



OFA Commentary: April 30, 2020

AgriStability enrollment an option for farm businesses anticipating financial hardship



By Drew Spoelstra, Executive Member, Ontario Federation of Agriculture

If your farm business is anticipating financial hardship this year due to the impacts of COVID-19 or for any additional reason, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) believes this might be the year for Ontario farmers to strongly consider enrolling in the AgriStability program.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada recently announced the deadline to enroll in the AgriStability program for 2020 has been extended from April 30 to July 3. The extension is meant to offer farm businesses additional time and flexibility to make informed decisions and assess their program coverage needs. In Ontario, AgriStability is administered by Agricorp.

OFA recognizes and understands that funding cuts to AgriStability made under the Growing Forward 2 framework reduced the utility of the program and resulted in many farmers discontinuing their enrollment. However, farm businesses across the province are facing increased challenges and pressures due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Enrollment in the program may be able to help offset increased farm operation costs, market unpredictability and production losses.

OFA continues to advocate with the [Canadian Federation of Agriculture \(CFA\)](#) and industry partners for changes to the program to make it viable for all farmers. Collectively, we've advocated for change in terms of restoring the payment trigger to 85% of historical margins and removing the Reference Margin Limitation (RML). In today's climate, it's apparent these changes are needed now more than ever.

OFA and CFA have been actively lobbying the federal and provincial governments to provide immediate financial assistance to farmers impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. One way that the government can quickly and efficiently deliver immediate financial assistance is through

enhancements to existing programs. Collaboratively, our call-to-action for policymakers has been to provide a government only contribution equal to 5% of Annual Net Sales (ANS) into AgriInvest accounts. This contribution would quickly provide much needed liquidity to farm businesses to help weather the storm of COVID-19.

To be eligible for the AgriStability program you must be a Canadian farmer reporting farming income or losses to Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and complete a production cycle and at least six consecutive months of farming activity in the program year. The intent of AgriStability is to provide farmers with affordable, whole farm coverage. With the enhancements proposed by industry, AgriStability together with other financial assistance programs, could provide the critical support the agriculture sector needs to weather this disaster.

For more information about the program and how to apply for coverage in 2020, contact Agricorp at 1-888-247-4999 or fill out the [participant form](#), available on agricorp.com, and submit the form by mail or fax.

-30-

For more information, contact:

Drew Spoelstra
Executive Member
Ontario Federation of Agriculture
905-379-5751

Cathy Lennon
General Manager
Ontario Federation of Agriculture
519-821-8883