



ConnectON

Data engine for economic growth

In 2014, the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance (GHFFA) identified agri-food asset mapping as an important tool to build a robust regional database to support growth, decision making and opportunity for the sector. Building on the successful work of the Golden Horseshoe Agri-Food Asset Mapping pilot project, and with support from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), the project was further extended in May 2015 to include the Greater Golden Horseshoe area.

In 2015, the Ontario East Economic Development Commission (OEEDC), in partnership with the GHFFA, supported the expansion of agri-food asset mapping into Eastern Ontario.

In 2016, the Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO) agreed to coordinate the Advanced Manufacturing Network. This network is a partnership of government and economic development organizations in Ontario focused on the support of and investment in manufacturing opportunities that would result in increased employment and prosperity in the province. Asset mapping of the manufacturing sector was identified as a key project by the network.

Based on the success of these projects and partnerships, in 2017/2018 an initiative to develop a common approach to data collection, mapping, data query and related economic development tools emerged. This has set the framework for ongoing data collection and mapping for agri-food, manufacturing, and tourism with the opportunity to expand into other sectors and geographies. This expansion continued through 2020 and 2021, when a project with the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC) saw agri-food and manufacturing sector data added and refreshed for their 15 member municipalities.

ConnectON grew again in 2021 and 2022, expanding to Northern Ontario. This project was completed in partnership with the Northern Policy Institute (NPI), the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and the Northern Ontario Farm Innovation Alliance (NOFIA). Through the Northern Ontario project, we were able to work with several organizations including Destination Northern Ontario, Indigenous Tourism Ontario, the North Superior Workforce Planning Board and the Ontario Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry. This project included mapping agri-food and manufacturing assets in 11 districts and 6 cities in Northern Ontario; as well as a pilot project to add a third sector, tourism.

In 2022, the Northern Ontario Farm Innovation Alliance (NOFIA) identified the District of Muskoka as an important area to be mapped to complete the Northern Ontario picture in ConnectON. With this, the District of Muskoka was added to ConnectON; mapping agri-food, manufacturing, and tourism assets.

2023 has seen new opportunities to expand partnerships, features, and projects. Working with Food and Beverage Ontario, a review of data and the addition of new businesses will result in a comprehensive food and beverage sector dataset for Ontario. A partnership with the Greenbelt Foundation supported research into the importance of the agri-food sector to the Greater Golden Horseshoe economy and laid the foundation for a public facing dashboard feature in ConnectON. Toronto Global became a partner to support the development and implementation of the ConnectON Dashboard for municipalities, cities, districts and regions across the province and a renewal of the platform.

As a result of the combined efforts of the GHFFA, our partners and users, the map of Ontario is nearly complete in ConnectON. As the platform evolves, additional sectors such as forestry, mining or technology may be added and other geographies may join ConnectON.

Mapping and analysing agri-food and manufacturing assets across municipalities and regions will contribute to effective planning, decision making and economic development relative to food, agriculture, and manufacturing.

Project Led By



Golden Horseshoe
Food and Farming
Alliance

Partners



Possibility grows here.



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Contributors

