's largest export market and improved stability for the agriculture and agri-food sector amid the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2021, the interim post-Brexit Canada-United Kingdom Trade Continuity Agreement was ratified providing continued preferential market access and tariff removals for UK exports that existed under the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). New Asian-Pacific markets for Nova Scotia agricultural exports continued to be explored under the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

In 2020-2021, most international food and beverage trade shows were cancelled or postponed until travel restrictions allow for in person participation and direct industry involvement due to COVID-19. Departmental marketing efforts over this year rapidly shifted to supporting virtual events, developing digital marketing assets, strategic market intelligence gathering and research and the development of an online food and beverage export directory website which is ongoing.

### Nova Scotia's International Agriculture and Agri-Food Exports Data

Agri-food products are Nova Scotia's third largest export category and accounted for 7% of the Province's exports in 2020. Overall, agri-food exports increased in 2020 to \$372.8 million, up 2.5% from 2019. Wild blueberry exports continued to be Nova Scotia's largest valued agriculture and agri-food export, totaling \$151.8 million in 2020, an increase of 8.9% over 2019. Fresh apple exports totaled \$8.5 million in 2020. Nova Scotia exported agriculture and agri-food products to 70 countries in 2020, with almost half of Nova Scotia's

agriculture and agri-food exports destined to the United States (46%). Other significant destinations were Netherlands (10%), Germany (9%), and China (5%).



### Services, Programs, and Partnerships that Supported Sector Development, Including Research Partnerships and Minister’s Conference

The Department continued to collaborate in providing business support services to individual producers and sector organizations in every region of the province in 2020-2021.

The Department worked with sector associations, academic researchers, and federal and provincial partners to manage strategic projects in weather, mink, long cane raspberries, wild blueberries, beef, pork, community pastures, wild blueberries, and bees. Important collaborations on national and provincial wine research, the implications for new federal Clean Fuel Standards for Agriculture were also initiated by the division this year.

Adapting to climate change, consumer trends, women in agriculture, and the increasing use of automation within the sector were key topic areas covered in an innovative Minister’s Digital Event Series, conducted in collaboration with Perennia in 2020-2021. In response to COVID-19, the digital events took the place of a live Minister’s Conference for Agriculture this year. The sessions brought together more than 1,800 participants from across Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada to hear the success stories of our leading producers and innovators.



In 2020-2021, \$145,000 was dedicated to Acadia Laboratory for Agri-Food and Beverage (ALAB) to assist the not-for-profit facility in purchasing state of the art equipment that will expand the range of testing services it can conduct for the wine, cider, and spirits sectors in Atlantic Canada. This investment has spurred on by new export testing procedures adopted by the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation and partnered support through the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. The improved lab will help ensure that Nova Scotia's craft beverages can continue to grow and remain competitive.

### Leadership and 4-H Partnership and Developments

The Department supports long-term community sustainability by building leadership capacity that empowers skilled, engaged, and responsible community members, adult volunteers, and organizations through partnerships with groups rural organizations like Fairs, Exhibitions, County Federations, and 4-H Nova Scotia.

In 2020-2021, the Department prepared to transfer all 4-H programs and events to 4-H Council of Nova Scotia. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Department continued to support 4-H leaders, councils, and members throughout most of the year. In January 2021, a full complement of Resource staff was hired by the 4-H Council of Nova Scotia and the transition program delivery was implemented.

Throughout 2020-2021, the Department continued to provide regular updates to local Federations of Agriculture on industry issues being worked on by government and participated in relevant projects being led by the County Federations. Department staff also worked with individual exhibitions and fairs to support them in the applications for their Infrastructure Funding, and with the Exhibitions Association of Nova Scotia to secure a consultant to modernize their Association Bylaws.

### Agriculture Awareness and Building Public Trust

The Department provided a range of information and outreach events focused on youth awareness of agriculture and agricultural careers. The Department also supported industry-led initiatives related to encouraging public trust.

COVID-19 also transformed the Department's approach to programming for schools. In 2020-2021, 147 schools across the Province were reached with hands-on, inquiry-based resources such as All Kinds of Apples, Little Green Sprouts, the Quest for the Perfect Strawberry, and Canadian Agricultural Literacy Month (featuring Mystery Seeds and Aquaponics kits) between September 2020 – March 2021. The team also worked with farms to prepare videos highlighting on-farm technology such as robotic milers and hydroponic vegetable production. Some videos and posts had hundreds to thousands of views and positive feedback was received from teachers.

