



# Sharing the Experimental Acres

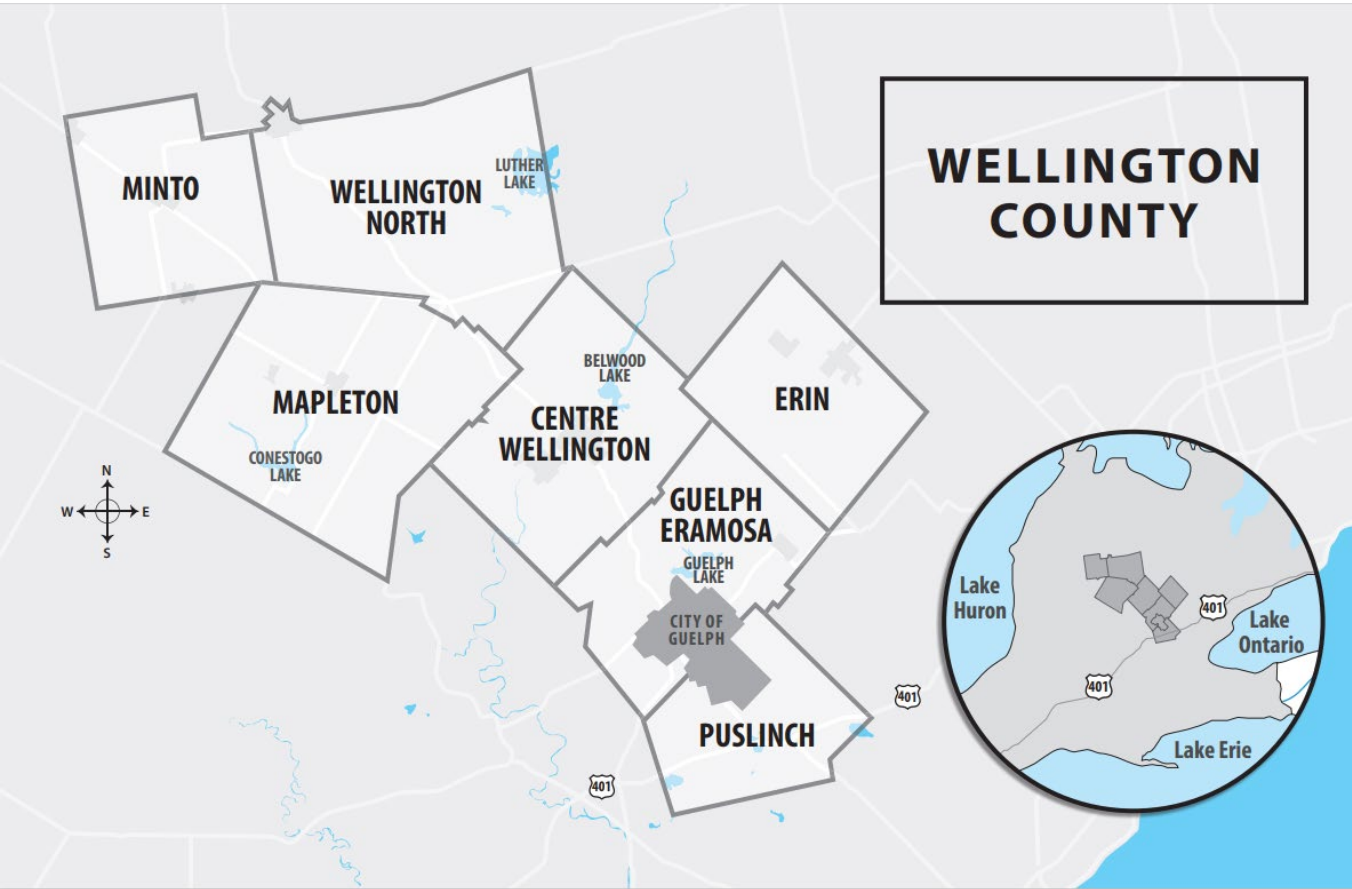
Addressing On-Farm Sustainability Goals at a Municipal Level

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Economic Development, County of Wellington, Ontario

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# Meet Wellington County



**Population:** 97,285  
**Area:** 2,665.36 km<sup>2</sup>  
**Farmland:** ~540,700 ac/  
218,813 ha (class 1-3 land)  
**Number of Farms:** 2,617 farms

# OurFoodFuture

Guelph-Wellington



1. Increase access to affordable, nutritious food by 50%
2. Create 50 new circular businesses and economy in Guelph-Wellington
3. Unlock the value of waste

# Assessing the Agricultural Landscape

- ▶ **2020 – Investigating Incentives for Regenerative Farming Practices Report**
  - ▶ Prepared by Centre for Environment and Sustainability programme at University of Western Ontario
- ▶ **2021 – Gap Identification and Programme Development**
  - ▶ Working with Arrell Food Institute scholars to build framework for local support mechanism for sustainable agriculture





# The Experimental Acres Pilot



Encourage regenerative agriculture practices on a small scale.



Offer monetary and educational supports to producers interested in applying regenerative agriculture practices.



Provide a social support group to help producers adopt regenerative agriculture practices.

