

Cultivating Our Future:

2020 Yukon Agriculture Policy





Table of Contents

Minister’s Message.....	5
Introduction.....	6
Yukon Agriculture Industry.....	7
Objectives.....	8
Targets.....	9
Objective 1: Support the Agricultural Economy	11
1.1 Business Risk Management	11
1.2 Market Development and Economic Diversification	12
1.3 Outreach and Extension Services.....	13
1.4 Labour Support and Skill Development.....	13
1.5 Organic Farming	14
1.6 Science and Innovation.....	15
1.7 Livestock Husbandry and Animal Welfare.....	15
1.8 Food Safety and Quality.....	16
Objective 2: Create and Protect Agricultural Land.....	17
2.1 Planning for Agricultural Development	17
2.2 Agriculture Land Development.....	18
2.3 Agriculture Lease Options.....	18
2.4 Protecting Farm Land and the Right to Farm	19
2.5 Improved Land Utilization.....	20
Objective 3: Promote Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture	21
3.1 Climate Change.....	21
3.2 Environmental Farm Plans	22
3.3 Encouraging Environmental Best Management Practices.....	22
3.4 Agriculture - Environment Interface	23
Objective 4: Foster Growth through Partnership and Community.....	24
4.1 Within the Government of Yukon	24
4.2 Government of Canada	25
4.3 Yukon First Nations	26

4.4 Municipalities and Local Advisory Councils	27
4.5 Yukon Agriculture Industry	27
4.6 Educational Institutions and Research Groups	28
4.7 General Public.....	28
Implementation, Monitoring and Review	29
Definitions	30
Appendix: Yukon Agriculture Land Program	32
A) Agricultural Land Dispositions.....	33
A-1) Fee Simple Tenure.....	33
A-2) Agriculture Lease Options.....	34
A-3) Planned Agriculture Areas	34
A-4) Spot Land Applications	35
B) Agricultural Land Application and Review Process	36
B-1) Planned Agricultural Areas	36
B-2) Spot Land Applications	37
B-3) Land Pricing for Planned Land and Spot Land	38
B-4) Preparation of Agreement Sale	39
B-5) Inspection and Enforcement.....	41
B-6) Accessory Agricultural Land Uses	41
B-7) Subdivision of Agricultural Parcels	42

Minister's Message



I am proud to present the 2020 Yukon Agriculture Policy, *Cultivating Our Future*. This policy outlines how the Government of Yukon will support the continued growth of Yukon's agriculture industry and our ability to be more self-sufficient in food production over the next decade. Our northern environment presents unique challenges that require tailored solutions for success in responding to climate change, smaller and more remote markets, and changing producer demographics.

Cultivating Our Future is Yukon's fourth agricultural policy. This policy builds off the progress and lessons learned from previous iterations. Its development was guided by the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee and informed through engagement with the agriculture community, Yukon First Nations and the public between 2016 and late 2019. The vision for the 2020 Yukon Agriculture Policy is to create the right conditions for a thriving agricultural industry to:

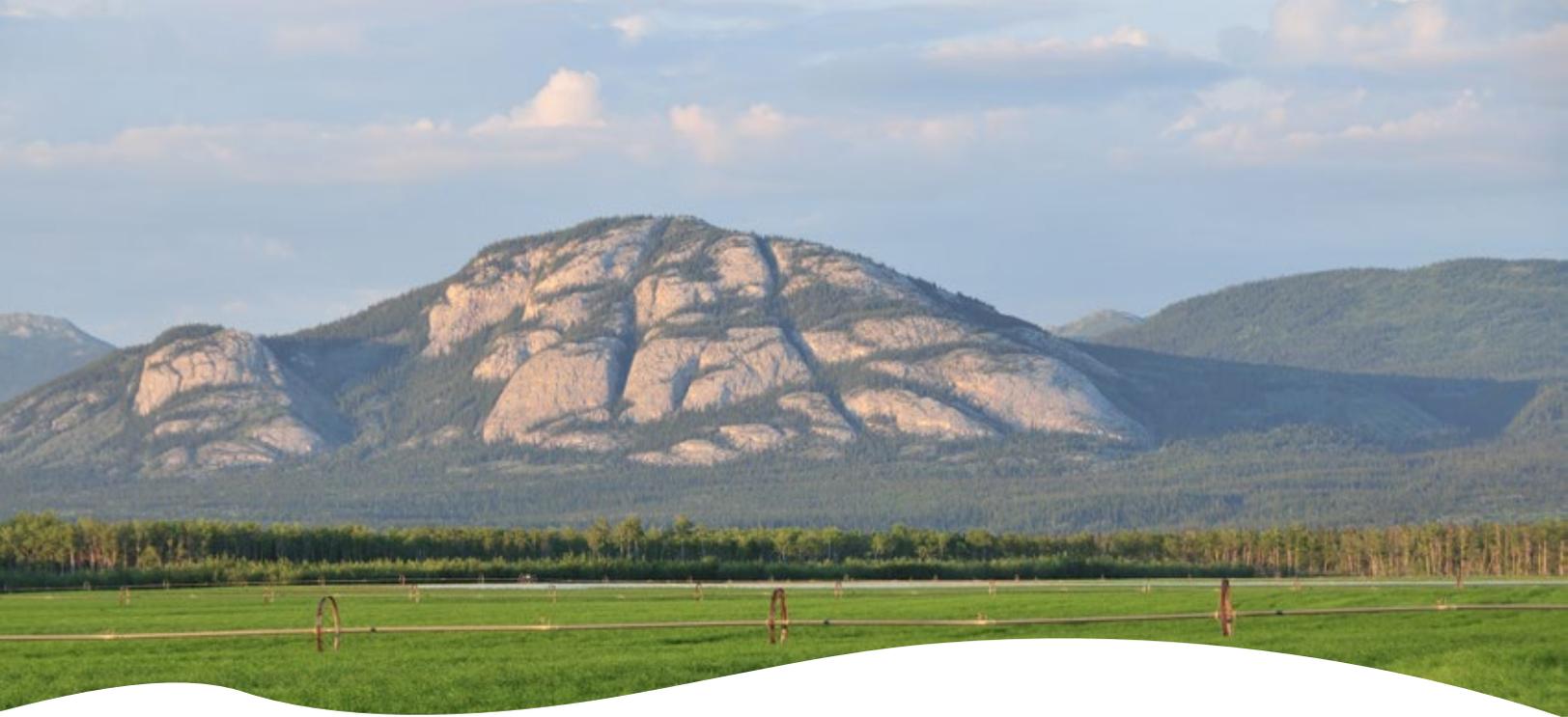
- increase our self-sufficiency in food production;
- produce high-quality products that feed our vibrant communities;
- contribute to our local economy; and
- leave positive cultural and environmental legacies for future generations.

In order to meet this vision, this policy spans issues, disciplines and jurisdictions. It requires collaboration and partnerships with the Government of Canada, Yukon First Nations governments, municipal governments, stakeholder organizations and individual producers.

I sincerely thank everyone who participated in the process of creating this policy and those who will participate in making its vision a reality over the next decade.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ranj Pillai". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Honourable Ranj Pillai
Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources



Introduction

The Government of Yukon developed *Cultivating Our Future* with the guidance of the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee ¹. *Cultivating Our Future* was also informed by public engagement feedback from an online questionnaire, a stakeholder survey and discussions with Yukon First Nations. Additional feedback was received during meetings with farmers in Whitehorse and Dawson City as well as during an agriculture policy open house and facilitated session held in April 2019. Results of the public engagement can be found in the *What We Heard* report available on [EngageYukon.ca](https://engage.yukon.ca).

Cultivating Our Future sets the Government of Yukon's direction on agriculture for the next decade. The vision for this policy is to create the right conditions for a thriving agricultural industry to:

- increase our self-sufficiency in food production;
- produce high quality products that feed our vibrant communities;
- contribute to our local economy; and
- leave positive cultural and environmental legacies for future generations.

