

## Committee of the Whole (2) Report

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**DATE:** Wednesday, October 16, 2019

**WARD(S):** ALL

**TITLE: YORK REGION AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD STRATEGY –  
UPDATE TO CITY OF VAUGHAN**

**FROM:**

Jason Schmidt-Shoukri, Deputy City Manager, Planning and Growth Management

**ACTION:** FOR INFORMATION

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**Purpose**

York Region staff are providing local municipal Council's with a presentation on the York Region Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy and how the Region collaborates with local municipal partners and the Agriculture and Agri-Food Advisory Committee to execute the Strategy. The update also notes progress on the outcomes of the projects implemented to date and explores future collaboration.

**Report Highlights**

- The agriculture and agri-food sector is a significant contributor to York Region's economy, providing 57,000 direct jobs through 270 manufacturers and distributors
- The York Region Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy is on track to implement 45 actions in five strategic goal areas
- The York Region Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy is being recognized in the updated Green Directions Vaughan 2019 and will be used to inform the City's Official Plan Review

## **Recommendations**

1. THAT the presentation, “York Region Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy”, provided by staff from York Region’s department of Planning & Economic Development, Corporate Services, BE RECEIVED for information purposes.

## **Background**

York Region’s Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy (Strategy) was endorsed by Regional Council in October 2017. The Strategy identifies objectives defined within five strategic goal areas and 45 action items to be implemented over five years. The five strategic goal areas are to:

1. Strengthen communication and collaboration with York Region, local municipalities and the agri-food sector,
2. Support the agri-food sector through integrated land use planning and economic development,
3. Support increased capacity for value added agri-food processing and support services,
4. Leverage location within the GTA and proximity to customers through direct farm marketing and meet demand for local food production, and
5. Provide support for business retention and expansion of primary agricultural production within York Region.

On May 16, 2019, Regional Council received an update report from Regional staff, which outlined the implementation of the Strategy and included: stakeholder outreach and engagement; and a progress status of the action items. The progress status identified 31 of the 45 actions items have either been initiated or planned, and four short-term activities were completed in 2018. Council also approved the Terms of Reference for the York Region Agriculture and Agri-Food Advisory Committee, formerly called the Agricultural Advisory Liaison Group.

Green Directions Vaughan 2019, the City’s community sustainability plan that is being updated, recognizes the Strategy and includes a new objective and three new actions to support local agriculture and local food to promote healthy lifestyles and social cohesion.

## **Previous Reports/Authority**

The Regional Municipality of York Staff Report, York Region Agriculture and Agri-food Update and Strategy (October 19, 2017) can be found at the following link:

<https://www.york.ca/wps/wcm/connect/yorkpublic/22ee2d68-ab89-44e9-94d3-76dac5fd4cde/oct+12+agri+ex.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>

The Regional Municipality of York Staff Report, 2018 Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy Update and Agriculture and Agri-Food Advisory Committee Terms of Reference (May 9, 2019) can be found at the following link:

<https://yorkpublishing.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=5156>

## **Analysis and Options**

The 2016 Census report on agriculture from Statistics Canada identifies over 3,447 hectares of farmland in Vaughan that generates a total gross revenue of over \$26 million. In addition to contributing to the local and regional economy, a vibrant agriculture and agri-food sector can positively impact human health and climate change by promoting local food and a plant-based diet.

City staff will continue to review the Strategy to inform the City's Official Plan Review, Master Plans, and relevant City projects. A number of City-led projects have already contributed to implementation of the Strategy, including:

- Distributing the York Region Farm Fresh Map 2018 and 2019 at Environmental Days and other City events
- Completing a local food awareness campaign in the Summer and Fall of 2018 supported by \$11,000 in funding from the Greenbelt Fund
- Growing the City's community garden program and local food education in collaboration with the York Region Food Network
- Making progress on the Mayors' Monarch Pledge by creating pollinator habitat and ongoing community outreach, including an Urban River Valley project in September 2019 funded in part through the Greenbelt Foundation and Park People

Staff from Vaughan will continue to attend Agriculture and Agri-Food Advisory Committee meetings and support the Woodbridge Village Farmers Market.

## **Financial Impact**

The review of the York Region Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy will be incorporated into departmental Business Plans and budgets for Economic and Cultural Development,

Policy Planning and Environmental Sustainability, and Parks and Forestry Operations to assess financial implications for potential future projects.

### **Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations**

The York Region Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy is consistent with the 2018-2022 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan and is related to four strategic priority areas, including:

- City Building
- Environmental Stewardship
- Active, Safe and Diverse Communities
- Economic Prosperity, Investment and Social Capital

### **Conclusion**

City staff will continue to work with York Region staff, businesses and other stakeholders to identify projects that can contribute towards the implementation of the Agricultural and Agri-Food Strategy.

**For more information**, please contact: Ruth Rendon, Senior Environmental Planner [ruth.rendon@vaughan.ca](mailto:ruth.rendon@vaughan.ca) or (905) 832-8585, ext. 8104.

### **Attachments**

1. Presentation on the York Region Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy

### **Prepared by**

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