Several new resources were developed, including Weather on the Farm (Grade 5 Science); Agriculture and Renewable Energy (Grade 6 Science); Digging Deeper, a soil science exploration (Grade 7/8 Science); and Pkwiman: Wild Blueberries in Mi'kmaki and Wabhanaki (Grade 7 Science/Grade 8 Social Studies). GenAg, a career exploration program for Grade 9 students, was also delivered to seven classrooms.

Special initiatives were undertaken to enhance learning about food and agriculture among African Nova Scotian students. Hope Blooms was engaged to provide home garden kits to 40 African Nova Scotian students aged 8-12 across the province and a webinar on agricultural careers and post-secondary opportunities was held in February for 15 African Nova Scotian high school students in partnership with African Canadian Services Branch, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Dalhousie University.

Agricultural education and public trust work were enhanced through the Department's memberships in national organizations including Agriculture in the Classroom – Canada and the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity.

Funding was provided to the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture for public trust work. In 2020-2021, they finalized their strategic plan, held several virtual Meet Your Farmer events such as Open Farm Day, launched the Your Farms, Your Nova Scotia social media campaign to connect farmers and consumers, provided communication training to farmers, developed key messages, and prepared a concise overview of Nova Scotia Agriculture called From the Ground Up.

### Regional Services Delivered to Agriculture Clients and Rural Organizations

The Department provides regional services to agriculture clients and rural organizations that are focused on outstanding client service, partnerships, leadership development, public trust, cooperation, and collaboration. In 2020-2021:

- The Department provided extension services to primary producers and agribusinesses through the six Regional Offices across the Province
- The Department assisted clients in accessing information from industry stakeholders such as Perennia and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, hosted webinars to assist industry specialists in providing opportunities for transfer of knowledge to primary producers
- The Department assisted clients with issues resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, such as:
  - Supporting U-Picks to meet stated outcomes
  - Livestock transportation
  - Development of the Abattoir Efficiency and Expansion Program to aid with the increased demand for services

- Enhancement of emergency management plans for industries whose traditional marketing plans were impacted by shutdowns in other areas of the Country
- Coordination of industry support for Temporary Foreign Worker isolation requirements
- The Department prepared an extension priority plan focused on soil health and farm financial analysis
- The Department worked to strengthen connections between industry representatives, researchers, and extension staff by establishing communication channels between these groups for commodities and sectors where they did not already exist

### Laboratory Services Initiatives and Developments

The Department's Animal and Plant Laboratory provides analysis for water, soil and soil amendments, plant tissues, dairy samples, and livestock feeds. In 2021, the laboratory successfully achieved the continuation of accreditation to ISO 17025:2017 within the Laboratory Accreditation Program of the Standards Council of Canada. The laboratory serves aspects of animal health, public health, food safety, and assists in the support of the agricultural economy. The laboratory processed a total of 25,022 samples in 2020-2021.

### Veterinary Services Initiatives and Developments

Despite some pandemic related slowdowns in early 2020-2021, the Animal Health Laboratory completed 483 post-mortems and averaged approx. 700 microbiology, serology, and parasitology tests per month on more than 10 different species. These tests included identification of salmonella isolates in animals linked to human health outbreaks. The Department supported the livestock industry in emergency preparedness in the province and responding to COVID -19 animal related issues.

### Animal and Crop Services Registrations and Safety and Security Programs

The Department continued to support and offer services related to the safety and security of food production through the delivery of traceability and biosecurity programs. In 2020-2021:

- Beekeeper registrations increased to 788, up by 14% from 690 in 2019-2020
- Agricultural pest initiatives were conducted in collaboration with Perennia and other partners for several pest monitoring and surveillance activities including an annual weed survey, European Corn Borer, Western Bean Cutworm, strawberry aphid, Swede Midge, and leek moth
- The annual wild chervil control initiative continues in agricultural marshlands
- Investigation was initiated to identify emerging pests that could impact agriculture

- Collaboration efforts include establishing a forum for discussion, sharing, and fostering collaboration on issues around plant health in Nova Scotia as well as participation in working groups under the Plant Health Council, including: Biosecurity, Emergency Response and Surveillance

### Developments Supported by the Natural Products Marketing Council

The Council completed 17 regulatory amendments in 2020-2021, including the development of new regulations to support both the chicken and egg industries. Despite the pandemic, Council continued to meet on a regular basis, utilizing a virtual meeting platform. Throughout the year, Council hosted several commodity boards virtually for industry updates, and engaged virtually with the commodity boards in industry planning and discussion. Council continued to support provincial industries at the National level and continued its work with commodity boards on their new entrant programs. The Council also assisted several commodity boards in navigating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the development of regulatory amendments to enable an emergency response to extraordinary circumstances.

## 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 or 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 2020-2021
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing	Not applicable
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	Not applicable