This policy sets out four strategic objectives, each with detailed actions to achieve this vision over the next 10 years. This policy includes an appendix detailing processes for the Yukon Agriculture Land Program.

¹ The Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee is comprised of representatives of key agriculture industry groups in Yukon. The Committee meets with Yukon government throughout the year to advise on agriculture matters.

Yukon Agriculture Industry

Yukon's agriculture and agri-food industry is a key part of Yukon life and has been a growing part of our economy since the Klondike Gold Rush. While improvements in transportation have resulted in importing much of our food from the South, Yukon farms continue to fulfill the important role of providing fresh, healthy products to feed our communities while keeping transportation greenhouse gas emissions low relative to imported food. Recently, there has been a shift in public awareness around how Yukon's agriculture industry contributes to the food security of Yukoners. The five-year Local Food Strategy released by the Government of Yukon in 2016 highlighted the new emphasis placed on local food production in the territory.

Over the last decade, the total amount of land under cultivation and number of farms in Yukon has grown, along with livestock and vegetable production. According to the 2016 Census of Agriculture released by the Government of Canada, between 2011 and 2016 the number of farms increased by just over 9 percent, with over 142 farms in the territory and a total farm area over 10,646 hectares. In 2016, total farm investments, including land, buildings, equipment and livestock, were reported at \$108 million, while industry production totaled \$3.9 million.

The 2016 Census highlighted that across the Canadian landscape there are fewer farms and farm operators, on average, are older. In Yukon, the trend is reversed, with the average age of Yukon farmers having decreased slightly from 54 to 53. In addition, there has been an increase in the number of farm operators who identify as female.

Yukon farm operators specialize in a variety of products, including vegetables, fruits, dairy, eggs, honey, sod, and bedding plants. Hay remains the largest portion of Yukon's agriculture industry. In 2016, vegetable and fruit production peaked at a 20-year high in terms of number of acres and farms in production.

Yukon producers breed and raise a variety of livestock, including cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, horses, ponies, llamas, alpacas, rabbits, bison and elk. Producers also breed and raise a variety of poultry for meat, chicks, and eggs. The territory's reliance on imported livestock is slowly decreasing as more Yukon producers are starting to breed their own animals and are committing to year-round operations.

Yukoners are exploring different ways of extending the shelf-life of their products and are producing a greater variety and amount of stored vegetables, cut meats, and value-added products, such as preserves and jams. These products are found in large retail stores, community markets, and in gourmet meals prepared by restaurants and caterers in Yukon's food service industry. In recent years, this growth in new products has expanded into new markets and Yukon farmers are finding success in selling their products both within and outside of the local region.

Agriculture activities in Yukon First Nations communities are vibrant, illustrated by more and larger community gardens and greater investment in growing food at the local level. Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation is a leader and has been producing fresh foods for their citizens and community from their community gardens since 2000. In 2014, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in established a teaching and working farm that has expanded over the years to

include small animal husbandry, eggs, berries and vegetable production. The Carcross Tagish First Nation Porcupine Creek Farm has been in operation since 2017, spanning over 153 acres of mixed habitat and a focus on raising livestock and growing crops to provide healthy food to their citizens and Yukon. The First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun is renewing its activities, including a farm and berry field in Mayo. With these and other examples of local food production, First Nations across the territory are demonstrating success in community garden and farm operations.

The growth of Yukon's agriculture and agri-food industry strengthens our food security. Yukon's agriculture industry contributes to our economy, adds diverse work options in our communities and enhances community well-being. Yukon's agriculture and agri-food industry faces and continues to overcome challenges such as a cold and dry climate, climate change, low nutrient soils, high operating costs and small local markets. While relatively small by national standards, our industry is durable and diverse.

Objectives

The vision for Cultivating Our Future: 2020 Yukon Agriculture Policy intends to balance the social, economic and environmental priorities of Yukon peoples and governments and address the evolving needs of the local agriculture sector.

This policy strives to create the right conditions for a growing agriculture and agri-food industry that produces high quality products for local consumption, is economically viable, operates in an environmentally sustainable manner and contributes to community well-being.

To meet this vision, Cultivating Our Future has **four objectives**:

- 1. Support the Agricultural Economy** - support the development and growth of an agricultural economy and associated infrastructure that is diverse, innovative, and competitive.
- 2. Develop and Protect Agricultural Land** – plan and develop new agriculture land and ensure agriculture land is used for food and forage production and is protected from loss.
- 3. Promote Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture** - encourage the development of an agriculture industry that responds and adapts to the challenges of climate change and utilizes best practices that protect the environment and the farm.
- 4. Foster Growth through Partnership and Community** - contribute to community well-being through collaborating with governments, members of the agriculture community, industry and the public on agriculture and agri-food matters



Targets

The **four objectives** of this policy are supported by measurable targets. These targets support monitoring the implementation and success of the vision for Cultivating Our Future. The Government of Yukon commits to reporting on these targets.

Government of Yukon Targets

The Government of Yukon will aim to achieve the following targets by the year 2030:

1. Develop a system to identify industry sector development and performance in Yukon.
2. Support the adoption of agricultural activities and approaches that minimize impacts of agricultural development on the environment.
3. No net loss of titled and leased agriculture land.
4. Make new agriculture land available ².
5. Conduct a review of environmental farm plans at least every five years.
6. Promote and share responsible farming practices for all aspects of agriculture such as crop management, food safety and livestock health, as examples.
7. Develop Acts and Regulations that reflect the needs of Yukoners and the agriculture industry.

² More specifically, the target is that a minimum of 50 percent of land is titled through planned development areas; 25 percent is released through lease developments; and a maximum of 25 percent is titled through the spot land application process.



The next step is to gather data and information to support the target statements. Progress on reaching these targets will be reported as implementation and monitoring occurs. To learn about how the Government of Yukon will implement, monitor, and review *Cultivating Our Future*, see page 29.

Industry Targets

Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee has set the following targets:

1. Increase in the production and sales of Yukon-grown agricultural products;
2. Increase or improvement (compared to 2019 values) in land utilization on existing agricultural parcels;
3. Industry infrastructure projects are financially self-supporting;
4. Environmental Farm Plans are complete for 75 percent of Yukon farms;
5. The agriculture industry continues to make a net positive contribution to the Yukon economy (i.e. total industry income is greater than total industry expenses); and
6. Increase (compared to 2019 values) in local agri-food availability in grocery stores.

The Government of Yukon will make best efforts to assist industry to achieve the above targets by the year 2030.



Photo: GBP Creative

Objective 1: Support the Agricultural Economy

The vision for Cultivating Our Future is to create the right conditions for a thriving agricultural industry. This means an industry that is diverse, innovative, competitive and both economically and environmentally sustainable. New equipment and farming techniques, more effective business planning and a wider range and availability of funding opportunities have supported greater farming productivity and economic viability in Yukon. These improvements in agriculture have helped to reduce our dependence on food imported from outside Yukon, grow our economy, and create diverse work opportunities in Yukon communities.

This objective has **eight** action areas.

1.1 Business Risk Management

Business risks in farming can have an impact on a producer's bottom line and future success. These risks include: unpredictable weather, crop or animal disease, pests, market changes, high input costs and, increasingly, climate change (see Section 3.1). Business risk management programs can help farmers manage risks, stabilize income and minimize the impact of losses that threaten the viability of farms.

The Government of Yukon will:

- continue to collaborate with the Government of Canada to offer national business risk management programs to Yukon farmers;
- research and support business risk management programs that are tailored for the North;
- continue to support industry programs designed to reduce costs and provide business advisory services to help farmers understand opportunities and constraints; and
- support industry in developing models for farm succession.

