



ConnectON

Data engine for economic growth

ConnectON Testimonials and Supported Projects

ConnectON Testimonials

OMAFRA

“GHFFA has always been on the leading edge of supporting economic development and land use planning by compiling data on the agri-food supply chain through ConnectON. This enabled the province to mandate implementation of the Agricultural System approach in the Greater Golden Horseshoe in 2017 and to encourage its adoption across Ontario through the 2020 Provincial Policy Statement – a new paradigm in land use planning that supports a thriving agri-food sector. As a key data source of the Agricultural System Portal, we are very excited that ConnectON will soon provide province-wide coverage of agri-food asset mapping. A big thanks and congratulations on this impressive feat!”

Helma Geerts, Policy Advisor, Land Use Policy & Stewardship, The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus

“The ConnectON Tool provides valuable insights to the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus and our member Economic Developers, adding another tool to the box for increasing investment attraction to the region. By mapping the sector assets, we are able to have insight as to where food processing and manufacturing occurs, and where there are gaps. In turn, this will lead to targeted investment attraction, to fill gaps within the value chain and offer existing business the ability to grow within the Province.”

Kate Burns Gallagher, Executive Director Economic Development, Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus

Northern Ontario

“Working with GHFFA to bring ConnectON to Northern Ontario is a win for evidence-based decision-making in northern communities.”

Holly Parsons, Policy Analyst, Northern Policy Institute

City of Hamilton

“The asset mapping tool has provided Hamilton with a wealth of knowledge and visuals to help develop marketing materials, inform strategies and demonstrate supply chains in the agri-food industry to potential investors. A few practical examples of how Hamilton has used the tool to date include: building up a database of registered farms for our Eat Local campaign - Hamilton Farm Map & Directory; building our value proposition including targeted investment attraction proposals and collateral; visuals and data to help inform a feasibility study for a Full Service Food and Beverage Warehouse project; demonstrating capacity for specific raw material inputs for an investment inquiry; and to help inform Hamilton’s new Food Strategy and consultation process. Hamilton sees many potential applications for the tool and will continue to use it to further our Economic Development Action Plan.”

Brian Morris, Sr. Business Development Consultant, City of Hamilton

Halton Region

“ConnectON data has been useful in a number of applications. Use of ConnectON data includes but is not limited to:

- Supporting and verifying completeness of Agricultural Impact Assessments on farms and support businesses
- Answering agricultural questions and providing analysis, and understanding agricultural assets and existing agriculture support businesses (including location) as often these are clustered in Halton Region
- Determine competitive factors that may assist in attracting businesses in the region
- Providing a Provincial perspective with respect to farming and other agricultural assets outside of the Regional Municipality of Halton
- Going forward, the data will be instrumental in identifying trends occurring in the agricultural sector Provincially, municipally and locally”

Anna DeMarchi-Meyers, Agricultural Liaison Officer, Planning Services, Halton Region

City of Kawartha Lakes

“The City of Kawartha Lakes is a community with a strong and integral agriculture and agri-food sector that contributes economic benefits to the regional economy. To continue this tradition and to address challenges in changing landscape and the economic forces that can adversely affect the sustainability and growth of the agriculture sector, the City of Kawartha Lakes initiated and completed a comprehensive Agriculture Action Plan. The plan has been a strategic priority and efforts have been directed at implementing the plan since its creation in 2010. A key activity to support the development of an updated action plan is the Agriculture & Food Summit. This was an interactive agriculture development event to engage the community about agriculture and food related projects underway and for the future in Kawartha Lakes. It was an opportunity for the community to contribute their views and ideas on agri-food sector as

well as presenting economic strategy to help the sector thrive. To support the Summit, the Kawartha Lakes Agriculture Economic Development team undertook an asset mapping project. City of Kawartha Lakes is a member of Ontario East Economic Development and as partner in program has access to the ConnectON web based asset mapping system. The team leveraged the ConnectON database to rapidly assemble various asset maps such as Crop Production, Livestock Production and Fruit and Vegetable Sector to illustrate the importance of agriculture sectors.”

Kelly Maloney, Economic Development Officer – Agriculture, City of Kawartha Lakes

United Counties of Prescott Russell

“ConnectON provided municipal and regional data to support research and proposal development for the recently announced UCPR Federal Slaughter, Processing and Distribution Facility.”

