Agritourism as a Solution to Rural Revitalization?:
A Case Study of North Durham Region

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A Thesis
presented to
The University of Guelph

In partial fulfilment of requirements
for the degree of
Master of Science
in
Rural Planning and Development

Guelph, Ontario, Canada
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ABSTRACT

AGRITOURISM AS A SOLUTION TO RURAL REVITALIZATION?:
A CASE STUDY OF NORTH DURHAM REGION

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The agricultural industry has a long-standing history as a successful cornerstone in Ontario. This historical prevalence stands true for the Regional Municipality of Durham’s three northern townships: Brock, Scugog, and Uxbridge. Agriculture is a driving force within the three township’s economies. Over the last three decades, agricultural production in Ontario’s rural townships have been negatively impacted by vertical integration, globalization, and the intensification of land-based activities. This research examines the role of agritourism as a solution to revitalizing the agricultural sector in north Durham region. This study utilized in-depth interviews with farm operators who have diversified their farming practices to understand these questions; the motivations to diversify farms through agritourism, how agritourism assists farming businesses, and strategies to implement agritourism into their current practices. This research is imperative to ensure farms are able to remain economically competitive against the pressures of urbanization and changing global markets.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to everyone who supported me in my academic journey, whether throughout my undergraduate degree or my masters, each and every one of you helped me find the path I am on today and for that I am forever grateful.

A momentous thank you to my advisor Dr. Ryan Gibson. Your guidance and support throughout the last two years of my master’s degree has been nothing short of incredible. Thank you for making this experience fun and exciting and teaching me to see the bigger, “real life” picture behind my research, it has helped shape me into the Rural Planner that I am today. I would also like to thank Dr. Wayne Caldwell for being an integral part of my advisory committee.

To my boyfriend Robert, who might know just as much about agritourism in north Durham as I do. Thank you for always listening to me and knowing the right thing to say to encourage and support me over the last two years, it meant more then you know. To my parents and brother, thank you for the continuous love and support and teaching me throughout my life that I can do anything I put my mind to. Also thank you for constantly sending photos of our dog Sophie and spending hours on Facetime whenever I needed, it is forever appreciated.

I’m incredibly thankful that I had someone to go through the experience of academia with. Emily, thank you for supporting me by listening, giving me the best advice, and believing in me and my abilities as an academic. Your ability to make me laugh through tagging me in the most sarcastic yet accurate memes never ceased to amaze me, thank you.

Finally, thank you to the individuals in north Durham who took the time to participate in my research study, without you none of this would have been possible. I hope your passion for farming, agritourism, and the agriculture sector never fades.
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List of Abbreviations

CA: Census Agglomeration

CAHRC: Canadian Agriculture Human Resource Council

CMA: Census Metropolitan Area

CSA: Community Supported Agriculture

DRWAA: Durham Region’s Workforce Authority Analysis

GTA: Greater Toronto Area

MMA: Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs

NAICS: North American Industry Classification System

NFU: National Farmers Union

OFFMA: Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association

OFA: Ontario Federation of Agriculture

OMAFRA: Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

PEI: Prince Edward Island

USMCA: United States Mexico and Canada Agreement
1.0 Introduction

Rural Canada offers a variety of tourist attractions. The socio-economic shift occurring in rural areas from industries centered on predominately selling and exporting primary resource-based goods and services (i.e., farming, fishing, mining, and forestry) to industries focused on experience-based and service-oriented economies is impacting the character of rural areas and people (Brookfield, 2008; Busby & Rendle, 2000). Many rural communities in Canada have successfully developed their local and regional attributes to attract tourists and, in turn, this has created employment opportunities, reduced dependency on primary industries, and begun to aid in revitalizing rural communities. In the agriculture sector, rural tourism is marketed as an alternative economic development strategy that will aid farm operators in overcoming the negative impacts caused by decades of urbanization, changing global markets, and globalization in rural communities (Schilling et al., 2014; Veeck et al., 2016).

An increased interest in experience-based and service-oriented economies can be traced to individuals having the desire for sustainable, environmentally-conscious day trips and holidays, while wanting to experience authenticity through travel, even within their own community (Tew & Barbieri, 2012; Timothy, 2005). This interest can also stem from individuals wanting to have experiences that allow them to participate in a hands-on rural experience rather than learning through a hands-off experience such as reading about a subject. As Ontario becomes more urbanized the connection to rural communities weakens and small-scale family farms will decline, along with urbanized communities’ connection to a rural lifestyle. Even so, many Ontarians have continued to have a deeply-rooted agrarian sentiment connecting them with a certain mystique and romantic impression of rural communities and their inhabitants (Bunce, 2003). At the core of this sentiment is nostalgia for the iconic small-scale family farm; yet, such farms are struggling to be efficient and practical production operations because of advances in modern agriculture.

Despite these conditions, there is an increased desire by urban residents to visit small-scale family farms and rural communities as a tourist destination as there is a concern that rural communities and small-scale family farms are in jeopardy of disappearing. Individuals who live in urban communities often want to escape the hustle and bustle of the city, be with family, connect to their natural and cultural heritage, and be in an environmental setting to enjoy an
authentic leisure experience (Che et al., 2005; Experience Renewal Solutions, 2009; Sznajder et al., 2009). Additionally, as local food production and distribution becomes a concern, parents, educators, and farmers want younger generations to know where their food comes from and the implications if those food sources were to disappear (Sznajder et al., 2009). Concerns over food sovereignty have also created the conscientious consumer who wants to re-connect with farmers and rural communities (Che et al., 2005). Tremendous concern also revolves around the stress and uncertainty within small-scale family farming operations and rural communities, threatening the future of the agriculture sector in Ontario. The major concerns are the replacement of the family farm with corporate farms, financial barriers prohibiting young people from entering farming, increasing regulation burden on farms, the loss of farming and farmland, and a lack of understanding about the importance of agriculture and the benefit it holds for society (Martz & Brueckner, 2003). A specific rural tourism niche, commonly referred to as agritourism, is growing in popularity and may aid in helping the small-scale family farm persevere through times of economic uncertainty. Agritourism may also be able to revitalize rural communities, as it offers nostalgic rural experiences and connectivity to farming and rural communities which is currently desirable and sought after by people living in urban areas (Che, 2010; Sznajder et al., 2009).

Agritourism effectively incorporates both rural development strategies and farm diversification because it uniquely lies at the interface of productive and consumptive uses. Agritourism is defined as “the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation” (Kelly, 2016, p. 4). Ultimately, diversification through agritourism allows small-scale family farmers to participate in and capitalize on the changing rural dynamic through the provision of alternative consumption and recreation activities that are aligned with the expectations of city dwellers (Barbieri, 2010). Agritourism aligns with rural tourism, specifically food or culinary tourism strategies, because small-scale family farms serve a dual purpose as a site of food production and tourism experiences. Within the literature, agritourism is commonly seen through the lens of farm diversification as one of many activities that farmers use to supplement agricultural income due to an inability or unwillingness to compete within a production-driven global commodity market (Barbieri et al., 2008). A less common rural development lens is also implied in terms of benefits to the community and the
importance of networking (Busby & Rendle, 2000; Schilling et al., 2014). Additionally, an analysis of the benefits sought by agritourism consumers, and the goals and services provided by agritourism operations, links directly to neo-endogenous development objectives and strategies, which will ultimately aid in rural revitalization.

1.1 Problem Statement

In their 2012 research study, Tew and Barbieri found that as global markets continuously change and urbanization increases, small-scale family farm operations in central rural Ontario are confronted with declining profitability. Declining profitability has made it common for farm operators to be faced with having to choose from expanding their off-farm employment to supplement household earnings, closing their farming operation permanently, or developing diversification techniques to create a supplementary income that will allow them to maintain their farming operation. Diversifying through implementing agritourism practices into farming operations can provide the supplemental income necessary to allow for the preservation of small-scale family farming operations and indirectly, rural communities. Agritourism operations will also allow local residents and tourists to experience direct contact and interaction with agriculture and natural resources, which promotes education and a better understanding and appreciation for the working landscapes that aid in maintaining natural resources. This research is thus significant to the agriculture section in Ontario because it aims to determine how agritourism can be used successfully as a diversification technique to revitalize the rural sector in north Durham region.

1.2 Research Questions and Objectives

This research addresses three main questions aim to determine why farm operations have diversified, how diversifying has helped the farm operation, and what the local and/or regional government is doing to support farming operations that want to diversify through agritourism. The research questions are as follows:

1. What was the motivation for farm operators to diversify their farm operation?
2. How has diversifying through agritourism contributed to the economics of the farm operations?
3. What are the opinions of farm operators regarding local and/or regional government strategies for supporting for agritourism operations?

In addressing the research questions three primary objectives will be fulfilled:

1. to assess how farm operators are utilizing agritourism as a diversification strategy in the rural townships of Brock, Scugog, and Uxbridge, Ontario;

2. to understand what strategies the municipal government is implementing to encourage and aid farmers that have diversified their farming strategies through the use of agritourism; and, finally,

3. to explore if agritourism diversification will assist in revitalizing the townships of Brock, Scugog, and Uxbridge.

1.3 Organization of Thesis

This thesis is organized into six chapters. The first chapter introduces the research, the research objectives and questions, and the significance of the research through exploring problems encountered by small-scale family farms. The second chapter provides a background to agritourism through a literature review. The literature review provides a historical and contextual background on diversification through the use of agritourism across Ontario, the United States, and in Europe. The literature review also explores the history of the small-scale family farm as well as some of the challenges and benefits of diversification through agritourism. Insight is also provided on characteristics of the stereotypical agritourism consumer.

The third chapter of this thesis focuses on the research methods employed. This chapter describes the methods used to collect the data, how the data was analyzed, and how the study area was identified. Chapter 3 also describes the ethics approval given to this research and the limitations encountered. In Chapter 4 the findings of the research are presented. This chapter categorizes and organizes the data that was collected. Chapter 4 presents the analysis of the data collected for the three objectives: why farming operations diversified, how agritourism has aided their farming operation, and what the local and regional governments are doing to help farm operators diversify through the use of agritourism.
Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the findings that were presented in the previous chapter of this thesis. This chapter also highlights the implications that the findings from this research will have on the agricultural community in Ontario, more specifically north Durham region. This thesis concludes with Chapter 6, which provides a summary of the research and determines future research areas that need to be explored in regard to agritourism.
2.0 Literature Review

Small-scale family farms in central rural Ontario are challenged to remain economically viable against the pressures of urbanization and changing global markets. Other prominent factors to consider are the effects of larger commercial operations, small-scale family farms’ lack of variability, and the inability to compete in a global market, if the farm operator so desires. This literature review utilizes peer-reviewed academic journals and research conducted by national and international organizations to analyze the fundamental changes that family farms in Ontario faced between 1991-2018. Small-scale family farms were forced to restructure their businesses in 1991 to remain viable against the increased pressures of globalization that manifested after the war (Mittelman, 2000).