1.2 Market Development and Economic Diversification

As Yukon's agricultural industry continues to grow, new agricultural markets emerge and develop. The market for value-added products is a prime example. Value-added products can improve a producer's profit margins, create new market opportunities and enhance economic growth. The Government of Yukon supports new market development and greater accessibility in local markets. This includes supporting infrastructure development that raises industry's production capacity and economic viability.

As the agricultural industry expands, Yukon producers may find opportunities to diversify to increase their income. These opportunities include diversifying farm operations so that different parts of the farm complement one another and engaging in non-farm work to diversify income sources. The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting market development, infrastructure development, and economic diversification in the agricultural industry.

The Government of Yukon will:

- support farm business planning to leverage agricultural loans;
- work with industry, Yukon First Nations and other partners to provide support and tools to enhance the promotion and marketing of “Yukon-grown” food and products;
- support market diversification opportunities, which may include agri-tourism, culinary tourism, or non-food agricultural products and services;
- evaluate application of supply management for Yukon ³;
- support increased value-added processing in the agriculture industry;
- support export of Yukon-grown agricultural food and products;
- explore cooperative sharing models for equipment and infrastructure;
- develop a strategic approach to infrastructure development for agriculture that leverages, integrates and collaborates with other industries in the territory;
- support the inclusion of the updated National Farm Building Code during publication of the National Building Code in 2020;
- support agriculture infrastructure development to facilitate the growth of the agriculture industry, e.g. irrigation and cold storages; and
- support secondary uses of agriculture parcels to promote farm income diversification while ensuring that the primary use of the land remains agriculture.

3 Supply management is a national system used in Canada that controls the supply of dairy, poultry and eggs.



1.3 Outreach and Extension Services

To help improve agricultural knowledge and practices, the Government of Yukon provides outreach and extension services to the agriculture community. These services include on-farm support, such as consultation on plant health and nutrient management, soil testing and feed analysis, and educational opportunities such as seminars.

The Government of Yukon will:

- expand outreach and extension services to include farm safety, health, and wellness;
- ensure that outreach and extension services are primarily focused on supporting and expanding commercial production while also maintaining these services for small-scale agriculture enthusiasts, hobby farmers and gardeners; and
- provide outreach services to the livestock industry.

1.4 Labour Support and Skill Development

Attracting and retaining skilled farm labour can be a challenge in the agriculture industry, particularly in Yukon where there is a competitive job market and a high cost of living. Another challenge is developing and transferring northern agricultural knowledge. The Government of Yukon is committed to offering support to farm operators that enhances their ability to attract and retain skilled employees. The Government of Yukon supports skill development through funding and delivery of training programs to increase and expand industry skills and knowledge.

The Government of Yukon will:

- continue to provide assistance and information on mentoring and internship opportunities and how to access summer students through local programs;
- continue to provide information on federal programs, such as the Seasonal Agricultural Worker and Temporary Foreign Worker programs;
- support enhanced skill development in the agriculture industry, as well as a variety of farm labour support programs; and
- work with the Department of Education, 4-H and Yukon post-secondary institutions to investigate education opportunities related to agriculture.

1.5 Organic Farming

Organic farming is an important component of the agriculture industry, providing both economic and environmental benefits. Organic certification has been achieved by a number of Yukon farms. “Certified Organic” products follow federal regulations with third party verification and are based on the principles of ecology, health, fairness and care. These principles apply to animals, soil, the environment and people, from workers and family on the farm to the customers who buy the farm’s products.

The Government of Yukon will:

- promote and provide incentives for the growth of organic farming in Yukon;
- support compliance with the federal *Certified Organic Regulations* within Yukon;
- work with industry to adopt a Yukon organic logo;
- ensure there is adequate capacity for organic verification in Yukon;
- assist farmers with organic certification requirements;
- determine equivalency standards between different certification plans and programs;
- train staff in organic agriculture practices and in the organic certification process; and
- investigate funding opportunities to assist industry with organic inspection and certification costs.





1.6 Science and Innovation

The Government of Yukon supports science and innovation in Yukon agriculture in partnership with industry, Yukon First Nations, Yukon University and other partners. The Government of Yukon will continue to conduct, support and promote research and development for Yukon agriculture.

The Government of Yukon will:

- support industry adoption of practices that improve resiliency and productivity through research, development, science and innovation;
- seek out partnerships between governments, industry and institutions to continue to advance agriculture science and innovation in Yukon; and
- continue to support the Yukon Agriculture Research Committee and develop and implement five-year research plans across sectors in collaboration with the committee.

1.7 Livestock Husbandry and Animal Welfare

The public and industry expects a high standard of ethical care for livestock. The Government of Yukon supports a diversified livestock sector and all livestock species. Husbandry practices will provide a good quality of life for livestock from birth to end of life. Farmers are responsible for ensuring the basic physical needs are met. This includes nutritious feed, clean water, shelter and health care.

The Government of Yukon will:

- create a livestock health and welfare committee to advise the Chief Veterinary Officer and the Director of the Agriculture Branch;
- support collaboration between Agriculture Branch and Animal Health Unit to ensure the livestock sector is supported through program delivery;
- seek to develop species-specific standards for fencing that supports livestock containment and minimizes interactions between livestock and wildlife;
- support use of the National Farm Animal Care Council's Codes of Practice as recommended practices for the care of Yukon livestock;
- support the development of animal protection and control legislation in Yukon that protects livestock;
- support a regulatory framework that enables a thriving Yukon livestock industry; and
- support and evaluate models that deliver veterinary care to livestock producers to facilitate production of safe food, such as a livestock-specific field veterinarian.

1.8 Food Safety and Quality

Food safety and quality is important to protect the health and safety of consumers. This requires a multidisciplinary approach that takes into account how food is produced, processed and marketed. The agriculture industry operates within numerous regulatory regimes for food safety to protect human health.

The Government of Yukon will:

- support the development of standard operating procedures for the agriculture industry that facilitate the production, labelling, sale and export of safe, high-quality foods;
- provide meat inspection and other services to meet food safety standards;
- provide funding for food safety plans and equipment; and
- provide education on food safety regulations and food safety practices.



Objective 2: Create and Protect Agricultural Land

Cultivating Our Future aims to develop new agriculture land and promote efficient and effective use of existing agricultural lands. Yukon's supply of agricultural lands is limited and should be used to the maximum primary use potential.⁴ Agricultural primary use is the production of food and fodder. To supply more of the territory's food needs, new agriculture land must be created, existing agriculture land must be protected, and greater utilization made of existing agricultural land.

2.1 Planning for Agricultural Development

Planned agricultural development involves many participants in the creation of farmland. Prior to designating land as farmland, the Government of Yukon consults with affected Yukon First Nations, the public and all relevant organizations to identify and mitigate concerns relating to the environment, cultural land use, land planning, and other issues. Where applicable, the Government of Yukon also submits project proposals for new parcels for assessment by the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board.

The Government of Yukon will:

- identify suitable areas for agricultural development;
- work to make new land available for agriculture development⁵; and
- prioritize planned agricultural development areas and the creation of infill lots.

Operational/
procedural details
around agricultural
land can be found in
Appendix A.

There is a separate
Grazing Policy.

⁴ In Yukon, agriculture and accessory activities permitted on agriculture parcels can vary depending on location. In municipal areas, zoning bylaws (pursuant to the *Municipal Act*) define which activities are permitted. Outside municipal areas, these activities are regulated by various Development Area Regulations under the *Area Development Act*.

⁵ See Policy Objectives on page 8 for specific goals.





2.2 Agriculture Land Development

Agriculture land is made available through planned land and spot land programs. To acquire agriculture land, either individuals or companies can apply to the Government of Yukon and must present a Farm Development Plan demonstrating that land acquisition will result in an economically viable and environmentally sustainable farming enterprise. The Government of Yukon considers all applications received in order to ensure that land will continue to be used for agriculture purposes.