United Counties of Prescott Russell Staff

Peel Region

“We have been using the ConnectON platform quite a bit lately to conduct research for agricultural impact assessments and other studies and reports.”

Peel Region Staff

ConnectON: Supported Projects

ConnectON has been used as a data source and mapping tool to inform and support economic development, planning, strategy development, research, policy and emergency preparedness and response. The following list of projects illustrate how ConnectON has supported many initiatives:

Economic Development

Agri-food Systems Study: Wellington Federation of Agriculture (2022-2023)

Understanding the impacts of the agri-food system is crucial to help balance the needs of Wellington County’s population growth while continuing to strengthen the agrifood system. Wellington County Economic Development staff worked collaboratively with the Wellington Federation of Agriculture to use ConnectON data and mapping for this project. <https://www.wfofa.on.ca/internal-documents/wellington-county-agri-food-system-study>

Eastern Ontario Local Food Aggregation and Distribution Study (2019 – ongoing)

It is intended that this wholesale market place will facilitate the aggregation, storage and distribution of locally produced food to wholesale buyers in the Eastern Ontario region. This Agri-Food project supports Peterborough County’s transition into a new rural economy through collaborative processes that will potentially drive business model innovation.

United Counties of Prescott Russell (2019-2020) – ConnectON provided municipal and regional data to support research and proposal development for the recently announced UCPR Federal Slaughter, Processing and Distribution Facility.

Business Retention and Expansion Agri-food System Studies – Huron County, Dufferin County, Durham Region, Simcoe/Grey/Bruce

- **Huron County: Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) (2021)**
<https://www.huroncounty.ca/economic-development/bre>
- **Dufferin County: Agriculture and Food Sector BR&E (2020)**
<https://www.dufferincounty.ca/sites/default/files/economic%20development/Agriculture%20and%20Food%20BR+E%20Final%20Report.pdf>
- **Durham Region: Local Food BR&E (2019)**
<https://www.durham.ca/en/economic-development/resources/Durham-Region-Local-Food-BRE-Final-report-EMAIL.pdf>
- **Simcoe/Grey/ Bruce Regional Study: Agriculture & Agri-Food Value Chain BR+E Study (2018)**
<https://www.simcoe.ca/CorporateCommunications/Documents/SGB%20BRE%20Final%20Trends%20Report.pdf>

City of Hamilton and Region Investment Attraction – ConnectON data was used to create a visual map of an existing supply chain and then 4 maps were produced to highlight the automotive, aerospace and steel supply chains to support a bid for new investment.

Durham Region: Exploring number of farms and farm types in local municipalities to assist with potential local food strategy – including determine where assets are located and cross referencing to determine if farms are doing direct to public sales.

Durham Region: Agri-food processing round table held as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, used the asset mapping data to identify food processors in the region.

Northumberland County: Regional Business Attraction resulting in agri-food processing and manufacturing businesses locating in the region.

Halton Region data has been used to analyze agri-food value chains, support service requirements, illustrate and understand the sector, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, investment attraction and business retention.

City of Kawartha Lakes used and leveraged ConnectON data to illustrate the importance of the agri-food sector, created maps for presentation at their Agricultural Summit and to support development of their Agriculture Action Plan.

Planning and Strategy Development

OMAFRA Agricultural Systems Portal (ongoing) – ConnectON is a data source for the Agricultural Systems Portal and supports Agricultural Systems Mapping across the province. <https://agriculture-systems-portal-ontarioca11.hub.arcgis.com/>

Guelph/Wellington Smart Cities Project (ongoing) – ConnectON is a data source to support this \$10 million initiative from Infrastructure Canada to implement their Smart Cities vision: *Our Food Future*, Canada's first circular food economy. <https://foodfuture.ca/dashboard/our-future-future-home>

Durham Region: Ag System Implementation (ongoing)
<https://www.durham.ca/en/doing-business/envision-durham.aspx>

Peel Region (ongoing) – Conduct research for agricultural impact assessments, employment survey and other studies and reports

Data to inform Municipal Comprehensive Reviews across participating municipalities (ongoing)

OMAFRA – Northern Ontario Veterinary Assistance Program (2022) – Mapping of livestock farms

Town of Caledon: An Agricultural Trends Study for Planning Policy (2021) - ConnectON asset mapping was used to inform the agricultural impact assessment and official plan review. <https://pub-caledon.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=14732>

Research/Policy

University of Waterloo: Biogas Project (ongoing) – The overall goal of this project is to evaluate the feasibility of widespread use of biodigesters to improve water quality and reduce greenhouse gasses (GHG) emissions from a technological, economic, and policy perspective. ConnectON and OMAFRA's Agricultural Systems Portal is supporting this project to understand the feasibility of locating biodigesters across Ontario.