The literature examined was published in English and is predominately written by authors in North America, with the exception of one Western European journal article that illustrates what the effects agritourism have once it has been well integrated into a community’s agriculture sector. Using non-Canadian and Ontario literature allows for the review to be well-rounded as it will use and compare different statistics and strategies that worked, with the intention that those strategies can eventually be adapted to Ontario. The debate in the literature reveals that rural societies and family farms in Ontario have been impacted over the last several decades by social, economic, and climate-oriented issues. Based on 1991 data from the World Bank, farm operators have been continuously confronted with declining profitability (Tew & Barbieri, 2012). This means farm operators are commonly faced with the dilemma of having to choose between closing their business permanently, expanding off-farm employment to supplement household earnings, or developing alternative agricultural enterprises.

2.1 The Changing Dynamics of Farming

2.1.1 Rural Regions in Ontario

As of 2010, Statistics Canada implemented a new departmental standard that categorizes the inhabitation of land across Canada: ‘population centers’ and ‘rural area classification’. These two categories work in tandem to describe population densities (Statistics Canada, 2016). A population center is defined as an area with a population of at least 1,000 and a density of 400 or more people per square kilometer (Statistics Canada, 2016). Population centers can be used to
define either rural or urban communities, as they have been divided into three groups based on
the size of their population as this will reflect the existence of an urban-rural continuum. Small
population centers have a population of between 1,000 and 29,999, medium population centers
have a population of 30,000 to 99,999, and large urban population centers have a population of
100,000 individuals and over (Statistics Canada, 2016). While other definitions do exist within
the context of Ontario, the concept of small population centers best encapsulates the study of the
urban-rural landscape that is analyzed within this research. In contrast, rural area classification
areas include all the territory lying outside population centers. Rural area classifications include
the population living in rural areas of census metropolitan areas (CMAs)\(^1\) and census
agglomerations (CAs)\(^2\), as well as the population living in rural areas outside CMAs and CAs
(Statistics Canada, 2016). Taken together, population centers and rural areas cover all of Canada.

Ultimately, rural regions are characterized by their predominating involvement in the
natural resource-based sector, unlike their urban counterpart. The natural resource sector
operates in rural spaces and uses the environment to produce goods and services, an example
being the mining and forestry sector. Bollman (2011, p. 3) stated in an interview with FARETalk
Ontario that “there’s an important difference between the landscape and the people scape”.
Bollman (2011) argued that individuals often view agricultural land as strictly representative of
farming, when there are mining and forestry industries that operate within the same agricultural
realm. Therefore, it is important not to stereotype agricultural land because the land does not
dictate the individual that may be residing or operating a business on it. Thus, as other industries
such as mining and forestry in the natural resource-based sector begin to develop and grow, the
landscape will look the same but the people scape will be vastly different (Bollman, 2011).

In Ontario, the agricultural sector is comprised of growing crops, raising animals, and
harvesting fish and other animals from a farm, ranch, or their natural habitats (Experience
Renewal Solutions, 2009). The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
(OMAFRA) uses the definition sustainable agriculture when referring to agricultural practices;
sustainable agriculture is "the efficient production of safe, high-quality agricultural product, in a

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\(^1\) CMA: An area consisting of one or more neighboring municipalities situated around a core. A census metropolitan area must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more live in the core.

\(^2\) CA: Comprises one or more adjacent census subdivisions that has a core population of 10,000 or greater. It is eligible for classification as a census metropolitan area once it reaches a population of 100,000.
way that protects and improves the natural environment, the social and economic conditions of the farmers, their employees and local communities, and safeguards the health and welfare of all farmed species” (Statistics Canada, 2019c, p. 3). The word sustainable in this definition captures OMAFRA’s goal for the agricultural and natural resource-based sector to produce goods and services in a manner that produces high quality goods and services while protecting the environment (Mailvaganam, 2017). This definition indicates the importance of protecting the environment Ontarians use to produce their food, a factor that was often overlooked in previous OMAFRA definitions of agriculture.

The agriculture sector reaches every corner of Ontario and provides jobs to a diverse array of Ontarians. In 2018, 18.59% of Canadians lived in a rural community as defined by the rural and small-town Canada definition, which leaves 81.41% of Canadians living in urban areas (Macro Trends, 2019). With a majority of the population living in urban communities, provincial land-use and development policies have become urban oriented as they often only reflect what is in the interest of urban communities, an example being to increasing intensification the Greater Golden Horseshoe through A Place to Grow Act.

The majority of land in rural communities remains unsettled on or has a low-population density (Marsden, 1998). There are economic development opportunities in rural Ontario that are not being utilized because improvements need to be made to certain aspects of rural communities. The aspects that may improve economic development opportunities include, but are not limited to: development of the tourism sector, improvement in broadband capacity, and improving and developing transportation methods in rural communities. If the economic development opportunities in rural Ontario were recognized and developed through these aspects it could essentially increase the population in those communities. Thus, more homes would be built on uninhabited land which would aid Ontario’s increasing population, and more individuals could purchase goods and service from small-scale family farms and businesses. Therefore, the total gross income of rural Ontario businesses could increase as more people would be frequenting their stores; this money could then go back into improving the community for its inhabitants. However, in order to recognize the opportunities that rural Ontario could provide there must be a distinction made in the differences between rural and urban areas in Ontario.
2.1.2 Family Farms and Land Ownership

The basis of family farming is ownership of the land. Land ownership has a dual purpose for individuals who are operating businesses within the agricultural sector. The first purpose is during the farmer’s lifetime, as owning land allows the individual to operate their own agricultural business with the hopes to generate a sustainable gross income; however, that is not always the case (Martz & Brueckner, 2003). The second purpose is upon death or retirement, as the land will be an asset for when the farmer retires, or if it is distributed to other family members as an inheritance (Martz & Brueckner, 2003). Farm families continue to persist in rural Ontario because these families are indebted to the soil where they derive their livelihood; this also further ties them to the land on which they farm. In their study of Canadian farm families, Martz and Brueckner (2003) noted that, on average, respondents owned 58% of the land they farm, and the remainder of the land was rented to other local farmers in order to generate income to sustain their own agricultural operation. Their study also found that owned land and rented land are viewed differently by the farm family because “while owned land is part of the capital base of the farm and the heritage of the farm family, the negotiation of land rental and lease agreements are shorter term production decisions” (Martz & Brueckner, 2003, p. 5). However, in 2011, 42% of Canadian farmland was on the rental market; this percentage is relatively consistent across all Canadian provinces as farmers are negotiating rental agreements to supplement their income (Nadella, 2013).

In 2016, the National Farmers Union (NFU) determined that owned land is fundamental to the success of the agricultural sector in Ontario. Whomever owns, controls, and determines the use of the farmland property determines the viability of the farm operation’s success or failure. In order to protect family farm operations and land ownership rights in Ontario, the provincial and federal government, as well as farm operators in Canada, must have a clear understanding of what constitutes a family farm. The NFU (2016, p. 3) endorses the definition that “a family farm is an operation that produces food or other agricultural products and where the vast majority of labour, capital, and management are provided by family members.” In other terms, Statistics Canada defines family farming as “farm operators (i.e., individuals involved in the day-to-day management decisions in operating a census farm) as well as the individuals in their households who make decisions for the farming operation” (Statistics Canada, 2019a, p. 4). A census farm
refers to a farm, ranch or other agricultural operation that produces an agricultural good or service for the intention of sale (Statistics Canada, 2019a, p.4). These two definitions of family farming are different in that the NFU uses a labor-intensive definition that focuses on production, capital and management, whereas the Statistics Canada definition strictly focuses on management decisions, and who has the authority to make those choices for the family farm operation.

In order to protect family farm operations, the NFU recommends that the Government of Ontario enact a unified set of land ownership restrictions wherein farmland can only be owned by individuals who reside in the province of Ontario (NFU, 2016). The NFU also suggests that the provincial government needs to annually monitor and publicly report changes on foreign and domestic ownership and control of farmland within its boundaries (NFU, 2016). This will allow Ontario’s provincial government to determine who the primary owners of agricultural land are in Ontario, domestic or foreign residents. Finally, to protect ownership rights for family farm operations, the NFU has stated that Ontario should legislate a maximum size of land holdings per individual, incorporated family and cooperative farm, and per corporation; however, such actions have had mixed results in Prince Edward Island (PEI) (NFU, 2016).

Under PEI’s Land Protection Act that was introduced in the 1980s, limits were set on land ownership of 1,000 acres for individuals, and 3,000 acres for corporations (Spencer, 2019). Those limits have nearly doubled since then, with allowances for leased land and non-arable land to 1,900 acres for individuals and 5,700 acres for corporations (Spencer, 2019). Therefore, to ensure that individuals are still able to purchase, maintain, and sustain a business on their limited number of acres there needs to be a provision introduced that addresses the initial land-grabbing issue and the accumulation of large amounts of land by existing corporations (Spencer, 2019). A downside to PEI’s policy model is that corporations have found loopholes in the Land Protection Act that allows them to purchase more land under different corporation names; because they have more financial resources than family farms in PEI, they are able to purchase more land (Spencer, 2019). This ultimately means that corporations world-wide will be able to purchase land in PEI, thus the local economy will suffer.
One structural economy difference between Ontario and PEI is that PEI is considerably smaller in geographic size and has different connections to the agricultural market. This difference needs to be considered when making the comparison between the two provinces because there may be more or fewer individuals interested in buying the available land. Therefore, if the same provisions are introduced within the context of Ontario there needs to be more limits on the ability for corporations to purchase land, such as corporations are not allowed to buy land under different fund corporations (Spencer, 2019). Farmers are more likely to invest in and preserve land that they own and where they have control over the acreages that they rent. Ties to the land through ownership also enable farmers to create new and innovative businesses in order to preserve the farm’s legacy (Fuller, 1990). Land ownership is fundamentally important to the structure and dynamics of family farming operations in Ontario; without control over a majority of the land, family farm operations would cease to exist.

2.1.3 The Changing Family Farm in Ontario

Across rural regions in Ontario, the relationship between family farming and the rural communities they reside in is closely intertwined. During the 20th century, family farming served as the primary engine of rural economies and largely defined what it meant to be a rural region (Fuller, 1990; Smithers & Joseph, 1999). The rural regions that family farms reside in provides the economic and social infrastructure that family farm operators need in order to support their agricultural operations, as well as sustaining their households. Thus, there exists not only a sense of shared progress between rural regions and the individuals that reside there but there is also a tangible interdependency that formed a foundation for mutually supportive interactions in rural communities (Smithers & Joseph, 1999). In turn, farmers focus much of their economic and social life towards the agricultural sector and their family farm.

