



Crop Infrastructure Study 2018

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The Crop Infrastructure Study was conducted to support the expansion of the agriculture sectors in Northern Ontario. Crop production in Northern Ontario has grown tremendously and this growth is forecasted to continue.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs engaged RSM in March 2018 to conduct a Northern Crop Infrastructure Study and provide an overview on the crop production value chain in Northern Ontario.

The purpose of this study was to conduct an inventory and categorize current crop system facilities and transportation services in Northern Ontario, including elevators, trucking companies, feed companies and crop-based food processors. The study looked at current system capacity including production volumes and potential capacity which included plans for expansion of the facilities. For the purposes of this study, crop handling systems was defined as infrastructure and activities that facilitate linkage across the crop production value chain. Crops included under this project were: winter and spring wheat, barley, oats, canola, soybeans, corn, flax and buckwheat.

A total of 26 individuals and organization were interviewed, including NOFIA. In addition, statistical data and information was collected from several publicly available sources. Since 2008, Northern Ontario has experienced a major increase in overall production of corn, wheat, soybeans, oats and canola. Between 2008 and 2016, the region's acreage harvested for those crops has increased from 53,000 ha to 102,756 ha. Production has nearly doubled as well, increasing from 60,500 tonnes to 144,900 tonnes. This trend is continuing with the recent installation of tile on 41,773 acres of tile and 10,271 acres cleared.

A common theme from interviews with producers is the need to increase on-farm storage capacity which would lead to operational flexibility. This is particularly important in Northern Ontario given the shorter growing season, distances transportation companies need to travel and lack of grain elevator capacity. To that end 58% of producers interviewed indicated that they were planning to increase storage capacity within the next 2 to 3 years.

Following are some of the recommendations identified in the status report; Address on farm storage gaps to improve operational flexibility; Enhance local food networks and niche markets; Establish additional agriculture research stations in Northern Ontario; Work with Northern Ontario universities and colleges to address technical skills gaps; Provide resources of different models of succession planning.

The sector could look for opportunities to address these recommendations and reduce barriers to enhance crop production value chains in Northern Ontario.