Northern Policy institute (2022) – ConnectON data was used to consider potential impacts of climate change on production agriculture in the North.

Greenbelt Foundation - Tracking Sustainability Indicators Project (2019–2021)

Agriculture's Economic Contribution in the Greenbelt and Greater Golden Horseshoe

With support from the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance, the Greenbelt Foundation has released two new reports that provide insight into the economic impacts and life histories of Greenbelt Farmers.

- The first report, **Understanding How Greenbelt Agriculture Feeds the Regional Economy**, details agriculture's economic contribution to the Greenbelt and Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH).
https://assets.nationbuilder.com/greenbelt/pages/14803/attachments/original/1647954664/Understanding_How_Greenbelt_Agriculture_Feeds_the_Regional_Economy_Digital.pdf?1647954664
- The second report, **Greenbelt Farmers: Economic Network Case Studies**, focuses on qualitative case studies of seven local Greenbelt farms.
https://assets.nationbuilder.com/greenbelt/pages/14803/attachments/original/1647973875/Economic_Network_Case_Studies_FINAL_REPORT_2022_Digital.pdf?1647973875
- Together, the case studies and economic analysis tell the story of the complexity of the agricultural and agri-food sector in the Greenbelt and Greater Golden Horseshoe, its relationships with other sectors, and the value of agriculture and agri-food businesses to the region's economy.

State of Rural Canada III - Bridging Rural Data Gaps (2019) - Canadian Rural

Revitalization Foundation, ConnectON Case Study - was submitted as an example of a collaborative initiative to address rural data challenges and was included as part of the full report (<http://sorc.crrf.ca/>). The report that was presented at the national 2019 Sustainable Communities Conference. Highlights from the report:

- Data challenges have real world implications for rural places across Canada, impacting decisions, programs, and policies locally, provincially, territorially, and federally. The challenges go beyond whether or not certain data exists (or exists at the appropriate scale). Access to data, the capacity to conduct analysis, and the skills to interpret and communicate results are all important pieces of the puzzle of using data to inform better rural decision-making.
- From a pragmatic view, limited time and funds mean that we all must make decisions and take action based on incomplete information. However, there are many innovative examples of rural places doing more with less in order to fill data gaps. The successes of these collaborative efforts show the potential for shared benefits across different stakeholder groups. They also show effective practices that can potentially be adapted to other contexts. In a changing world that forces our communities to adapt to rapid environmental and economic shifts, this kind of innovative problem solving is imperative.

Carrot Value Chain Study (2019) – Holland Marsh Growers Association, Synthesis Agri-food Network and the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance
<https://foodandfarming.ca/custom/uploads/2020/10/Carrot-Value-Chain-Analysis-Report-2020.pdf>

Ontario Food Terminal Study (2019) – GHFFA and Canadian Urban Institute Food Terminal Study
https://canurb.org/wp-content/uploads/TheOntarioFoodTerminal_CUI_FullReport.pdf

Analysis of Food and Farming Assets in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2016)

Ontario East 3-D Mapping Project with Carleton University
<https://newsroom.carleton.ca/story/putting-ontario-east-on-the-map/>

Emergency Preparedness and Response

ConnectON is a resource to identify, sort and map the agriculture, food and manufacturing supply chain. Infrastructure layers provide key mapping information. Data can be combined with other resources to support information requests and develop new tools and resources.

Grey County (2019–2022) – COVID Resiliency Mapping

Durham Region – Durham Health Project - ConnectON data was used as a farm type and density information source for their climate change health vulnerability assessment report specific to extreme heat and UV exposure. They were looking for information on the number of farms in Durham Region and a map and breakdown of the number of farms by type (livestock vs non-livestock).

York Region used ConnectON data to create a contact list that was used when working closely with public health colleagues in York Region Public Health to spread key messages to agri-food industry during COVID.

York Region in collaboration with Health Unit and Emergency Services, ConnectON data was used to extend outreach for distribution of information on Avian Flu.