Since the 21st century, however, both family farming and rural communities in Ontario are changing in response to the impacts of vertical integration, globalization, and the intensification of land-based activities (Milone, 2001). Vertical integration is the process of one company acquiring another company that operates in the production process of the same industry. A prime example of vertical integration in Ontario’s agricultural sector is larger agricultural corporations buying out small-scale farming operations to strengthening their supply
chain, reducing production costs, capturing upstream or downstream profits, or accessing new distribution channels. Larger agricultural corporations seldom produce more than two or three different crops and do virtually everything by using heavy machinery. They also usually sell their goods and services in wholesale markets either locally or globally, by the truck or rail carload. Based on these negative impacts, the once common and well understood connection between family farms and their community is facing a changing dynamic in terms of how family farming operations are run. In terms of farming, Marsden (1998) documented a shift from traditional to more industrialized form of farming. The once traditional way of farming has been replaced by a high degree of mechanization and intensification where capital and technology and other purchased inputs have been substituted for labour (Busby & Rendle, 2000; Marsden, 1998). Increased mechanization and intensification are more economically feasible and allows smaller family farms to compete on a global market. However, this impairs the relationship that family farm has with their community as they no longer need to depend on their community to sell their goods and services. There are also fewer people involved in agriculture, which decreases the number of people living in rural areas, and which then has a ripple effect on rural areas - for example: fewer young people, sports teams, and number of volunteer fire fighters.

The geography of commodity marketing and input procurement for family farms has fundamentally altered because, in Canada, there is no distinction that is consistently drawn between franchising and other forms of distribution in the agricultural sector (Blair & Lafontaine, 2005). Larger farming corporations often have an increased link with agribusiness, governmental policies and programs, and financial institutions for their market and inputs, something that small-scale family farms do not often have. Larger farming corporations have this connection because they have more resources and finances than smaller scale farms. This has caused many family farms to shift away from a community-based focus and dependency to now depend on places of exchange and service provision outside their community, which is causing their rural communities’ economy to decline (Mendoza, 2008).

The community side of the stereotypical Ontarian family farm system has also seen a drastic change in terms of pace and scope. Rural regions serve functions and supply services that extend well beyond agriculture and food production; now farms often have to incorporate a form of tourism into their business. The results in a ‘new’ rural economy that may see agriculture
representing one of many economic activities, where the preeminence of farming as the foundation of the rural economy is no longer assured (Tew & Barbieri, 2012). Thus, family farm owners in central rural Ontario are struggling to remain economically viable against the pressures of urbanization and changing global markets. An anticipated impact on Ontario farmers may emerge through the new trade agreement replacing the North American Free Trade Agreement known as the United States Mexico and Canada Agreement (USMCA). Previously there were strong restrictions (quotas) and tariffs on imported agricultural products; these restrictions will be loosened by the USMCA (Rubina, 2018). For example, dairy products will be affected as consumers will be able to substitute Ontario dairy products for cheaper foreign goods which will drive down the income of Ontario farmers (Rubina, 2018). Farm operators are commonly faced with the dilemma of having to adapt their business plans to remain economically viable in a constantly changing agricultural sector.

OMAFRA has determined that census farms, also defined as family farms, have seen a drastic decrease in total number and acres in Ontario since 1996. In 1996, Ontario had 67,520 family-owned and operated farms. In 2016, the most recent Census of Agriculture, Ontario had approximately 52,000 family-owned and operated farms, which is a decrease of 4.5% since the previous census in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2019c). In terms of acreage, Ontario family farms have seen a decrease in total acreage since 1996 where there were 13,879 acres in use, in comparison to 12,348 acres in 2016 (Staciwa, 2017), which is a decrease of 1,531 acres. The decrease in both the acreage and number of census farms can be contributed to the pressures of urbanization and changing global markets, larger commercial operations, small-scale family farms’ lack of variability, and the inability to compete in a global market. Thus, to sustain the current number of small-scale family farms, local, regional, and provincial governments need to implement policies that are going to aid farmers in diversifying their farming operations.

2.1.4 Factors that Impact the Profitability of Family Farms in Ontario

Farming is one of the oldest professions in Ontario. Family farms were once at the heart and soul of local rural communities and they created a total gross income sufficient enough to support the average size family of 5-7 individuals (Fuller, 1990). Until the mid-20th century, many rural communities throughout Ontario grew and prospered based on strong relationships forged between local farm families and the surrounding communities (McCann et al., 1997).
However, farmers have had to diversify their farming techniques in order to be able to compete in a complex, continuously changing economic environment.

A contributing factor to a changing economic environment in the agriculture sector is climate change. Despite agricultural producers’ propensity to adapt to changing climate conditions, the earth’s changing climate is anticipated to impact agriculture on a much larger scale than prior to 2014 (Donahue, 2014). The agriculture sector is highly dependent on the climate; in order to produce adequate crops for farmers to be able to sustain themselves, nutrient levels, soil moisture, water availability, and other conditions must work harmoniously with one another. In order to sustain themselves, farmers must sell 70% of their goods and services; however, this may not happen because of the changes in the frequency and severity of droughts and floods that pose challenges for small-scale family farmers’ ability to produce their crop (Donahue, 2014). The changing climate that Ontario’s small-scale family farmers face makes it difficult to grow crops and raise livestock. Thus, farmers are also not able to ensure their output production levels because of climate change, which impacts the rates that farmers can sell their goods and services, making their total gross income unpredictable.

With the agriculture industry becoming more unpredictable, insurance premiums will increase as the basic function of insurance is the higher the risk, the higher the premiums and climate change has made working in the agriculture sector risky. In order to comprehend the effects of climate change on the agriculture sector it is also important to consider other evolving factors that affect agriculture production. These factors include but are not limited to technology, government policies, labour shortages, new and emerging markets, and globalization.

A growing demand for labour and a shrinking supply of domestic workers will increase Ontario’s labour gap, with the greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture industry being impacted the most (CAHRC, 2015). The demand for agricultural workers in Ontario is expected to grow by an average of 0.9% per year over the next 10 years, rising from 112,000 workers in 2014 to 124,000 by 2025 (CAHRC, 2015). This growth rate is nearly double the national average of 0.5%. While the demand for labour will rise, the supply of domestic workers is predicted to shrink, with 6,300 fewer Canadian residents available to work in Ontario’s agriculture sector by 2025, as illustrated in Figure 1 (CAHRC, 2015). This means that over the next decade, the number of jobs that cannot be filled with domestic labour will increase by 4.5% per year, rising from 28,700 to
46,600 (CAHRC, 2015). That number is equivalent to 38% of the total workforce required to support the agricultural industry. In other words, within 10 years, more than one in three jobs in Ontario will remain vacant until domestic or foreign workers can be found. If the agriculture sector does not have enough farmers, foreign or domestic, to sustain the industry then, economically, the agriculture sector will continuously change as the influx of workers increases and decreases (CAHRC, 2015). It is due to the unpredictability of climate change and the labour shortage in the agriculture sector that small-scale family farmers have had to transition into modern, industrial practices heavily dependent on mechanization, specialization and cheap labour (Donahue, 2014). This transition is hindering the small-scale family farm.

Small-scale family farms are agricultural operations that produce crops and livestock on a small-piece of land without using advanced and expensive technologies (Fuller, 1990). Though the definition of size of these farms is a source of debate, it can be argued that farming on family owned land, on Indigenous lands, and smallholdings in urban areas fall in this category (Ainley, 2014). This type of farming is also characterized by intensive labor and limited use of agrochemicals and supply to the local or surrounding markets (Ainley, 2014). Unlike large-scale commercial agriculture.
Throughout his research Fuller (1990) determined that family farmers make business and operational decisions based on whether it will improve their wellbeing or utility; this has not changed in the past 30 years. More specifically, farmers in Ontario pursue activities that increase their income, reduce labour requirements, decrease their financial and physical risks, and are conveniently implemented into their current operations business plan (Fuller, 1990). However, a variety of constraints play into farmers’ decisions, including but not limited to available production technologies, biophysical or geophysical limitations, labour and input market restrictions, lack of financial and credit opportunities, and policy and regulation constraints (McCann et al., 1997).

Family farms across Ontario adapt technology to manage their farming operation. Technology adoption illustrates that different variables across Ontario farms and are based on sources of heterogeneity which force farmers to adapt the technologies with which they maintain their operation. The different variables may include the geographical location of the farming operation, types of crops the farm can grow, and the resources that the farmer has to maintain his operation. Technology adaptation influences farmers’ choices about what crops to grow, what types of technology to use, and how to manage their land. Just as individual consumers have
different preferences about products they consume, asset endowments, risk preferences, farmer characteristics, and intertemporal considerations affect their choices (Knowler & Bradshaw, 2007). Farmer attitudes, resource availability, and knowledge and education are essential as farmers may be risk-averse toward making changes in cropping decisions or adopting new agricultural practices or might have very conservative attitudes toward technology or lower or higher levels of concern for the natural environment. A farmer’s resource base or total gross income and the ability to obtain credit will also influence the farmer’s choice of crops, farming systems, and willingness to invest in new crops, systems, or technologies (Knowler & Bradshaw, 2007; McCann et al., 1997).

Family farmers are often more risk-averse or face credit and income constraints because of the changing economic environment that the agriculture sector faces due to the labour gap in agriculture workers and climate change. These constraints are often the norm for family farmers rather than the exception. They may also cause farmers to be less likely to adopt new technologies, even if they are likely to reduce susceptibility to risk or increase productivity or income over the long-run (Suess-Reyes & Fuetsch, 2016). It is difficult for family farms to obtain proper training on the benefits of the new technologies as they often cannot take the time away from running the business. Therefore, lack of knowledge and information about the costs, benefits, and implementation of adopting new technologies or conservation practices will also affect a farmer’s propensity to adopt them (Suess-Reyes & Fuetsch, 2016). Even if farmers have full information and can implement new technologies efficiently and at a low cost, differences in intertemporal preferences or credit constraints may mean that farmers are unwilling to sacrifice current profits or income for long-term improvements in soil fertility, risk-reductions, or improved yields.

Biological, geophysical, and market conditions are important variables that also influence farmer decision-making and adoption of land use practices or technologies. These factors include but are not limited to water availability, soil fertility, and risks of floods, droughts, frost, or pest or weed infestations; the importance of each of these factors varies with the types of crops planted (Fuller, 1990). Market conditions include both input and output conditions. Input market conditions shape farmer production decisions through the dynamics of local and seasonal labour availability. These factors determine whether it is profitable or not to grow a crop with a very
narrow harvesting window in a month where the overall demand for agricultural labour is high in the region (Zilberman et al., 2012). Input price volatility and economies of scale with respect to inputs or technologies can also contribute to farmers planting different mixes of crops or planting more of one crop than another (Zilberman et al., 2012). In contrast, Zilberman et al. (2012) has divulged through his research that output market conditions including prices, price variability, transportation costs, and supply chain transaction costs are important determinants of how profitable it is for farmers to grow a crop. Many of these variables are influenced by location, as communities closer to urban centers are likely to adopt new technologies more quickly. Consumer attitudes and willingness to pay for differentiated crops or particular attributes, such as organic or local production or pesticide-free varieties, also affects the agricultural system.