The Government of Yukon will:

- promote use of timber and woody debris during clearing in an environmentally sustainable manner that results in best use of forest resources;
- ensure land clearing and development procedures responsibly address Yukon First Nation and public interests regarding environmental sustainability, greenhouse gas emissions, economic viability and land use compatibility;
- seek to increase the development value and provide incentives for farm development plans that use organic amendments; and
- promote appropriate agricultural land use and seek to minimize habitat fragmentation.

2.3 Agriculture Lease Options

The Government of Yukon is developing lease options in response to the demand for low-cost land for the production of, for example, food, animal feed, hay, game farming, or pasture areas for livestock. Flexible lease options will be used to attract new entrants, expand current operations, as well as to promote agricultural innovation. Agriculture leases may be for soil or non-soil based operation and support the objective of 'developing new agricultural land' without exchanging public land into private title.

The Government of Yukon will:

- explore pricing regimes for agriculture leases;
- develop agricultural parcels for lease that are up to 65 hectares to accommodate innovative and wide-ranging agricultural production uses; and
- develop agricultural parcels for lease that are up to and greater than 65 hectares for improved pasture, hay lands, and forage.



2.4 Protecting Farm Land and the Right to Farm

Regulation is important to protect farm practices and a farmer’s “Right to Farm” in Yukon. The *Area Development Act* and *Development Area Regulations* establish that agriculture land cannot be converted to other zoning designations. These regulations identify activities that are allowable within the boundaries of relevant local area plans and areas where zoning has been established.

The Government of Yukon will:

- affirm the right of a farmer to farm their land ⁶;
- ensure there is no net loss in Yukon agriculture lands, while allowing flexibility for alternative land uses if primary agriculture use has been met; and
- prevent agriculture land from being rezoned to other land use designations, unless:
 - there is an exchange for an unzoned privately titled parcel of land with greater agricultural value; or
 - land is subdivided to create a public benefit as defined in the *Subdivision Act*.

6 “Right to Farm” for this policy means to help ensure that common farm practices and operations can continue to occur on designated farmlands.

2.5 Improved Land Utilization

While Yukon is a vast territory, the amount of land that is suitable for agriculture is limited by soil class and climate. Practical considerations further reduce land availability. It is critical that existing agricultural land is used for agricultural production. The Government of Yukon is committed to working with land owners to ensure agricultural lands are used to support our agricultural economy and are preserved for future generations.

The Government of Yukon will:

- support programs that encourage owners of idle agriculture land to bring their parcels back into production through extension services and funding;
- ensure the size of dispositions under the spot land application process are based on needs identified in the Farm Development Plan;
- increase the minimum required field development for new agriculture Agreements for Sale to 60%;
- ensure the area of any land covered by windrows or woody debris left in the field will not count towards the minimum clearing requirement;
- ensure owners of agriculture land demonstrate that primary agriculture use of the parcel is achieved prior to the release of any development permits for non-primary uses;
- explore a land buy-back program when agriculture land is underutilized; and
- investigate methods to ensure that primary agriculture use of the parcel is maintained.



Objective 3: Promote Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture

Cultivating Our Future aims to encourage the development of an agriculture industry that is responsive and adaptable to climate change and supports environmental sustainability. The Government of Yukon will continue to support Yukon's agriculture industry in creating a positive environmental legacy for future generations.

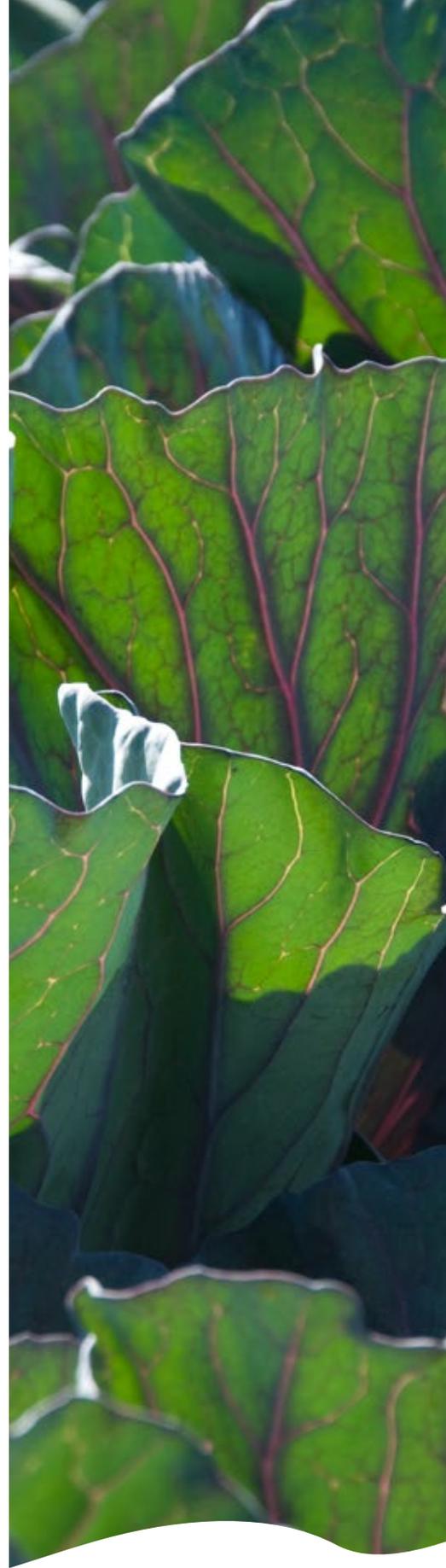
This objective has **four** action areas.

3.1 Climate Change

Climate change is causing patterns of “normal” weather to shift, with extreme weather events becoming more frequent and severe. In Yukon, the annual average temperature has increased by two degrees Celsius over the past 50 years. More warming is projected, with winter warming more pronounced (Yukon Climate Change Secretariat, 2019). If drought conditions occur more frequently, there may be greater demand for irrigation. Warmer temperatures will result in permafrost melting, another example of how climate change is bringing new challenges that require new tools and approaches in agriculture.

The Government of Yukon will:

- design policies and programs for agriculture that facilitate a sector that is environmentally compatible and sustainable on a long-term basis;
- support and encourage farming practices that aim to increase the carbon within the soil and enhance soil quality;
- research and develop land-clearing practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
- support research and innovation around climate change and provide tools for adaptation (including soil development);
- investigate modifying the National Land Suitability Rating System to better account for the specifics of Yukon permafrost with respect to agriculture soils; and
- support irrigation expansion and development to adapt to variability in precipitation.



3.2 Environmental Farm Plans

Environmental Farm Plans are designed to help farmers assess potential environmental impacts from agricultural activities and develop strategies to mitigate negative impacts. The Environmental Farm Plan program is an educational tool for farmers to learn more about potential environmental issues and provides assistance to adopt best practices with respect to reducing environmental impacts. The scope of Environmental Farm Plans ranges from manure management, fuel storage, soil management, pest management and other risks. This leads to action plans that benefit the farm when implemented.

The Government of Yukon will:

- encourage farmers and producers to complete the Environmental Farm Plan program;
- provide continuing education efforts to support the adoption of Environmental Farm Plans; and
- support emergency planning and risk mitigation on farms.

3.3 Encouraging Environmental Best Management Practices

Agriculture and the environment are inherently linked. Environmental factors, such as air quality, nutrient cycling and rainfall are necessary ingredients of agriculture. Agriculture can also have significant impacts on the environment, both positive and negative. The Government of Yukon encourages farm operators to adopt environmental best management practices to enhance the environment in the territory.

The Government of Yukon will:

- encourage the research, development, distribution, adoption, and evaluation of best environmental management practices for agriculture land in Yukon;
- develop best management practices for the development of renewable energy projects on agriculture land, to ensure compatible and efficient full use of the land;
- continue to provide education and best practice guidelines regarding purchased seed species, quality, timing of seeding and placement of seed;
- support land use practices that encourage soil-building;
- design and deliver training and incentive programs on environmental best management practices; and
- encourage farmers to register in the Environmental Farm Plan program (section 3.2).



