

Agricultural Impact Assessment Terms of Reference

Description

A technical report that provides a written description of the impact of a proposed development on the surrounding environment specifically the viability of agricultural uses and operations as well as mitigation measures to reduce any negative impacts.

Agricultural Impact Assessment is to be prepared by a Consultant that has a demonstrated advanced knowledge of Ontario agriculture.

When Required

An Agricultural Impact Assessment may be required to support the following applications for developments:

- Official Plan Amendment
- Zoning By-law Amendment
- Site Plan Control
- Plans of Subdivision
- Consent to Sever

During pre-application consultation, it will be determined if such a report is required and, if so, the specific requirements of the Study, based on the nature of the proposed application and the context of the study area. The requirement for an Agricultural Impact Assessment will be a condition of initial approval of the proposed development.

Rationale

The requirement of an Agricultural Impact Assessment will help in assessing the compatibility of the proposed development with the existing and/or future land uses in the surrounding area as it relates to agricultural lands and protecting them for agricultural purposes.

Required Contents

The Agricultural Impact Assessment should include the following components, but is not necessarily limited to:

Introduction

- Brief description of the proposal (what is being proposed by whom and why);
- Explanation of why an AIA is being completed (provincial and municipal requirements or as a best practice) and how these are satisfied in the AIA;
- Study methods Used (e.g., background materials, windshield surveys, field investigations such as soil survey);
- List of data, mapping and other information sources used to complete the AIA;
- Statutory and informal consultation process including pre-consultation, meetings with municipal & provincial staff as well as the local community (e.g., agricultural

advisory committee, farmers, Indigenous communities, agri-food businesses), as applicable;

- Coordination with other studies that address impacts to the agricultural system (e.g., noise, transportation, environmental impact studies);
- AIA authors and contributors, as applicable, and their qualifications and experience, demonstrating advanced knowledge of Ontario agriculture; and
- Time period over which the AIA was completed, including the timing of any field investigations.

Study Areas

- Identification of alternative primary and secondary study areas which may initially be larger than needed for the proposed use;
- Identification of primary study area—the area required for the proposed use based on avoidance or minimization of impacts to the agricultural system. Identification of secondary study area—the area of influence of the proposed use which could vary depending on the impact (e.g., noise, traffic);
- Description of the primary and secondary study areas including:
 - land use (e.g., lot and concession, aerial imagery, official plan designations and zoning);
 - transportation (e.g., traffic patterns and volumes, use by farm vehicles, modes);
 - agriculture (e.g., designated prime agricultural areas; soil type; CLI; parcel fabric; agricultural uses [i.e., crop types, livestock uses], farm buildings and structures, agri-food network elements, their connections and importance); specialty crop area potential; slope and topography; hydrology, hydrogeology and drainage [incl use of water for agriculture]);
 - general overview of economic, community and environmental contributions of agriculture.

If location alternatives are required:

- Comparison of study area alternatives in terms of impacts to the agricultural system;
- Selection and rationale for the preferred primary and secondary study area locations; and
- Additional description of the primary study area in terms of minimum distance separation formulae, type and condition of farm improvements, other land uses and features, historic severance activity, access points to farm operations and fields, proximity to settlement areas and associated considerations.

If location alternatives are not required:

- If land is to be rehabilitated back to an agricultural condition, detailed pre-development (baseline) information on the primary study area (e.g., soil survey,

soil budget, in specialty crop areas soil suitability for specialty crops and microclimatic conditions, potential to grow specialty crops, crop yields, drainage);

- Demonstration that the AIA was coordinated with work for Aggregate Resources Act approvals (if applicable); and
- Explanation of how pre-consultation and consultation influenced the identification of study areas.

Assessments of Impacts

- Consideration of potential impacts and the degree of impact in the absence of measures to avoid, minimize or mitigate impacts;
- Analysis of the Identified impacts including whether they are short- or long-term, limited to the primary study area, experienced in the secondary study area and beyond (regional perspective in the case of agri-food network elements) and cumulative considering other non-agricultural uses in the area; and
- Explanation of how consultation influenced the assessment of impacts.

Measures to Address Potential Impacts

- Consideration of the hierarchy of measures to address potential impact, with the priority on avoidance, then minimization, then mitigation (direct and indirect), plus any additional applicable measures.
- Identification of measures to address potential impacts;
- Explanation of how measures are proportional to potential impact or risk; and
- Description of how consultation influenced the identification of measures to address potential impacts.

Net Impacts

- Net impacts (i.e., impacts that will still be experienced after measures to address potential impacts are identified) are documented, along with their magnitude and extent; and
- Dependencies are clearly identified (e.g., if X measure is implemented, the result will be Y).

Recommendations and Conclusions

- Explanation of how provincial and municipal requirements/expectations are satisfied;
- Identification of anticipated net impacts of the proposed development or infrastructure to the agricultural system; and
- Recommended implementation plans for each measure to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts, addressing who will implement the measure, how effectiveness will be determined, contingencies, and implementation timing.

Appendices

- Curricula vitae of the study team (excluding municipal staff).
- Full references for all background information sources.
- Data from field studies (e.g., soil survey).
- MDS formulae calculation forms (personal information removed)
- Individuals and groups engaged during pre-consultation and consultation.