Finally, policies and regulations that the federal and provincial government implement impact the profitability and evolution of different agricultural systems across Ontario. Policies and regulations do this by facilitating or hindering trade in particular types of agricultural products by influencing farmers decisions about what crops to grow or how much land to farm. This can be done by using policies such as price supports or set-aside programs, or by making different types of production or land-use relatively more or less expensive through regulations, taxes and subsidies, or standards (Lichtenberg, 2002). For example, Bill 66 the Resorting Ontario’s Competitiveness Act, which would change the province’s Planning Act to make it easier for municipalities to designate land for new businesses more quickly, would result in prime farmland being paved over (Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2019). In addition, many policies that do not specifically target agriculture, such as labour and immigration or water policies, have a substantial effect on the costs of agricultural production (Lichtenberg, 2002). For example, laws such as those that regulate pesticide usage and application or limit water use can make it more costly to produce using synthetic pesticides or inefficient irrigation systems (Lichtenberg et al., 1988). While in the short run such regulations may have a negative impact on farmer welfare, they also serve to stimulate innovation and adoption of new technologies in order to comply with regulations and reduce the costs of production (Lichtenberg, 2002).

2.1.5 Crises Impacting Farming

The agriculture sector has a prevalent, long-standing history as a successful cornerstone industry in Ontario. Throughout the last three decades, however, agricultural production has been
impacted by vertical integration, globalization, and the intensification of land-based activities that has crippled Ontario’s agriculture and agri-food sector (Wicks & Merrett, 2003). These impacts have caused a decrease in the number of farm operators in Ontario. OMAFRA reported there were 85,020 operators in 2001; this was reduced by 14,550 individuals to 70,470 in 2016 (Mailvaganam, 2017). The decrease in the total number of farm operators has impacted the number of hired farm laborers in Ontario from 24,013 in 2001 to 12,305 individuals in 2016; this decrease is also impacted by the labour gap that Ontario’s agriculture sector is experiencing (Mailvaganam, 2017). If the current trends continue, Ontario’s agriculture sector will continue to decline until there are only a select number of large industrial farms monopolizing the industry, and family farms will no longer exist.

Vertical integration has diminished the economies of scale for Ontario’s rural townships in that the agricultural industry is not creating a proportionate savings in cost because their level of production is not increasing due to decreased consumer demand (Blair & Lafontaine, 2005). Further, globalization and the intensification of land-based activities have created a decline in the costs of cross-border trade in farm products, which has primarily been driven by reductions in governmental distortions to agricultural production, consumption and trade (Milone, 2001). These impacts have further caused farmers’ total gross income to gradually decline which has compelled farmers to incorporate restructuring strategies into their business plans (Valley & Wittman, 2018).

Restructuring involves farmers diversifying their land, labour, and capital resources that were previously committed to conventional farming activities to other activities that are not specifically production-oriented. Suess-Reyes and Fuetsch (2016) state that the techniques that farmers once used are no longer viable as they are not adaptable to the impacts that the agricultural sector in Ontario is facing. One form of diversification is agritourism. Diversifying farm businesses through the use of agritourism is an important technique for farmers to utilize because it can create additional revenue that can help to sustain farming practices, maintain agricultural heritage, and maximize farming activity through recreational uses. In addition, the benefits of keeping family farms in business extends to both the surrounding local communities and society. As agricultural production is multifunctional in nature, keeping farms operating preserves the intangible services, that farmlands provide to society along with the production of
food and fiber, such as recreational opportunities, environmental amenities, and cultural preservation (van der Ploeg et al., 2000).

**2.1.6 Summary**

Owning farmland allows the individual to operate and maintain their own agriculture business, with the objective of generating a sustainable gross income for their family and upon death or retirement to allow the land to become an asset to their family (Martz & Brueckner, 2003). It is because of land ownership and agricultural businesses that small-scale family farms are able to continue to persist in rural Ontario, these families are indebted to the soil where they derive their livelihood which further ties them to the land they farm on. However, land ownership and the natural resource sector is being negatively impacted by vertical integration, increased globalization, and the intensification of land-based activities. These negative impacts are impeding the ability for small-scale farmer operators to maintain the functionality of their run farm or agricultural business. Therefore, with no succession plan farm operators are being forced into diversifying their farming practices in order to keep their farm operation functional.

**2.2 Contemporary Themes in Agriculture**

**2.2.1 Off-Farm Employment**

Based on the economic decline that Ontario’s small-scale family farmers face they often have to capitalize their agriculture operation with secure employment opportunities outside of the agricultural sector (Bessant & Monu, 1993). Off-farm income is generated when a farmer, spouse or other family member works off the farm, thereby generating supplementary income for the family (Beesley, 2010). Off-farm employment is also referred to as pluriactivity. The agriculture restructuring of the 1980s heightened research attention to off farm employment trends. Macro-level economics in Ontario had also begun to emphasize the importance of embedding off-farm employment into the farming operations business model as it will help farmers better sustain their farming operation through the extra, off-farm income (Bessant & Monu, 1993).

The acreage of the farming operation is a major variable in determining if the farmer will seek off-farm employment. Smaller census farms are less likely to provide a sufficient and stable
income for the household and are more likely to be associated with rural lifestyle choices in which farming becomes a secondary source of incomes for the household (Alasia & Bollman, 2009). Smaller census farms are similar to family farms in that they are operations that earn total gross farm receipts of less than $250,000 for the census year (Alasia & Bollman, 2009). Statistics from the Census of Agriculture show a striking difference in off-farm labour participation by the size of farm business. The 2016 Census of Agriculture found that 44.4% of all farm operators did some off-farm work, usually as a means of supplementing their total income; thus, just over 3 in 10 (30.2%) operators worked an average of 30 hours a week or more off the farm (Alasia & Bollman, 2009).

The earliest research on off-farm employment in the 1980s recognized that part-time farming, to some extent, represented an adaptive strategy that eased transitions in or out of the agriculture sector (Beesley, 2010). The decision for a farm operator to work off the farm, or to make use of assets on-site to carry on a supplementary business enterprise, is linked to the broader issue of generating and sustaining a livelihood that will be sufficient for the farm operator’s entire household (Beesley, 2010). Seeking off-farm employment opportunities is an adaptive strategy that farm operators use as a supplementary income to act as a form of insurance against future economic threats to the farming operation (Beesley, 2010). Marsden (1990) argues that household resources, such as skills, labour, and livelihood strategies, are crucial to the survival and sustainability of a family continuing to operate and maintain their farming operation. However, varied types of off-farm employment, farm operation variables, and proximity to urban centers supersede the farmer’s skill level, labor and livelihood strategy, as they often dictate the desire for a farmer to pursue off-farm employment (Beesley, 2010).

Despite the advantages to off-farm employment there are perceived barriers to small-scale family farmers pursuing off-farm employment opportunities. Perceived barriers to off-farm employment is closely related to motivational factors and whether the farmer or their spouse found that participating in off-farm labour markets a viable economic option to increase their total gross income (Bessant & Monu, 1993). The factors that have influenced off-farm employment since 1993 are: access to day-care services, training, financial lending policies, time restrictions away from the farm operation, and the availability of other non-agricultural employment opportunities (Bessant & Monu, 1993). Off-farm employment is only feasible if its
operators can hire labour at rates lower than they can attain off the farm, otherwise the operation owners are best to run the business themselves. However, as the economic state of Ontario’s agriculture sector continues to change and be negatively impacted by vertical integration, globalization, and the intensification of land-based activities, family farms are becoming superseded by….

### 2.2.2 Farming and Identity: The Changing Role of Women in Agriculture

The following literature is based on research that was conducted in western Europe. Further, the numerical data used in Section 2.2.2 illustrates the reviewed literature within a Canadian context, as the data is from Statistics Canada.

Despite the cultural and geographical differences, the gender roles of women in farming in both western Europe and Ontario hold similarities because the position of women in the labour market, more specifically farming, has undergone significant advances in both contexts over the last 40 years (Shortall, 2014). The lifting of the marriage ban, women receiving jobs in the trades sector, the ability for women to seek divorce, and contraception have dramatically changed the lives of women, providing women with the ability to make their own choices, like their male counterparts (Shortall, 2014). However, gender segregation is still a pervasive feature of all labour markets, and there are still differences in men and women’s employment by sector, workplace, and occupation. Nonetheless, across most of western Europe women have become more permanently attached to the labour market, and the presumption that women are “home-makers” first and workers second is no longer held to be true (Shortall, 2014).

Shortall’s (2014) research focuses on how agricultural operations shape the farm family, gender roles, and the identity of the family members. Typically, farmers are understood to be male; being a farmer defines their identity, group identity, and gender identity. Thus, the culture and traditional practices of agriculture have been dominated by men. Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* has been used to describe the powerful way in which the institution of farming is understood to embody masculinity (Shortall, 2014). Habitus invokes a process of socialization whereby the dominant mode of thought and experiences to which one is exposed is internalized by the said individual, thus habitus disposes individuals, in this case farmers to certain things and to behave certain ways (Shortall, 2014). Farmers know instinctively, without knowing, the right
thing to do. Not only are farmers’ behaviors guided by habitus, they are also constrained by it; this is also true for women on farms. Habitus is cumulatively constituted, so the gendered role of women on farms will only change gradually during the farmer’s life, and only if they are able to contribute to the farm operation through experiential, hands-on work.

In Canada, female farmers face these similar constraints. However, as of 2016, women’s gendered role in farming has changed somewhat, as Statistics Canada recorded the percentage of female farm operators at 28.7% in 201; this is an increase from 25.3% in 2012 (Statistics Canada, 2018). The number of females in the farming sector has increased for a number of reasons - one is that more young women are willing to take the risk of taking over and operating their family farms. This is proven by the fact that the number of farms run solely by women under the age of 35 rose 113% in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2018). More women are also beginning to identify themselves as farmers; traditionally in the agriculture sector they were often considered the “farmers wife” despite the work they completed on the farm (Dowling, 2019). While women have been farming for as long as farming has existed, recognition of this role by government and statistic agencies has only been recent. Many women would sell produce from the farm at local farmers markets as well as care for the children at home, although that was not considered farming by the once male-dominated agriculture sector (Dowling, 2019). The change in perception, and the increase in female farmers, has also been triggered more incentives being offered for women to join the agricultural sector through farming. Some grassroots networks offer grants for women who enter farming; similar programs exist through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. The AgriDiversity Program, for example, helps under-represented groups, such as women in agriculture, take on leadership roles by providing them with the training to do so (Dowling, 2019). Despite the fact that women are becoming a stronger presence in farming they still face daily challenges that men do not. Women have to fight to gain respect from their fellow male farmers, and they are often still tasked with the housework and raising their family on top of assisting to run a farm operation.

2.2.3 Pluriactivity

There are two terms describing the practice of taking up other gainful activities by farmers and farm families: pluriactivity and diversification. Durand and Van Hu ylenbroeck (2003) define pluriactivity as the combination of agricultural and non-agricultural activities
performed by the farmer or members of the farm household. For example, in north Durham region, Ontario, there is a farming operation where the husband is primarily focused on livestock, where the wife has a store where she sells her pottery and offers pottery classes to the public. In other words, pluriactivity is a non-agricultural source of income that can also be done on the farm (Durand & Van Huylkenbroeck, 2003).