3.4 Agriculture - Environment Interface

Farmers are stewards of their lands, operating with a wide range of environmental management considerations in mind, including climate change, wildlife interactions, invasive species management, nutrient management, manure management, seeding, crop selection and soil conservation, and plant health. Agriculture activities invariably interact with wild spaces and wildlife.

The Government of Yukon will:

- support the separation of domestic and wild species through education and funding programs;
- develop fencing standards, guidelines and regulatory tools to support livestock containment and safety;
- incorporate proactive approaches into wildlife management plans to reduce the interactions of wildlife such as elk, mountain goats, sheep and bears with domestic species;
- develop livestock management practices to support proper grazing management and reduce the possibility of weed issues;
- support Yukon invasive species education; and
- protect riparian areas through setbacks and project-specific mitigations as recommended by the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board.

Objective 4: Growth through Partnership and Community

Cultivating Our Future aims to contribute to community well-being through encouraging collaboration between governments, members of the agriculture community, industry and the public on agriculture and agri-food matters. A coordinated approach is important for the strategic and successful development of Yukon agriculture. The Government of Yukon is committed to collaborating with partners to support a thriving agriculture industry over the next decade.

This objective has **seven** action areas.

4.1 Within the Government of Yukon

Within the Government of Yukon, the Agriculture Branch is the primary point of contact for agriculture related matters. However, other Government of Yukon departments and branches also provide services that support agriculture. For example, Department of Economic Development supports strategic projects to innovate and grow the agriculture industry, including projects focused on marketing and food security. Other key partners within the Government of Yukon include the departments of Highways and Public Works, Environment, Education, Tourism and Culture, and Health and Social Services. The coordination and partnership between the Agriculture Branch and other Government of Yukon branches and departments is essential to ensure the agriculture community can access government programs and services in a coordinated, streamlined and efficient manner.

- The Government of Yukon will develop a one-government approach to agriculture while maintaining the Agriculture Branch as the primary point of contact for the agriculture community; and
- continue to ensure the Agriculture Branch is responsible for:
 - developing agricultural land;
 - providing extension and outreach services;
 - coordinating and implementing agriculture policies and strategies;
 - working with the Animal Health Unit on livestock health, welfare and control; and
 - administering and reviewing laws and regulations applicable to agriculture in the territory.

4.2 Government of Canada

The Government of Canada, through the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, plays an important national role in agriculture and its continued development in a pan-northern setting. The Government of Canada is a major partner in federal-territorial agriculture funding programs. Other federal departments, including the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada provide industry development programs to support the sector.

The Government of Yukon will:

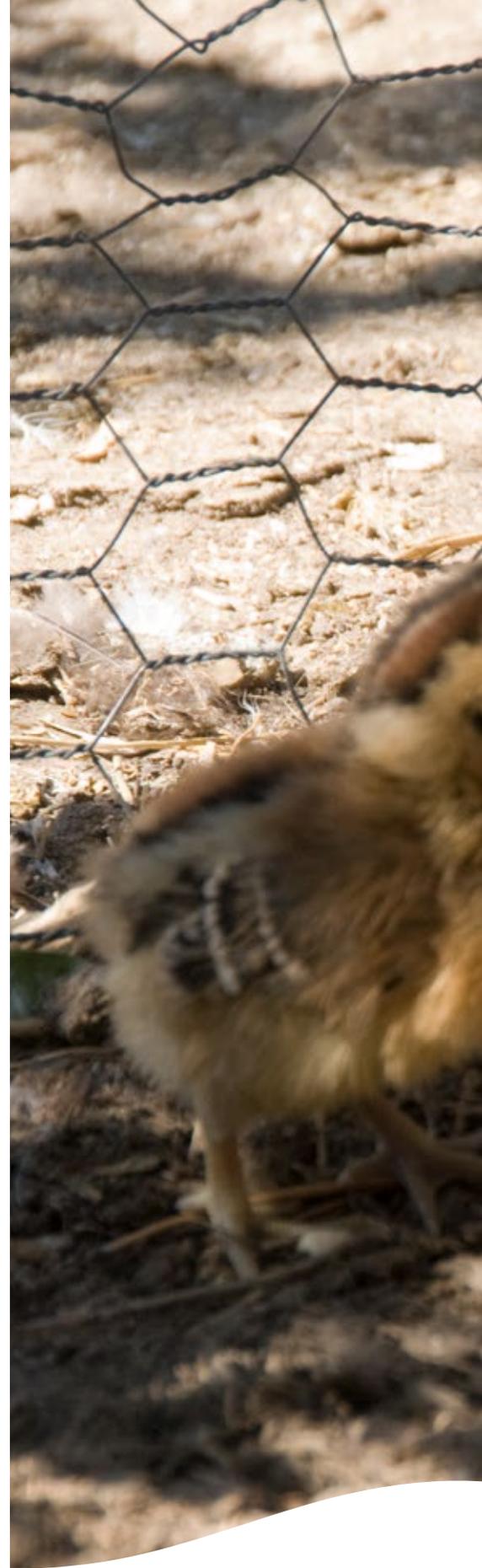
- continue to work with the Government of Canada to tailor and deliver programs for the unique needs of Yukon;
- partner with the Government of Canada to support and administer federal-provincial-territorial funding programs; and
- work with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada researchers on northern agriculture research projects.

4.3 Yukon First Nations

Yukon First Nations are important partners in the agriculture industry, contributing to its profitability and local food production. A number of Yukon First Nations governments lead innovative agricultural development projects ranging from community gardens to operational farms. The Government of Yukon collaborates with Yukon First Nations governments to support the development and success of community agriculture and food production programs and projects.

The Government of Yukon will:

- continue to consult and seek input from Yukon First Nations and transboundary Aboriginal groups on agricultural land applications and land planning initiatives that occur within their Traditional Territories and asserted traditional territories;
- continue to offer support of food production by Yukon First Nations through extension services, soil testing, crop trials and applicable funding programs;
- continue to seek Yukon First Nations representation and knowledge in agricultural matters;
- support training for Yukon First Nations in northern agricultural techniques, for example through the Yukon Master Gardener course; and
- investigate joint agriculture land preparation or development projects, consistent with the provisions of First Nation Final Agreements and Self Government Agreements.





4.4 Municipalities and Local Advisory Councils

Municipalities and local advisory councils have an important role to play in agriculture development within communities, including activities such as planning agriculture lots and developing community gardens.

The Government of Yukon will:

- work with municipalities and local advisory councils on agricultural matters, including support for increasing agriculture production and land availability; and
- continue to provide advice and education on agricultural matters.

4.5 Yukon Agriculture Industry

There are a number of agriculture industry organizations and associations in Yukon representing a variety of sectors and products. These organizations are active in promoting the interests of their members, as well as delivering a variety of programs and initiatives to the industry.

The Government of Yukon will:

- work with the agriculture industry and organizations to seek input on agricultural matters and collaborate on the delivery of industry-related programs; and
- support the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee in providing guidance on the development and management of the agriculture and agri-food industry in Yukon, including policy and program development and implementation.



4.6 Educational Institutions and Research Groups

The Government of Yukon works with educational institutions and research groups, including universities, Yukon post-secondary institutions and the Cold Climate Innovation Centre. For example, the Yukon Master Gardener Program has been a successful partnership between Yukon University and the Government of Yukon, with courses being offered in a number of communities.

The Government of Yukon will:

- work with educational institutions and research groups to develop programs, offer courses and research innovative solutions to northern agricultural challenges; and
- provide assistance to researchers on Yukon agriculture-related projects where feasible.

4.7 General Public

It is important that Yukoners have the opportunity to provide their input and feedback on agriculture development in the territory and be involved in initiatives that may affect them.

