

TWEED 2017 AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS FORUM REPORT



Tweed 2017 Agricultural Business Forum

Summary

In March 2017 your BR&E Team hosted an evening event with over 20 farmers to identify issues facing the farming community. Participants shared their hopes and challenges which were captured by the Team. Key findings are summarized in this report. We recognize the importance of our farmers and their contributions to our community. We will continue to investigate solutions to those items that fall within our mandate.

Why an Agricultural Business Forum?

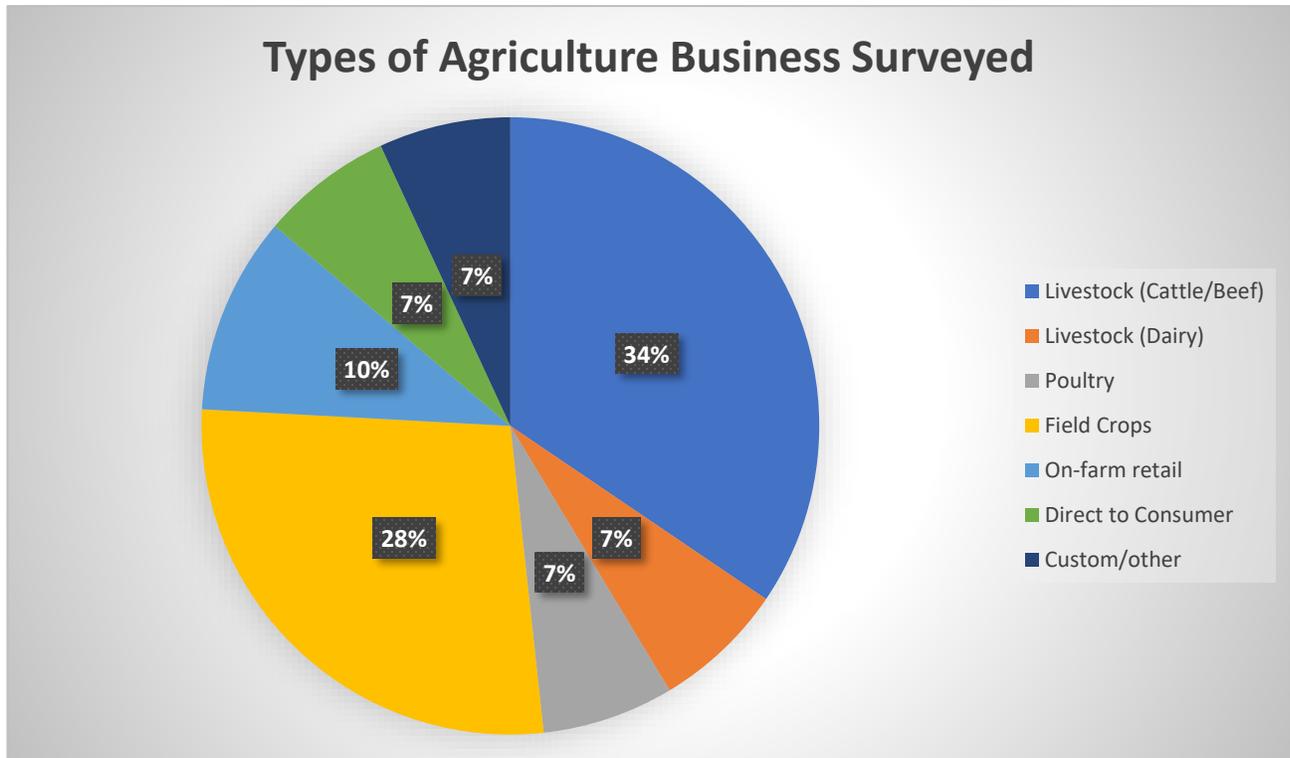
- One of the key recommendations from the 2016 Tweed BR&E Report identified a need to have more input from the agriculture community (only 2 farmers took part in that initiative).
- The 2017 Agricultural Business Forum took a different approach from the 1 hour in-person individual survey interview method used in the 2016 Tweed BR&E; Instead, local farmers were invited to a group gathering in which they could discuss issues facing the farming community in an informal and collaborative way.
- At the 2017 Agricultural Business Forum, small group discussions were led by BR&E Team Members, and farmers were also invited to complete



IN TOTAL, 22 LOCAL FARMERS
PARTICIPATED IN THE AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS
FORUM. **14 OF THESE FARMERS ALSO**
OPTED TO COMPLETE ADDITIONAL INDIVIDUAL
SURVEY QUESTIONS.

Key Findings

Survey Summary:



Ratings on Factors of Doing Business in the Community:

Wildlife Damage Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 64% of respondents rated as "POOR" or "FAIR"
Veterinary Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 64% of respondents rated as "GOOD" or "EXCELLENT"
Food Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 57% of respondents rated as "GOOD" or "EXCELLENT"
Food Traceability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 57% of respondents rated as "GOOD" or "EXCELLENT"

Key Findings

When asked how important any of the following factors will be during the next 18 months:

- **“Overall Cost of Doing Business”** rated as VERY IMPORTANT to 77% of respondents
- **“Public Concern/Awareness of Industry”** rated as VERY IMPORTANT to 57% of respondents
- **“Land Use Issues”** rated as VERY IMPORTANT (42% of respondents) and SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT (28% of respondents)



Group Discussion Summary

Farmers were asked about barriers to their business and potential development that would most benefit their sector. Key points are outlined below:

Greatest Barriers to Supplying Locally?

- small population base
- need a point of sale
- lack of available processing
- competition - farms produce similar products and flood local market
- etc.

Assets/Infrastructure that if developed would benefit agriculture?

- wider bridges/roads for farm equipment
- local Farm Supply Store
- 911 signage
- access to better internet for rural properties
- etc.

What Support Services from the Municipality would benefit your business?

- roads/bridge improvement
- natural Gas
- decreased Hydro costs
- signage
- local marketing
- etc.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Since the Agricultural Business Forum the BR&E team has been busy providing assistance to our local agriculturalists. Many issues that need to be addressed are at the provincial and federal level but the BR&E committee will continue to make recommendations to council to lobby on behalf of farmers to address their issues.

Some actions to date include:

- Discussion with Municipality of Tweed Council to recommend the consideration of widening and adding structural integrity to rural bridges when future road infrastructure updates are needed to allow use for all sizes of farm equipment.
- Recommendation that new tar and chip roads in the Municipality have painted centre lines.
- Encouraging the Municipality of Tweed to lobby on behalf of our farmers for Hydro One rate reductions.
- Support of Farm Gate Stands through the Municipality of Tweed website and social media as well as being included on local mapping.
- A list of grant opportunities has been compiled and is available to the public
- Collaboration with the Tweed & Area Chamber of Commerce to support buying local.