Meanwhile diversification is associated with the workplace. Diversification focuses on increasing the scope of products and services being produced and sold. In most cases, diversification is done to give or ascribe validity or increase the value of existing production factors such as land, labour, farming equipment, or to reduce risk to existing products (Barbieri et al., 2008). Durand and Van Huylkenbroeck (2003) also believe that the term diversification has a narrower meaning than pluriactivity in that diversification means a new form of agricultural production, one oriented at non-food use. The typical subcategories include but are not limited to fiber crops, pick-your-own crops, how-to workshops, herbs for medicinal use and agro-forestry (Durand and Van Huylkenbroeck, 2003). Diversification therefore refers exclusively to activities undertaken on the farm or based on the farmer’s land and capital resources. In this meaning, diversification may be seen as a sub-group of pluriactivity, a wider term that covers all forms of generating non-agricultural income with both on and off-farm activities (Durand & Van Huylkenbroeck, 2003).

The driving forces behind why small-scale family farms diversify their farming practices by using pluriactivity is linked with internal farm factors of each specific farm, such as size of the farm, total gross income, type of crop grown, or the operational season for the farm (Fuller, 1990). Studies conclude that larger farms are more likely to incorporate pluriactivity because of their access to financial and non-financial resources, such as capital for investments, natural resources and infrastructure for re-use (McNally, 2001). On the other hand, Barbieri et al. (2008) found that total arable land available negatively influences farmers’ decision to adopt an alternative farm enterprise; they concluded that the probability of adopting an alternative enterprise on a farm falls by 28.6% as the mean size of arable land increases by from 20 to 49.4 acres. This drop in percentage illustrates that the total acreage of the farm may not be as important as its profitability, both in the sense of the willingness to incorporate pluriactivity, but also the ability to do so.
An association between pluriactivity and the mode of agriculture production that the family farm cultivates has also been found. Pluriactivity is more likely to be observed on specialized farms as they are in a niche farming market and may only produce one or two specific types of produce such as wheat straw or grass-fed cows (Barbieri et al., 2008). Family farms that specialize in a niche market have a higher risk of having their farming operation face economic decline because, in niche markets, if the demand for the product decreases then the family farm will subsequently deteriorate. Similarly, Barbieri et al. (2008) reports that pluriactivity is also more likely to occur on farms with seasonal production because labour/time is available in the off-season to develop and manage diversified enterprises. Seasonally-operated family farms also have an increased need to generate non-agriculture-related revenues during the off-season of the farm. The off-season for family farms in Ontario who are primarily growing crops typically falls within the winter months of November to April (McNally, 2001).

Family farms that incorporate pluriactivity into their farming operations can lead to a range of benefits such as increased revenue, operational security, and developing new skills (Fuller, 1990). Pluriactivity can increase revenue because the farm operator will not only be receiving income from just their produce but from another diversified source. Operational security can be achieved through pluriactivity because, as farms diversify through new activities and produce to adjust to the changing farming markets, they will be able to better sustain their total gross income and thus provide themselves and their family members with a long-term future in the farming industry (Fuller, 1990). If farmers expand their business venture through pluriactivity, this will also provide farmers with the opportunity to increase their skills and expand their network of business contacts as they will be exploring opportunities beyond their niche market.

Despite the fact that pluriactivity provides great benefits that allow for small-scale family farms to expand beyond their niche markets; it also is a risky undertaking for any farming operation. Pluriactivity encourages dependence on an industry that is prone to uncontrollable change because consumers habits change frequently (McNally, 2001). Therefore, farm operators may only be able to incorporate pluriactivity into their farming operation for a short period of time and if consumer habits change then farm operations may lose their entire investment into incorporating pluriactivity (Barbieri et al., 2008). Incorporating pluriactivity may also increase
pollution in terms of noise, visuals, air, water, and litter. For example, farmers will have increased production levels and may have incorporated more machinery into their farming operation, thus increasing pollution being emitted into the environment. Pluriactivity may also increase wear and tear on the landscape features of the farm because in some cases, where farm operations are incorporating pluriactivity, members of the public may be visiting their farms, and often guests may not treat agricultural land as it deserves to be treated (Barbieri, 2008). Incorporating pluriactivity into a farming operation requires research, as well as the finances and resources to do so because the changing consumer market will greatly affect the viability of pluriactivity to work for a farming operation.

Studies that illustrate the relationship between the characteristics of the farmer/farm household and diversification show that farmers who diversified their farming practices are more likely to be individuals with considerable farming experience and those who have extensive farming backgrounds (Barbieri et al., 2008). This reinforces that those with the strongest farming traditions may be most likely to seek ways to maintain their livelihoods. Carter (2001) states that a large portion of diversifiers who use pluriactivity describe their farming operation as being their only occupation. Carter (2001) also found no correlation between the farmers who diversified their farming operation through pluriactivity and their age and education levels.

The structure of a farm household is correlated to farm diversification. Studies conclude that the number of family members, not including spouses who work on the farm, has a positive relationship to diversification, except passive diversification, for example renting or leasing of the farm property (Barbieri et al., 2008). This suggests that diversification through pluriactivity is a strategy that either utilizes or provides employment for family members and may tap into their own knowledge resources and human capital (McNally 2001). Damianos and Skuras (1996) found a higher number of children living on diversified farms, suggesting that diversification is a strategy that either utilizes or provides employment for family members. Further, the research that Barbieri et al. conducted in 2008 illustrated that the probability of adopting any diversification enterprise was about 10% higher for each additional child living on the farm. Therefore, the correlation between the farm family and diversification illustrates that diversifying a farm is a massive undertaking that requires support from all family members.
2.2.4 Summary

During the 1980s, small-scale family farm operators pursued employment outside of the agriculture sector in order to keep their farm operation financially viable. Off-farm employment occurs when a farm operator, spouse or other family member works off the farm in any capacity to generate a supplementary income. Alasia and Bollman’s (2009) research illustrates that small-scale family farm operators are more likely to seek off-farm employment in comparison to large industrial farms because they have less acreage to grow crops and raise livestock. Small-scale family farms thus use off-farm employment as an adaptive strategy to create a form of financial insurance against future economic threats against the farm operation (Beesley, 2010). The perception of women in the farming industry is changing in both Western Europe and Canada; the number of women in the farming industry has increased since 2016 and women are now viewed as contributing members of the farm operation. This has allowed women to contribute financially to the farm operation through on and off-farm employment. Besides pursuing off-farm employment, farm operators may choose to diversify their farming operation. Diversification can be implemented into a farming operation in many ways; two specific ways are pluriactivity and agritourism. These two forms of diversification aim to ensure that farm operators will be able to generate a supplementary income in order to support themselves and their family, and to maintain the farm operation.

2.3 Agritourism

2.3.1 What is Agritourism?

Farming operations across Ontario are beginning to expand beyond what encapsulates a traditional agricultural operation. Wineries, guided tours, pick-your-own operations, and seasonal-themed hayrides are some of the many activities that can now be found on farms because farmers are altering their business models to work in collaboration with their farm operation and rural lifestyle (Kelly, 2016). These types of operations are developed when farmers diversify their farming practice through the use of agritourism. Agritourism is a sub-niche market within rural tourism that combines both the agriculture and tourism sector to allow tourists to engage in recreational activities in an agricultural setting (Ainley, 2014). One of the characteristics that makes agritourism different from rural tourism is that agritourism occurs on a
working farm and not just in a rural area (Barbieri, 2010). A working farm is described as agricultural land and buildings that are actively being used for production and/or the raising of livestock (Barbieri, 2010). From the perspective of Ontario’s agriculture sector, OMAFRA defines agritourism from the perspective of the consumer in that it is “the act of visiting a working farm or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, procuring a product or service, education or personal involvement in the activities of the farm operation” (Kelly, 2016, p. 4).

Originating in Europe in the 1960s, agritourism broadly aims to increase farmers’ profitability by allowing farm operators to charge the public a fee to visit their working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agri-business (Ainley, 2014). Agritourism consumers thrive on experience-based farming operations that allow them to learn about an agricultural business. Therefore, agritourism operations are agriculturally-based businesses that provide visitors with both an entertaining and educational hands-on experience that teaches them how raw ingredients from the farm are transformed into many of the foods that consumers love while having fun doing so (Ainley, 2014). Subsequently, agritourism businesses provide consumers with a greater understanding of where livestock and produce comes from and how these staple foods can be used. Agritourism operations further provide farm operators with non-monetary benefits, such as preservation of rural lifestyle and social interaction with guests, by drawing visitors into rural communities and showing them where their produce comes from and that life exists beyond the city.

Agritourism is growing as a niche market because it meets the needs of modern Canadian families. Active farm operations are becoming increasingly attractive destinations because visitors are nostalgic for a simpler time (Che et al., 2005; Sznajder, 2009). Individuals, usually those who live in the city, want to escape the hustle of their urban lives to connect with their cultural heritage, be with family, enjoy the natural environment, and have an authentic leisure experience (Che et al., 2005). Increasingly, as food production and distribution become of greater public concern, families also want their children to know where their food comes from and how it gets from farm to table (Sznajder, 2009). However, it is up to the farm operator to entice visitors to return to the farm operation and to use word-of-mouth to tell other individuals about the experience they had while visiting the farm operation. Word-of-mouth is a beneficial
marketing technique for agritourist operators because it can increase the businesses’ reputation with no financial obligation (Sznajder, 2009). Agritourism businesses in Ontario also use word-of-mouth to support one another. This means that if one agritourism business does not supply the good or service, farm operators will suggest another local agritourism or farming business where the visitor can get the product or experience, they desire. Word-of-mouth and positive connections made with visitors, either through personal conversation or one of the activities offered on the agritourist farm, allows the said business to remain operational (Che et al., 2005; Eckert, 2004).

With appropriate knowledge of the market, diversification into agritourism has the potential to add income to the farm family’s household (Martz & Brueckner, 2003). Agritourism operators charge visitors a fee to visit their operation; this fee then goes back into the business with the hopes that this secondary form of income can be allocated towards preserving the agritourism businesses and, indirectly, the rural lifestyle of these farm operators. However, beyond economics, farm operators and their families may choose to diversify through the use of agritourism because of the effects of globalization on agriculture, the growth of the tourism industry, and social motivations, such as wanting to maintain a rural lifestyle (Martz & Brueckner, 2003; Sznajder, 2009). A leading expert on agritourism marketing, Eckert (2004) captures the essence of agritourism for the family farm as “being all about opportunity, the opportunity to keep the family farm alive by creating new revenue streams and a way to keep the younger generation involved through creating new business roles and challenges” (p. 5). In fact, the Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association (OFFMA), a membership driven, direct-farm market organization, estimated that 400 farms involved in agritourism within Ontario in 2005 accounted for $116 million in sales (Jayeff Partners, 2005). In 2009, a subsequent study found 750 Ontario farms hosted an estimated 8 million customers annually with sales in the $210 million range (Experience Renewal Solutions, 2009). Increasingly, as farm operators begin to diversify their farming operations through agritourism, annual revenue sales will increase, small-scale family farming operations will grow and the agriculture sector in Ontario will revitalize itself.