The Government of Yukon will:

- provide opportunities for public consultation and input regarding agriculture planning, development and policy initiatives; and
- provide agricultural related services, such as soil testing, feed testing and growing advice (e.g. Yukon Master Gardener Program).

Implementation, Monitoring and Review

To ensure Cultivating Our Future remains relevant and continues to guide the industry in an effective way, the Government of Yukon will develop an implementation, monitoring and evaluation plan to meet the commitments established in the policy.

The Government of Yukon will:

- work with the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee to develop an implementation plan for this policy within one year of its release;
- establish a system for monitoring and evaluating policy targets; and
- initiate a review of the policy no later than in its tenth year of implementation. The evaluation will allow for input from the agriculture industry, Yukon First Nations, mandated boards and councils, interest groups and the public.



Definitions

Agriculture: The science or practice of cultivating the soil, producing crops, raising livestock and, in varying degrees, the preparation and marketing of the resulting products.

Agriculture lands: Arable lands or lands suitable for non-soil-based agriculture.

Agri-food: relates to the commercial production of food (intended for human consumption) by farming. Agri-food can be produced on the farm as well as off-site in various processing facilities.

Arable: In reference to soil-based lands for titled or lease tenure, arable refers to land categorized as Class 5 soil or better according to the Land Suitability Rating System used by the Government of Canada.

Livestock: For the purposes of implementing the policy, livestock includes all species that can be used for the purposes of agriculture including, but not limited to: hogs, cattle, poultry, goats, sheep, bison, llama, horses, alpacas, donkey, rabbit, elk, bees or yak.

Hay lands: In reference to hay land leases under legislation, hay lands are defined as lands used for pasture and forage production with a soil class 6 or 7 according to the Land Suitability Rating System used by the Government of Canada.

Intensive use: An agricultural use in which three or more Animal Units are confined within 100 square metres and do not have access to additional space. A combination of different livestock species is allowed, provided the maximum number of Animal Units is not exceeded.

Animal unit: In this policy, Animal Unit refers to livestock in terms of their waste production potential. The Agriculture Branch provides Animal Unit calculations for industry.

Non-soil-based agriculture: An agricultural activity that is not dependent on the quality of the soil of the lands on which it is carried out (*Lands Regulation*, section 70).

Operational need: A demonstrated need that all presently owned or leased land is fully utilized for agriculture and additional land is necessary for the growth of the agriculture business.

Organic: Products that are certified organic under the Canada Organic Regime.

Primary agriculture use: Active farming of the land as demonstrated by:

- A farm site verification by Agriculture Branch; and
- Evidence of one of the following:
 - 60% of the land is in production as per Agriculture Branch farm site verification; or
 - Gross farm sales (as shown on Canada Revenue Agency tax returns) have been at least \$15,000 for two of the previous three tax years; or
 - Proof of enrollment in the federal Agri-Stability program for two of the previous three tax years.

Public Benefit parcel: A public benefit includes rights-of-way, bridgeheads, protected areas, conservation areas, lands for public use, and lands for recreational, institutional and public facilities or infrastructure.

Right to Farm: Ensures common farm practices and operations can continue to occur on designated farmlands.

Soil-based agriculture: An agricultural activity which is dependent on the quality of soil of the lands on which it is carried out. (Lands Regulations, section 70).

Yukon-Grown:

- For livestock, meat or meat products: The livestock was born and raised in Yukon; or has spent a minimum of 51% of its life in Yukon; or has lived in Yukon for at least one complete year.
- For crop production: Plants or plant material and the products derived from these plants that originated from a Yukon source or were imported from an outside source and grown in Yukon for no less than 51% of its life cycle or is a plant that continues to grow and be nurtured in Yukon for no less than one complete year.



Appendix: Yukon Agriculture Land Program

Policy Guide for Agriculture Land Development

The vision for the 2020 Yukon Agriculture Policy is to create the right conditions for a thriving agricultural industry to increase the territory's food self-sufficiency. This includes planning, developing, and protecting agriculture land to ensure it is available for agricultural production and is protected from loss.

To achieve this vision, the Government of Yukon commits to continuing to make new land available for producers to grow agricultural products. The Government of Yukon will also continue to work with producers to ensure agricultural land is primarily used for agricultural production.

The Government of Yukon will continue to make new farmland available through planned agriculture areas and spot land applications, and continue to apply land development procedures that consider industry needs, Yukon First Nations' rights, and public interests regarding environmental, economic and social values.

This section details the applicable agricultural land development policies in Yukon.



A) Agricultural Land Dispositions

Agriculture land dispositions release Crown Land to private individuals or companies for the purpose of agricultural production. Agricultural land is released through spot land or planned land offerings via various models, including:

- Fee simple tenure under a seven-year Agreement for Sale;
- Long-term up to 30-year leases; and
- Short-term lease tenures.

Land applicants are eligible as per *Land Regulations*.

The Government of Yukon will continue to:

- ensure agriculture land dispositions are made available in a fair and equitable manner;
- ensure all agriculture land dispositions are consistent with the provisions of the *Lands Act*, *Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act*, *Area Development Act*, and regulations made under them, as well as Government of Yukon policies;
- ensure that fee simple land dispositions for soil-based crop production are on land that has the agronomic capability to support agriculture;
- ensure leased land opportunities may be developed on both arable and non-arable lands;
- ensure land dispositions are an appropriate size to accommodate the intended use; and
- ensure Farm Development Plans justify the area of tenure.

A-1) Fee Simple Tenure

Individuals or companies that have a successful agricultural land application can be granted fee simple title to the land upon completion of the Agreement for Sale, which is signed by both the applicant and the Director of Agriculture. The Agreement for Sale outlines all the terms and conditions of the sale, which includes a Farm Development Agreement that details the land development items that must be completed within seven years. If the development is completed as per the Farm Development Agreement, then 100 per cent of the value of such development may be applied to the cost of the land.

The Government of Yukon will:

- investigate legislation that will prevent an applicant from reapplying for a period of time if they default on an Agriculture Agreement for Sale or an Agriculture Lease;
- uphold that an Agreement for Sale holder can hold only one Agreement for Sale at a time; and
- confirm applicants maintain Yukon residency for the duration of the Agreement for Sale.

A-2) Agriculture Lease Options

The Government of Yukon can develop lease agreements with individuals and companies for up to 30 years to provide options for agricultural production. Although to date the vast majority of agricultural land has been titled through fee simple tenure, demand is increasing for more flexibility in land tenure options, including agricultural land leases that allow for low-cost options for producers and also maintain the primary use of the land in agricultural production. Agricultural lease options are available for both planned agricultural areas and spot land applications.

The Government of Yukon will continue to:

- ensure agriculture leases are up to 30 years, with a possible extension of 30 years; and
- create agriculture leases for various types of innovative and conventional operations; for example market gardens, improved pasture, and hay lands.

A-3) Planned Agriculture Areas

The Government of Yukon began developing planned agriculture areas in 2010 to be proactive in designating areas for agricultural production. The Government of Yukon undertakes preliminary work, including identifying suitable land and preparing the lot for sale by submitting applications to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board; conducting surveys; and constructing access roads. There have been planned agricultural areas in Haines Junction, Ibex Valley, Mayo, Dawson, and ongoing developments in Yukon.

The Government of Yukon will continue to:

- assess applications in planned agriculture areas through the Agriculture Planned Land Application Review process ⁷;
- ensure planned lots are available for both soil-based and non-soil-based operations; and
- plan for agricultural subdivisions and infill lots in consultation with Yukon First Nations, transboundary Aboriginal groups, Renewable Resource Councils, communities, industry, planning authorities, existing land users, and the general public.

⁷ This process includes the submission of a Project Plan and Farm Development Business Plan that demonstrates the commercial viability of the farm operation.