# How do we fit in?

Farmer Curiosity	Experimental Acres	Local or Regional Funding	Federal or Provincial Funding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small scale, informal trials</li> <li>• Qualitative data points</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small scale, formalized experimentation with BMP</li> <li>• Data gathering for baseline measurements</li> <li>• Mix of qualitative and quantitative analyses</li> <li>• Few requirements to join programme</li> </ul> <p><b>Funding Support:</b></p> <p>\$</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field scale BMP implementation</li> <li>• Continued monitoring</li> <li>• Stricter entry requirements</li> <li>• More intense reporting</li> </ul> <p><b>Funding Support:</b></p> <p>\$\$</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operation-wide BMP implementation</li> <li>• Tied to Federal or Provincial goals (i.e. Climate Action)</li> <li>• Sector specific actions</li> <li>• Specific requirements for entry</li> <li>• Rigorous data collection and reporting</li> </ul> <p><b>Funding Support:</b></p> <p>\$\$\$</p>



# Programme Principles

1. **Farmers know their land best**
2. **Don't be annoying.**

Farmer Lydia Dyck learning how to soil sample at Saugeen River CSA





# Experimenting with no-till, buckwheat cover crop, and winter grains



August 2022



September 2022

Conclusion: Buckwheat did not out-compete volunteer canola, and tillage did not increase the buckwheat survival.





# Hay Establishment Trial 2022





# Hay Establishment 2023





# Pilot Growth

2022	2023
2 Regions	3 Regions
15 Participants	21 Participants
17 applicants	78 applicants
\$1,000 to \$3,000 per farmer ~\$80.00 in lab costs \$300 honorarium	\$500 to \$3,000 per farmer ~\$80.00 in lab costs \$350 honorarium



Map of applicant locations from 2023



# Benefits to Local Government

- ▶ Working towards municipal climate mitigation plan to lower agricultural emissions
  - ▶ More farms with completed soil tests
  - ▶ On the ground knowledge of local agriculture practices
  - ▶ Supporting innovative practices
- ▶ Better relationship and dialogue with agricultural community
- ▶ Creating a network of farm collaborators for researchers or industry looking to do on-farm research



Interseeding rye and berseem clover into maize at Hi Hope Holstein





# Challenges

- ▶ Balancing multi-year nature of projects with budget cycles
- ▶ Monitoring, verification and reporting of greenhouse gas emissions
- ▶ Staying on top of best management practices

Black Sheep Farm is trialing rotational grazing and winter bale grazing

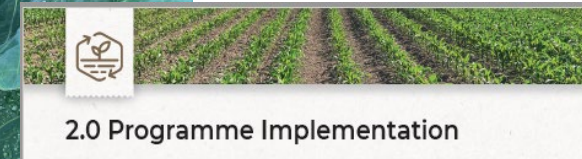
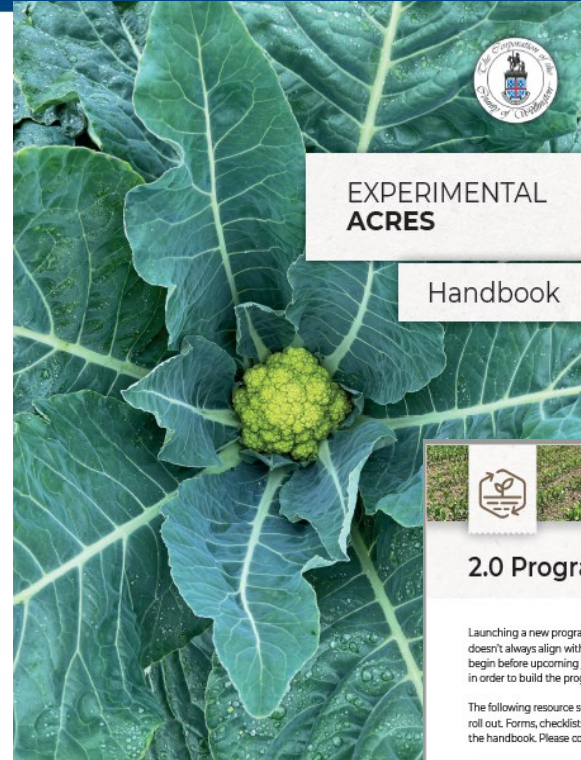


# Bring Experimental Acres home!

- ▶ Experimental Acres Handbook

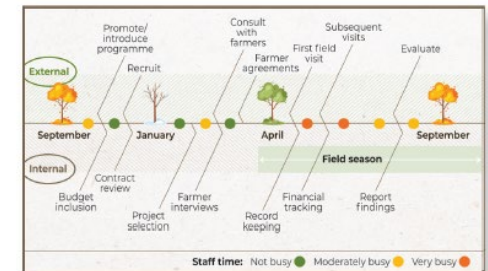
- ▶ Step-by-step guide for implementing the programme

- ▶ Please reach out!



Launching a new programme takes time and planning. Note that the municipal budget year doesn't always align with the cadence of the growing season; recruitment of participants will begin before upcoming year's budgets are confirmed. It may be useful to think in 18-month cycles in order to build the programme.

The following resource section is arranged by the calendar order in which the activities will need to roll out. Forms, checklists, and support documents can all be found in the appendices at the end of the handbook. Please contact [spdev@wellington.ca](mailto:spdev@wellington.ca) if editable versions are required.





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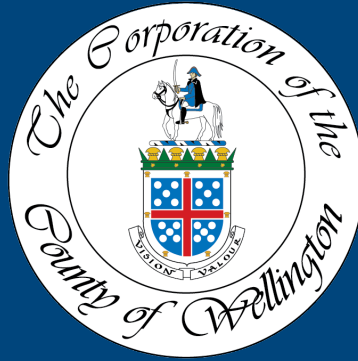
[www.wellington.ca/ExperimentalAcres](http://www.wellington.ca/ExperimentalAcres)



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