The ability of an agritourism operator to understand the expectations of the agritourist consumer and why they visit agritourism operations is crucial in ensuring the success of
agritourism as a diversification strategy to keep small-scale family farming operations viable (Jayeff Partners, 2005). However, beyond 2010, limited research has been undertaken to examine and understand agritourism operations and their consumers in Ontario. With the world becoming increasingly globalized, the growing climate change crises, and academic scholars and researchers retiring from agriculture research, the agriculture sector and its associated literature beyond 2010 may be fundamentally different than past practices.

Globalization has changed Ontario’s agriculture sector, which in turn impacts small-scale family farm operations. Unlike the past where they were a local source of produce and livestock in rural communities, globalization has allowed the agriculture sector to be dominated by large-scale industrial farming operations because they have the ability to control the local and global trading market as they have more physical and financial resources than small-scale family farms (Mittelman, 2000). For example, larger agriculture operations in Ontario, such as Algoma Orchards, are more viable because they can compete in the global trading market. Climate change has become an increasingly discussed topic that has also changed the agriculture sector and associated literature. Farmers have had to adapt their farming techniques in order for their farming operation to remain functional, despite changes in the earth’s average temperatures and rainfall, pests, and carbon dioxide levels (Donahue, 2014). As farmers have shifted their techniques, academic scholars and researchers have also shifted their focus towards researching the impact and consequences of climate change on the environment, rather than agritourism diversification techniques.

Farmers are choosing to diversify based on being told about or observing the success of other farmers who have started agritourism enterprises rather than on research. Diversifying through agritourism without conducting proper research can lead small-scale family farmers to undervalue their products and services, perhaps in part from not knowing their new consumer base, but also from perpetuating the lowest-price mentality dominating modern agriculture (Wicks & Merrett, 2003). It is important that research on agritourism is updated as the agriculture sector in Ontario continues to change and evolve. Updated research can contribute to small-scale family farmers having more success when diversifying through agritourism because it will allow them to use factual evidence from research studies to determine how best to implement agritourism into their farming practices.
2.3.2 Farmers Motivations for Pursuing Agritourism

Farmers diversify their farming practices through the use of agritourism for both financial and non-financial reasons. However, there is an ongoing debate within the literature about what the primary motivations are; researchers Ollenburg and Buckley (2007) suggest that this lack of consensus stems from the spatial context of the agritourism farming operations that have been studied. In both North America and Europe, the growing consensus is that financial motivations for pursuing agritourism as a diversification strategy are most prominent but non-financial motivations such as social factors and a sense of accomplishment are also important for farmers. Examples of social factors include but are not limited to: having a sustainable retirement plan, being able to socialize with tourists and teach them about farming and farm life, the ability to preserve family farms and rural communities, and the ability to contribute to the preservation and conservation of natural/historical capital (Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007). Farm operators who engage in agritourism practices have “expressed several motivations simultaneously” for doing so based on complex factors that are either financially or non-financially motivated (Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007, p. 448).

Providing an increased income for farm operators is the most commonly cited motivation depicted in the literature for why farmers choose to pursue agritourism practices (Eckert, 2004). Beyond the desire to increase their income, farm operators pursue agritourism to prevent their income from fluctuating due to agricultural production levels that change seasonally or from increased global competition and pressures (Barbieri, 2010; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007). The literature demonstrated that farm operators choose to diversify through agritourism based on market-oriented and opportunistic motivations. For example, opportunistic motivations may include farm operators’ desire to maximize the use of farm resources and buildings, the ability to teach the public about agricultural practices, and the desire to use expand their business while getting the public involved (Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007). Other farm operators may use agritourism to expand their brand awareness or diversify current market offerings and capitalize on existing market opportunities (Schilling et al., 2014). Busby and Rendle note that diversifying through the use of agritourism is often about “providing income which can make the difference between viability or not” (2000, p. 640), which is particularly prevalent in small-scale family
farms where production and access to commodity markets is constrained by how much land the farm operator owns and uses (Schilling et al., 2014).

While the literature documents that financial motivations are the prominent factor for diversifying through agritourism, the actual profitability and financial returns from agritourism are quite modest. For example, Fennel and Weaver’s (year) investigation of Saskatchewan’s agritourism farms in 1997 indicated that farm operators derived a gross annual income under $10,000 (p. 469), the comparative analysis of the United States agritourism sector reported annual incomes of $15,000 or less (as cited in Rozier Rich et al., 2010). Since 1997, there has been no data recorded to illustrate if the total gross income of agritourism farming operations in the United States or other parts of Canada is increasing or decreasing. For most farms, agritourism does not bring in large revenues; rather it provides income that makes the difference between viability and bankruptcy by increasing total gross income (Busby & Rendle, 2000). Fluctuations due to seasonality, the globalization of agriculture, and unstable markets can be alleviated somewhat for farm families by diversifying their farming operation through the use of agritourism.

Another research study conducted by Busby and Rendle (2000) on the transition from tourism on farms to farm tourism also concluded that the financial contributions of agritourism are limited and often farm operators only pursue agritourism as a “next stage” in their agricultural career. The next stage in a farm operator’s career would be expanding their business, in terms of both production and acreage. However, there is a growing number of recent qualitative and quantitative studies that suggest that the “economic impact of agricultural tourism is significant in terms of income, wages, employment, and tax revenues” for small-scale family farming operations near urban communities (Veeck et al., 2016, p. 427). Veeck et al. (2016) noted that in Michigan agritourism has become a diverse sector offering a broad range of activities while simultaneously hybridizing to include off-farm markets, which has resulted in a fiscal return great enough to allow farm operators to keep their farming operation viable. This echoes perception of social and financial success noted in Canada, New Jersey, and the United Kingdom. However, several authors have observed a widening gap between large and small agritourism enterprises in season length, revenue, and employment, as well as a diminishing of midsized enterprises, which mirrors ongoing trends within the agricultural (Veeck et al., 2016).
There are a number of non-financial motivations that are important rationales commonly cited within the agricultural literature. There is no singular frame of reference for the non-financial motivations that persuade farm operations to pursue agritourism as a form of diversification. To describe the non-financial motivations, researchers have used terms such as social, cultural, or sociocultural lifestyle because, intrinsically, these terms hold a peripheral relationship to income or revenue (Barbieri, 2010; Schilling et al., 2014). In comparison to financial motivations, nonfinancial motivations are more varied as reported within the literature, despite some attempts to standardize the phrasings. Non-financial motivations may include consumer education, an improved quality of life, meeting new people, enjoying a farm lifestyle, or to preserve agricultural land and heritage amongst different communities (Barbieri, 2010; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007; Veeck et al., 2016). Despite a growing consensus on the central importance of financial motivations encouraging farm operators to pursue agritourism practices in North America and Europe, non-financial motivations appear to have greater importance as motivators in Australia and New Zealand (Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007). In addition, a survey of 1,135 American agritourism farm operators found that they believed they had greater success in achieving important non-financial goals than financial goals (Barbieri, 2010). As a result, non-financial goals have had a greater contribution to farmers’ satisfaction with their decision to diversify through the use of agritourism practices (Barbieri, 2010).

2.3.3 The Challenges and Benefits of Agritourism

Small-scale family farm operators often diversify through agritourism because it has the ability to supplement their income and can contribute to a sustainable work-life balance. However, like any farm diversification technique, agritourism does not come without its challenges. The literature notes four general themes of challenges: physical, financial, social, and institutional. Farm operators may experience one or several of these challenges while diversifying through agritourism. Physical challenges may include urban populations having difficulties travelling to agritourism operations in the north; this may occur because often the only form of transportation to agritourism businesses and rural community is by car (Flanigan et al., 2015). There is often no local bus system and regional bus routes do not have stops that go north, nor do they have favorable schedules that would allow for individuals to travel to and from agritourism operations during operational hours. Inability to travel to the agritourism
operation will inhibit visitation and diminish the financial feasibility of operating an agritourism business. Having a long distance between farms also presents another physical challenge as it causes inaccessibility and a lack of critical mass (Che et al., 2005).

The second challenge focuses on the financial challenges that occur when operating an agritourism business. Agritourism businesses that are unable to financially sustain themselves will face potential investment risks that are associated with diversification through agritourism. The primary financial risk is that the farm operators cannot wait long for returns on their investments, nor can they front the necessary capital to initially develop their enterprise so it aligns with consumer expectations of quality and experience (Flanigan et al., 2015; Sharpley & Vass, 2006). The financial challenges involved with operating an agritourism business can also hinder the ability for the business to initially develop or continuously persist within the sector. Often, financial challenges are associated with farm size, small farms are less likely to diversify successfully due to related financial instability (Sharpley & Vass, 2005). However, a contrasting study conducted in Michigan found that small-scale family farms are more likely to be successful due to their financial flexibility resulting from a lower investment in costly land or technology (Veeck et al., 2016).

Social challenges can arise for agritourism business operators. Social challenges may include a personal lack of willingness or ability to adapt to a new, service-oriented role, which can inhibit successful diversification due to a perceived move away from farming methods and resultant changes in farmer identity (Sharpley & Vass, 2006). Relatedly, family or community tensions may result from decisions to change land use or deescalate technology use to better align with consumer expectations of rural communities (Schilling et al., 2014). The fourth and final notable challenge of diversifying through the use of agritourism is the institutional challenges that may arise during the development and expansion of an agritourism operation. Often, government policy and legislation inhibit agritourism development, particularly when there is a lack of clarity or different conflicting policies are introduced at different levels of government (Barbieri et al., 2016). For example, in the Region of Durham, the regional government is attempting to pass legislation that would zone the stores or work areas on an agritourism business as commercial rather than agricultural. Commercial businesses pay more in
taxes than agricultural businesses; therefore, if this legislation passes, agritourism operators may not be able to afford their property taxes, rendering their business inoperable.

Despite these challenges, agritourism operations can create benefits for both the farm operator and the surrounding rural community. Agritourism can provide a number of economic and sociocultural benefits to rural communities and small-scale family farms. Agritourism is said to stimulate local economies, with studies in Michigan noting a contribution of sales exceeding $430 million per annum by agritourism farms (Barbieri et al., 2016; Veeck et al., 2016). On the other hand, the actual contribution that agritourism provides to employment continues to be debated. Several studies noted a minimal increase in job creation due to a typical reliance on family labour (Sharpley & Vass, 2006), while Veeck et al. (2016) noted an impactful contribution to both full and part-time employment in Michigan that also provided transferable job training for future employment opportunities. Agritourism operations have also helped to develop and preserve social, and countryside capital by maintaining farmland diversity, reconnecting agriculture to communities, and providing public education about food and farming, which has the potential to improve local food systems and has implications for positive rural identities (Flanigan et al., 2015; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007).