A-4) Spot Land Applications

Agriculture spot land applications are available to individuals that have identified a parcel of land primarily suitable for agriculture production. Spot land applications for fee simple title must be soil-based activities (example: hay crop, market garden), while leases are an option for both soil- and non-soil-based agricultural activities. Eligible spot land must: be vacant and available; have arable soil (for title), reasonable access, and respect the minimum parcel size as per the *Development Area Regulations*. The maximum parcel size for fee simple title applications is 65 hectares.

The Government of Yukon will continue to:

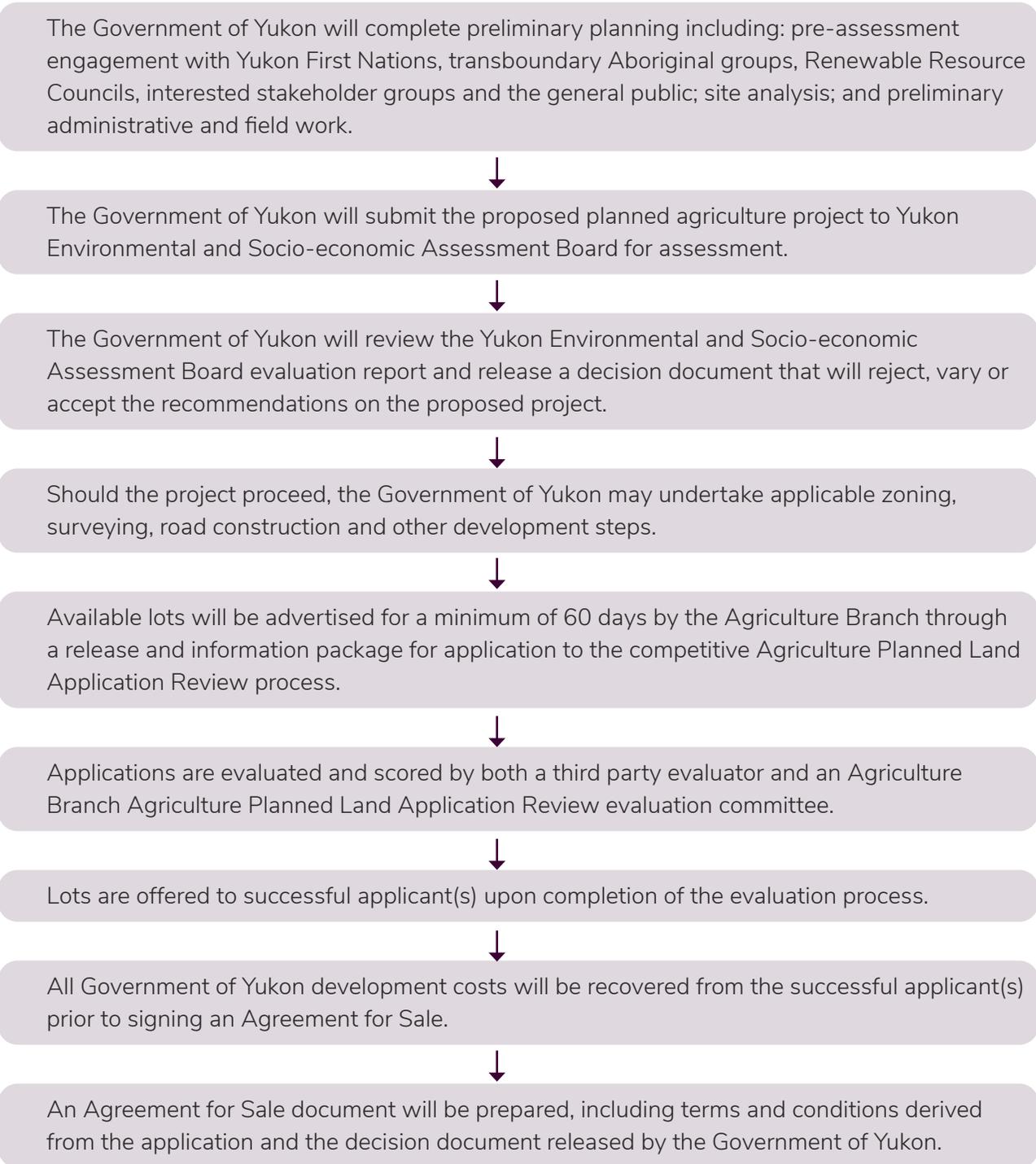
- ensure the spot land application process is available for commercially viable farm operations;
- ensure Yukon First Nations and transboundary Aboriginal groups are consulted during spot land applications;
- consider the agriculture industry's need for land, environmental impacts, other land use and resource interests, and other factors to determine whether the spot land disposition is in the public interest;
- maintain that agriculture lot expansions will be processed through the spot land application process. Agriculture lot expansions will only be considered in instances where the existing agricultural operation is at capacity and requires additional land to expand its business enterprise (i.e. when there is an operational need for more land);
- verify that both operational need and primary agriculture use are demonstrated in the spot land application;
- direct spot land applicants into planned agriculture areas when in proximity; and
- investigate the removal of the spot land application process from lands within completed Local Area Plans.



B) Agricultural Land Application and Review Process

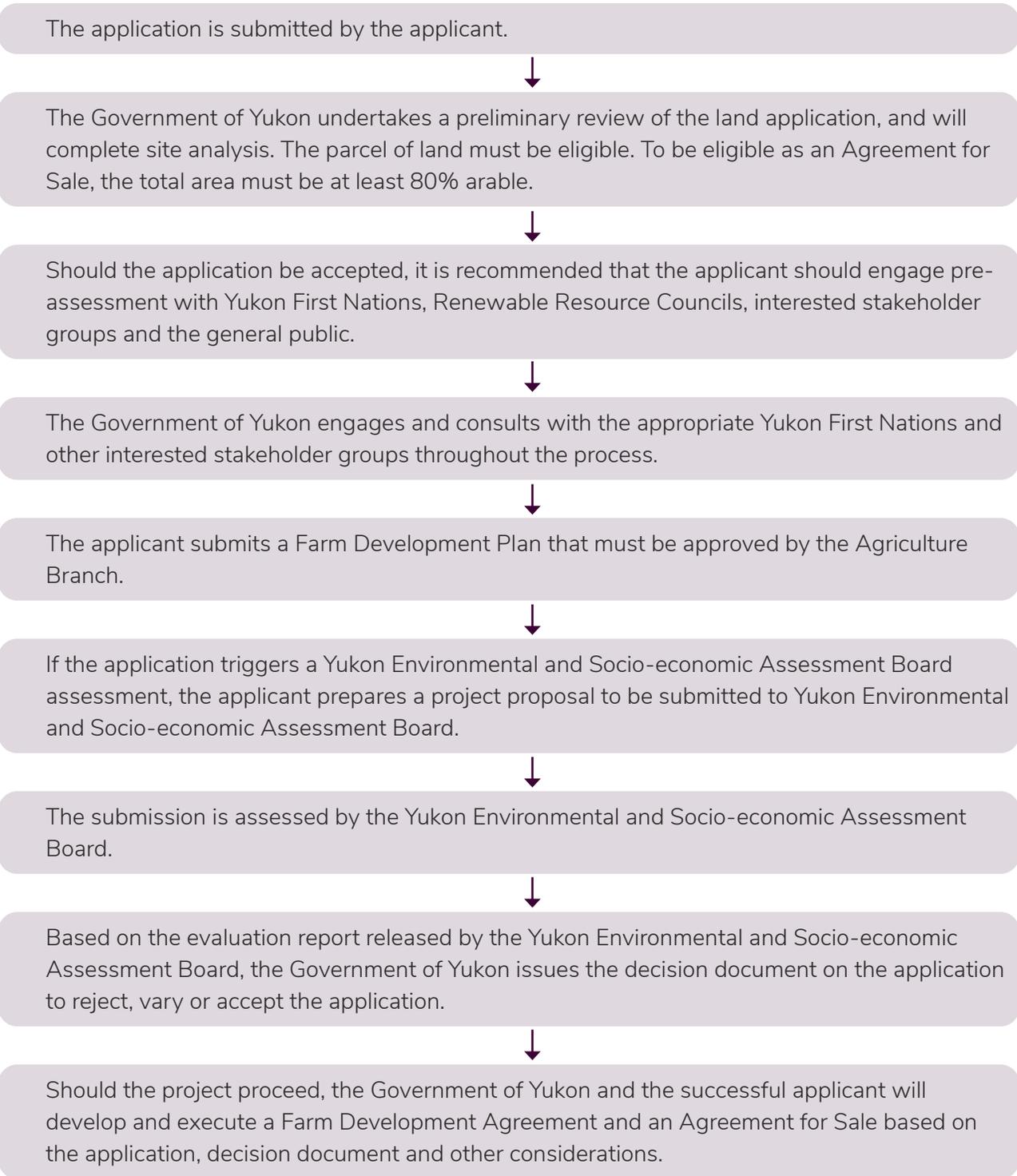
B-1) Planned Agriculture Areas

The agricultural planned land process includes the following components:



B-2) Spot Land Applications

The Spot Land Application process includes the following components:



In rare cases where a spot land application does not trigger a Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board assessment, a non-Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Act review is conducted by the Agriculture Branch. This review includes all consultation as described above, as well as a report that describes the project activities and any mitigations. A decision document is also issued that can include any terms and conditions to mitigate any potential adverse impacts that were identified through the review.

B-3) Land Pricing for Planned Land and Spot Land

The Government of Yukon is responsible for pricing agricultural land. The Government of Yukon will work within regulations to ensure agricultural land is priced in a manner that represents the fair market value of the developed land.

Planning, application review and fieldwork costs may be borne by the Government of Yukon. Other Government of Yukon development costs shall be recovered from the successful applicant. The following factors affect pricing, valuation, and taxation of land:

1. If the application review requires specialized studies or fieldwork (over and above what is normally done for spot land applications), these will be deemed development costs and will be payable by the applicant.
2. The cost of survey, if covered by the applicant, will be deducted from the appraised value to arrive at an adjusted land sale price for spot land applications. Surveys completed by the Government of Yukon are a development cost to be payable by the successful applicant.
3. The value of the land will be calculated in accordance with the applicable provisions as described in the *Lands Regulations*, that the Agriculture Branch may request amendment to as required.
4. The Government of Yukon establishes property tax rates in accordance with the *Assessment and Taxation Act*, and considers a property's primary use in the taxation process.



Accessory uses that may result in increased activities off the parcel may be subject to an environmental assessment, additional authorizations, and consultation with First Nations, stakeholders and the public.



B-4) Preparation of Agreement for Sale

An Agreement for Sale is the legal process used for fee simple titled agricultural lots. The Agreement for Sale includes the Farm Development Agreement based on the Project Plan for a lot released under Agriculture Planned Land Application Review, or a Farm Development Plan under spot land, and the decision document along with terms and conditions of the approval. Once the applicant has completed the conditions in the Agreement for Sale, they may apply for title. Applicants have up to seven years to complete the conditions in the Agreement for Sale.

Under spot land applications, the Farm Development Agreement may be adjusted during the Agreement for Sale period as required, with the consent of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Unlike spot land applications, development items in the Farm Development Agreement for planned agricultural land parcels cannot be amended for the reason that the lot was awarded based on the submitted Project Plan.

A Farm Development Agreement will include:

1. A commitment to carry out specific approved agricultural developments for the proposed project and all the development and production work that will be done to make the project operational.
 - a. For soil-based parcels, this will include, but not be limited to, a requirement that at least 60% of the parcel be cleared, broken, cultivated and seeded in a crop for human or animal consumption prior to title. The field development must be completed in line with the Agriculture Land Development Guidelines created by the Agriculture Branch.
 - b. In the specific case of game farms, the minimum clearing requirement may be adjusted to reflect the specific site conditions and operational needs of the Farm Development Plan. The clearing requirement may be replaced by the requirement for game fencing (fencing suitable to retain domesticated game animals within the property), as natural terrain may be more advantageous to domestic game animals than cleared fields.

- c. Additional agriculture development items which the Government of Yukon agrees to may be used to offset the cost of the land. This will include a statement of value detailing the cost of each part of the approved development for the purposes of offsetting the cost of the land. The applicant is able to offset the sale price of the land using a 1-for-1 development credit. This means for every dollar of approved development work completed, up to one dollar of the difference between the land sale price and the Government of Yukon development cost may be forgiven. No portion of the Government of Yukon development costs can be paid through development credit. Capital improvements deemed necessary to the successful operation of the farm enterprise and counted towards approved development work in a Farm Development Agreement may include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Field development (see Agriculture Land Development Guidelines)
 - ii. Fencing
 - iii. Clearing for farmyard sites, shelterbelts, and driveways
 - iv. Shelter belts
 - v. Farm buildings
 - vi. Drainage and irrigation systems
 - vii. 20% of the value of the farm house, up to a limit of \$20,000
 - viii. Other relevant capital expenditures may be considered but do not include farm implements and equipment.
2. A detailed description of all the conditions that must be met before title is granted or equity is earned in the property.
3. The identification of penalties that will apply in cases where applicants do not meet all the conditions of their Farm Development Agreement. Penalties may include the loss of the Agreement for Sale or penalty fees.



B-5) Inspection and Enforcement

Agricultural parcels under Agreement for Sale or lease will be regularly inspected and monitored to ensure compliance with the Farm Development Agreement and compliance with the terms and conditions of the Agreement for Sale or lease.

Requests for time extensions on Agreements for Sale shall be made in writing by the Agreement for Sale holder and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Agriculture Branch.

Remedies under the *Lands Act* may be taken against agreement holders who do not fulfill the terms of their Agreements for Sale.

B-6) Accessory Agricultural Land Uses

Agricultural land is primarily to be used for agricultural activities. However, accessory activities for the purpose of diversifying farm income will be allowed on agricultural parcels, subject to the following conditions:

- primary agriculture use is established prior to an application for a permit for secondary, accessory, or ancillary uses;
- terms and conditions of the Agreement for Sale are followed;
- accessory activities are consistent with the existing laws, *Development Area Regulations*, and local area plans or regional land use plans or both that apply to the parcel;
- accessory activities cannot interfere with the agriculture use of the parcel or supersede the primary use of the parcel;
- accessory uses must not result in unreasonable negative social, economic or environmental impacts to the surrounding area or adjacent parcels; and
- leases will state what secondary or accessory activities are permitted under the lease.

B-7) Subdivision of Agricultural Parcels

The subdivision of agriculture parcels is regulated by the *Subdivision Act*, the *Subdivision Regulation*, *Development Area Regulations* and municipal bylaws, which outline the following guidelines:

- one-time subdivision of agricultural parcels may be permitted where a farm operator has owned the land for a minimum of 10 years and has demonstrated primary agriculture use;
- subdivided agricultural parcels must remain zoned and identified as agriculture land;
- the size of the resulting parcels must meet the requirements set out in Local Area Plans and the *Development Area Regulations*;
- subdivision applies to titled lots only;
- neither parcel will be allowed to be subdivided again;
- boundary realignments and lot expansions will not remove the future subdivision opportunity nor reset the time that the farmer must own the land;
- a public benefit subdivision under the *Subdivision Act*, where the reconfiguration is determined to be in the public benefit, does not remove the future subdivision opportunity;
- resulting reconfiguration of the parcels must not impair requirements for access or the ongoing agricultural use of the parcels; and
- when a subdivision of agricultural land occurs for the purpose of creating a surveyed road right of way or public utility that is for public use; the new subdivided portion of the lot will be transferred to the Government of Yukon.

For more information please
contact the Agriculture Branch:

867-667-5838

agriculture@gov.yk.ca