Although the economic benefits that agritourism can provide have been noted in the literature, non-economic benefits such as personal, family or social benefits need further research to provide conclusive results (Sharpley & Vass, 2006). Regardless of the lack of attention, several notable sociocultural community benefits include outreach and greater public education about locally-produced food and farming operations; this aligns with a growing societal concern and awareness of food safety and security. As well, outreach and public education may create a positive transition towards low-impact agricultural practices that satisfy tourist desire for authenticity and align with growing societal concerns about human and environmental health (Flanigan et al., 2015). In essence, agritourism operations provide a supplementary income for farm operators while offering educational, hands-on experiences for visitors.

The Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario’s Prime Agricultural Areas (the guidelines) aim to help the municipal and local government, farmers, and other stakeholders interpret the policies in the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), 2014 on the uses that are permitted in agricultural areas (OMAFRA, 2016). The guidelines provide direction on: agricultural,
agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses such as agritourism (policy 2.3.3 of the PPS), removal of land for new and expanding settlement areas (policy 2.3.5 of the PPS), limited non-agricultural uses in prime agricultural areas (policy 2.3.6 of the PPS), and mitigation of impacts from new or expanding non-agricultural uses (policy 2.3.6.2 of the PPS) (OMAFRA, 2016).

These guidelines are meant to complement, be consistent with and explain the intent of the PPS policies and associated definitions. Where specific parameters are proposed, they represent best practices rather than specific standards that must be met by farm operators in Ontario (OMAFRA, 2016). These parameters are based on the judgement and experience of OMAFRA and the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MMA) as well as consultation with municipalities and stakeholders on how to be consistent with PPS policies (OMAFRA, 2016). When small-scale family farms are diversifying through the use of agritourism they need to ensure with their local and municipal government that proposed agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses are compatible with, and shall not hinder, surrounding agricultural operations (OMAFRA, 2016). Criteria for these uses may also be based on guidelines developed by the Province or municipal approaches, as set out in municipal planning documents such as Official Plans, which ultimately achieve the same objective.

2.3.4 The Agritourist Consumer

There has been a lack of research conducted on the agritourist consumer in Ontario which is a gap in the literature (Ainley & Smale, 2009). However, despite this gap, the literature notes that there are several stereotypical characteristics and expectations that the traditional agritourist consumer has. The traditional agritourist consumer is experience driven, looking to reconnect with a rural environment, and wants to consume all that rural surroundings have to offer. Barbieri et al. (2016, p. 1101) found that “agritourism can act as a bridge, reconnecting urban dwellers with agriculture and rural life.” For these reasons, agritourism operations often have the greatest appeal to aging or mixed generational consumers who originate from urban or suburban locations (Ainley & Smale, 2009; Ainley, 2014). Agritourism often appeals to urban dwellers because it provides them with an opportunity to connect with a rural space and experience what the agritourist operation has to offer and caters to a sense of nostalgia for an agrarian past (Veeck et al., 2016).
Barbieri et al. (2016) notes effort is required to bridge the stereotypical characteristics and expectations of agritourist consumers. These characteristics and expectations often overlap and provide agritourist consumers with three main personal benefits. The first benefit is that agritourism operations allow agritourist consumers to fulfill a desire for experiential tourism where they can reconnect with the natural rural environment through participating in activities such as apple picking or hayrides (Barbieri et al., 2016). Reconnecting with rural environments allows agritourist consumers to also reconnect with rural values through having outdoor experiences with their family (Veeck et al., 2016).

The second benefit is not only for the agritourist consumer but also for the surrounding rural and urban communities as it fulfills the desire that agritourist consumers have to learn about agriculture, rural lifestyles, and local food production as food security is becoming a growing concern within the agricultural sector (Ainley & Smale, 2009; Ainley, 2014; Barbieri et al., 2016). By becoming educated about rural communities, agriculture, and food production, the agritourist consumers can act as educational liaisons when they return to their urban lifestyle because they will be able to educate other individuals about the importance of rural and food production.

The third and final benefit that agritourist consumers receive when visiting an agritourist operation is that they get to experience a place of relaxation and observation; consumers value experiential agricultural activities within a rural setting. Agritourist consumers thrive on experiences that the agritourist operation and rural community can offer them; often, they are more concerned with the activities the agritourism operation has to offer than the location (Barbieri et al., 2016; Che, 2009; Flanigan et al., 2015). However, a contrasting study by Ainley & Smale (2009) found that experiences and rural reconnection are not significant drivers of agritourism consumers; the study neglected to say what the driving factors may be. It is important to note that their research is not representative of the stereotypical agritourism consumer because their sample size was exclusive to visitors with at least one overnight stay while, in North America, most agritourism consumers are day-trippers (Ainley & Smale, 2009; Barbieri et al., 2016). As agricultural practices continue to modernize there has been a debate regarding agritourist consumers expectations of modern, mechanized agriculture within the agritourist operation. Some studies note that consumers may be put off by modern, mechanized
farming because it fails to align with idyllic imagery of agriculture; others state that agritourism operations that provide consumers with hands-on, real life experiences will off-set this concern (Busby & Rendle, 2000; Flanigan et al., 2015).

2.3.5 Summary

Agritourism is becoming a prominent form of diversification that farm operators are implementing into farming operations across Ontario. Agritourism operations allows visitors to get hands-on, real life experiences for the purpose of enjoyment, procuring a product or service, or to educate themselves about agricultural practices and the surrounding rural community. However, it is important to note that diversification through agritourism has its associated challenges that farm operators have to overcome to reap the benefits from operating an agritourism farming business. These challenges are identified through four main themes: physical, financial, social, and institutional. Despite the associated challenges, farm operators are motivated to pursue agritourism because of the monetary and non-monetary benefits that diversifying through the use of agritourism provides. The biggest motivation for pursuing agritourism is, however, the increased total gross income that agritourism operations provide for farm operators and their families. Farm operators cannot let the challenges of operating an agritourism business consume their focus as they need to maintain the business in a fashion that draws agritourist consumers to visiting the operation. Agritourist consumers are drawn to agritourism operations that provide the opportunity to connect with a rural environment and have a hands-on, real life experience through the activities that the farm operation has to offer.
3.0 Research Methods

This research employs three primary methods: case study, background document review, semi-structured interviews. The study used semi-structured interviews comprised of 15 open-ended questions to achieve the research objectives. Semi-structured interviews allowed interviewees to respond with the most in-depth and candid answers possible, which provided a well-rounded understanding of why farm owners may choose to diversify their farming practices through agritourism. Semi-structured interviews also allowed for a positive rapport and dialogue to be developed between the interviewee and the researcher. This dialogue allowed the researcher to follow topical trajectories during the interview stimulated by the guided, open-ended questions (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). This ultimately allowed for the interviewees to express their views on their own terms and allowed the researcher to collect reliable qualitative data that accurately represents agritourism practices in north Durham region.

The objectives of this research study necessitated in-depth information to be gathered through direct in-situ engagement with the interviewees, a process that was influenced by content analysis. Inductive analysis was used to determine if diversification through agritourism could be a successful tool to revitalize north Durham region. Examining the data through inductive analysis allowed for (1) condensing raw textual data into a brief summary; (2) establishing clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the data; and (3) developing a framework of the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the data. There is no pre-existing conceptual or theoretical framework used within agritourism research, thus inductive analysis is a suitable research methodology to employ.

3.1 Case Study Profile

The identification of the study area for this research was driven by an analysis of the trends produced by the Region of Durham’s Annual Business Count Survey from 2016-2018 (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2019). The highlights from the annual survey provided a breakdown analysis of economic trends for each of the Regional Municipalities of Durham’s (Region of Durham) eight townships. More specifically, the results of the Region of Durham’s Business Count Survey provide an understanding about the Region of Durham as a whole, its economy, the types of businesses operating within the region, and the types of jobs those
businesses provide (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2011a). This research focuses on the Region of Durham’s three northern townships of Brock, Scugog, and Uxbridge. During 2016 to 2018, the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting industry stayed consistent at 1% of the total jobs in the Region of Durham’s and 6% of businesses (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2019). However, the population in the Region of Durham increased by 37,742 individuals from 645,862 to 683,604 in the respective years (Statistics Canada, 2019b). With an increasing population comes concern for the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting industries because this industry comprises only 1% of the total jobs in the Region of Durham; these industries are currently unable to produce the goods and services that the expanding population requires. Therefore, to meet the necessities of the growing population in the Region of Durham, the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting industries will need to increase the number of employees and expand the number of businesses through techniques like diversification.

3.1.1 The Regional Municipality of Durham

The Region of Durham is an upper-tier municipality located in Southern Ontario 70 kilometers east of Toronto (see Figure 2). An upper-tier municipality is formed by two or more lower-tier municipalities; the responsibilities of both upper and lower tier municipalities are set out under the Municipal Act and other Provincial legislation. Thus, as an upper tier municipality, the Region of Durham sets out the legislation and guides the local government of the lower tier municipalities within their jurisdiction. The Region of Durham is comprised of eight lower tier municipalities: Ajax, Brock, Clarington, Oshawa, Pickering, Scugog, Uxbridge, and Whitby. Each of these municipalities must adhere to the decisions developed and implemented by the Region of Durham. The Region of Durham also forms the east end of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and is a core part of the Golden Horseshoe Region. The Region of Durham is 2,523 square kilometers and is connected to Lake Simcoe in the northern portion of the Region and Lake Ontario in the South, as seen in Figure two (Statistics Canada, 2019b).
Figure 2: An Aerial Map of The Regional Municipality of Durham and Surrounding Regions, 2018 (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2018)

As previously stated, in 2018 the Region of Durham had a total population of 683,604 (Statistics Canada, 2019b). Table one illustrates the three townships with the lowest populations in 2018 are in the north Durham region: Brock inhabiting 12,408 individuals, Scugog with 22,184 individuals, and Uxbridge with 22,060 individuals (Statistics Canada, 2019b). Table one also illustrates that in the southern portion of the Region, Oshawa has the largest population with 169,509 individuals, followed by Whitby, Ajax, Clarington, and Pickering with their respective population statistics (Statistics Canada, 2019b). The majority of the Region of Durham’s population resides in the southern portion of the region in predominantly urban neighborhoods.
According to the Region of Durham’s Workforce Authority Analysis (DRWAA) published in 2018 and the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) the retail trade industry is the most prominent industry in the Region of Durham. The retail trade industry consists of businesses that sell a variety of goods and services to primarily individuals, not corporations (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2018). NAICS is the standard used by government and other statistical agencies to classify businesses into different industries for the purpose of collecting, analyzing, and publishing statistical data related to Canada’s business economy. The DRWAA found that based on 2016 census data, the retail trade industry, NAICS code 44-45 was the most prominent industry in the Region of Durham because it employed 11.6% of the Region’s labour force (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2018). As of December 2017, there was 3,625 retail businesses in the Region of Durham and 39,965 people employed within the industry (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2018).

As seen in Figure 3, the retail trade industry can be divided into 12 subsectors. Since 2014, there has been an increase in the number of businesses in all subsectors except for ‘electronics and appliance stores’ and ‘gasoline stations.’ The sector with the biggest positive fluctuation was motor vehicles and parts dealers as that sector decreased to 333 businesses from 347 businesses between 2014 and 2015 but increased by six businesses to have a total of 339 businesses in 2017 (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2018). Figure 3 demonstrates that in the Region of Durham, food and beverages stores dominate the retail industry in terms of number

Table 1: Total Population by Age Group, Ontario, The Region of Durham and Municipalities, 2018 (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2018)
of businesses, followed by health and personal care stores and then clothing and clothing accessories stores. The entire retail trade industry is likely to be highly disrupted by the continuous changes in technology because individuals can now conveniently purchase goods and services online from the comfort of their homes (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2018).

![Figure 3: The Region of Durham Business by Subsectors, 2017 (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2018)](image)

### 3.1.2 North Durham Region

North Durham region is comprised of three rural townships: Brock, Scugog, and Uxbridge (see Figure 4). These three northern townships cover 52% of the total land area within the Region of Durham and have 56,652 residents, representing 8.2% of the population (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2018). The population in north Durham is expected to remain steady until 2031, with the Township of Uxbridge growing to becoming slightly larger than the Township of Scugog in 2021 (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2018).
The three northern townships all have the highest number of individuals in the 55-59 age category, as seen in Table 1 (Statistics Canada, 2019b). Therefore, the 8.2% of the population that lives in north Durham is aging towards retirement. In accordance with Number Analysis (2011) data on north Durham, there were over 4,500 businesses in north Durham in a variety of sectors (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2011b). These sectors were categorized by NAICS codes and their subsectors within each classification, for this research study the aggregate numbers were analyzed. Figure 5 illustrated that within the three northern townships high concentrations of businesses were found in the following sectors: construction, professional, technical and scientific services, agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, other services, and real estate.
Figure 5: Percent of Local Businesses by NAICS Industry Code, 2011 (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2011b).

Figure 5 further illustrates that the Township of Brock had the highest number percentage of businesses in the construction sector at 20.62%. However, it is Brock’s large rural land base that reflects the high percentage of total businesses in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting sector at 15.25%. Brock also has a substantial presence in the professional, scientific, and technical services at 8.92% of the total businesses within north Durham (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2011b). In Scugog, the total percentage of businesses in the construction sector was 16.09%, followed by professional, scientific, and technical services at 12.66%, real estate, rental and leasing at 9.06%, and agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 8.16% (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2011b). The real estate, rental and leasing industry is dominate in Scugog because the town supports a high number of second homeowners and cottagers in the summer months (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2019). Finally, according to Figure 5, the Township of Uxbridge has 15.34% in the construction sector, 14.73%
in the professional, scientific, and technical services sector and 7.95% in the retail trade sector (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2011b). While agriculture forms a substantial proportion of the townships land base, the percentage of businesses in agriculture are not as strong as in Brock and Scugog.

The north Durham region operates the largest portion of the region’s agriculture sector. According to the 2016 Census of Agriculture, and illustrated in Table 2, north Durham had 813 farming operations whereas the southern portion of the Region has 510 (Statistics Canada, 2019c). The goods and services produced at these farming operations are sold to the Region’s five southern townships as well as the Region of Kawartha Lakes, which is north of Region of Durham, and the Region of York, which is located to the south. In north Durham there are 184,885 acres of farmland that are worked and maintained by farm operators, as seen in Table 2 (Statistics Canada, 2019c). However, the total acreage of farmland in the entire Region of Durham decreased from 297,012 acres in 2011 to 292,815 acres in 2016, which means the Region lost 1.4% of their farmland in five years (Statistics Canada, 2019c). This decrease will negatively impact the agriculture sector in the north because the land loss will affect the north’s ability to farm their 93,310 acres of viable crop land as well as the ability for employment levels to be maintained (Statistics Canada, 2019c).

Table 2: Farm Size and Productive Land in Durham, 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2019b)
3.2 Background Document Review

Prior to engaging with research participants, a web-based search was conducted to identify and collect information from relevant primary and secondary sources, such as local agritourist businesses Facebook pages and Durham Farm Fresh’s website. During the beginning stages of data collection, information and promotional materials were collected in hard copy at several local conferences and events, including but not limited to the Teeny Tiny Summit and the Rural Symposium in 2019. The information collected facilitated the development of a preliminary understanding about agritourist operations in north Durham. More specifically, this approach determined how many businesses in north Durham would qualify to participate in the research, how these businesses interact with one another, and their relationship with the local and regional government.

The research began by conducting a review of recent web-based primary and secondary sources about agritourism businesses and events in north Durham’s three townships: Brock, Scugog, and Uxbridge. An analysis of these documents allowed for an understanding of how agritourism businesses operate in north Durham and the initiatives and promotional materials these business owners use to attract visitors. In order to conduct an accurate analysis of the documents, eight steps were followed to gather information about the agritourism business:

1. Author/creator
2. Context (place and time of the document’s creation)
3. Intended audience
4. Purpose for the document’s creation
5. Type of document (photograph, pamphlet, government-issued document, newspaper article)
6. Main points expressed in the document
7. General message of the document (What is it trying to say? What is it promoting? Why?)
8. Significance (So what? Why is this document important? What does it explain about the businesses day to day operations?)
The online search also revealed that a majority of agritourist businesses, and potential research participants, would be in Scugog and Uxbridge. Agritourism businesses have only just begun to establish themselves in Brock (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2019).

Additionally, a content analysis of this material identified common ideas, key words, and events that agritourism business operators in north Durham use to attract visitors to their operation. The common ideas noted were: tours, interactive/interact with what the farm operation offers, home-made goods or services; the key words noted were on-farm diversified use(s), agritourism, pick-your-own, agriculture, locally made/sourced; and the noted events in the analysis were interactive/interact with what the farm operations offers, do-it-yourself. After an initial analysis the common ideas, key words, and events were then categorized into more specific classes. For example, home made goods or services were categorized into products such as wool, lavender, and livestock; pick-your-own was categorized into apples, pumpkins, and other fresh produce; and do-it-yourself was categorized into events such as build-your-own bouquet.

After the content analysis, web-based searches were generated to develop an understanding of what types of agritourist businesses are in north Durham, what goods and services they offer, where they are located, and how they promote themselves on social media and the web. The resources reviewed reflected the agritourism sector in north Durham and facilitated a more personalize interviews with the participants as a heightened understanding of what agritourism is like in north Durham. The types of document reviewed included: websites, regional strategic plans, maps, tourism brochures, agritourism fact sheets, Durham Farm Fresh brochures, and regional tourism reports. The regional government authored five of these sources with the rest originating from the local governments of Brock, Scugog, and Uxbridge.

3.2.1 Content and Inductive Analysis

A content analysis was conducted to review background documentation on agritourist operations in north Durham. Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within qualititative textual data sources (Cho & Trent, 2014). Content is analyzed for the presence, meaning, and relationships of reoccurring words, themes,
and concepts that arise in the primary and secondary data sources. Content analysis was conducted on four websites: the Region of Durham’s, Durham Farm Fresh, the Regional Planning and Economic Development website, and the Durham Tourism website. These four websites lead to other soft documents, such as two regional strategic plans, one map, three tourism brochures, one agritourism fact sheet, one Durham Farm Fresh brochure, and one regional tourism report. This method allowed inferences about the messages within the texts, the audience, and the culture surrounding the text, and how this all affects north Durham’s agritourism businesses.

While conducting, and after semi-structured interviews were completed, inductive analysis was used several times to further understand the interview data. Inductive analysis began with organizing the raw data collected from interviews, through a process known as open coding (Cho & Trent, 2014). Using a statistical analysis program called NVivo, all materials were reviewed by making notes and dividing the data into categories as they were read and listened to interview recordings. This process required repeated reading and listening to the material, after which notes were transcribed and headings were recording onto a coding sheet. The next step involved grouping the data and reducing the number of categories by combining similar headings into broader categories. This process increased the understanding about the reality of agritourism businesses in north Durham from the perspective of the business owners.

3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

This research was guided by the logic and methodology of semi-structured interviews with individuals who operate agritourist businesses in the three townships of north Durham. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative method of inquiry that combines a pre-determined set of open questions that will allow particular themes or responses to be further identified. This research project was reviewed by the research ethics board (REB) at the University of Guelph to ensure compliance with federal guidelines for research involving human participants. The REB reference number for this project is 19-01-029. The submission was originally approved in February 2019, and renewed in February 2020 for the remaining duration of the research study, as can be seen in appendix B. Conducting semi-structured interviews allowed for the respondents to answer with candid and valid answers which provided accurate data.
Through attending four conferences on rural, agriculture, and planning within the Region of Durham, further information was collected about agritourism businesses in north Durham. It was at these conferences that introductions to the Region’s Rural Economic Development Coordinator and Agriculture Economic Development Coordinator were made. These individuals provided contact information for the farming operations within north Durham that were identified through web-searches and businesses that they suggested. All potential contacts were checked to ensure they met the definition of an agri-tourist business. Emails were sent to the appropriate agritourist businesses in the case region. Through conducting online research, 11 additional businesses were found to be eligible to participate in the research study. Therefore, with the list of contacts that the Region of Durham staff provided and through conducting online businesses, a total of 23 businesses were identified as eligible to participate in the research. Cold calls were then made in order to follow up with those farm operators who did not respond to the initial two emails. The overall objective of the cold calls was to connect on a personal level with the farm operators to explain further about the research with the hopes that they would participate.

The semi-structured interviews took place from May 2019-November 2019; 9 out of the 23 eligible businesses participated. Interviews were conducted with agritourist business owners who had diversified their farming practices through the use of agritourism and who were members of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) or Durham Farm Fresh. Agritourist operators that participated in this research study have operated their agritourist business anywhere from 1 to 35 years. To disrupt the participants’ schedules as little as possible the interviews took place either over the phone or in-person at the individual’s place of business. Allowing the research participants to choose how the interview was conducted allowed participants to be comfortable in familiar surroundings, thus being able to provide candid answers. Interviews ranged from 30-45 minutes in length, while interviews conducted over the phone tended to take less time than in-person interviews. Interview length also depended on how much information the research participant wanted to divulge; in some instances, the research participants did not want to go into detailed answers depending on the sensitivity of the question. Each research interview was recorded using a Sony IC recorder; notes were also transcribed into a Word document during the interview which allowed for accurate and detailed responses to be
recorded. The research participants also had the opportunity to review the interview questions ahead of the scheduled interview if they so desired.

The semi-structured interviews consisted of 15 open-ended questions divided into three themes. An open-ended-question requires a thought-out and detailed response as it cannot be answered using yes or no. Using open-ended questions allowed the farm operators to shape their own answer without being constrained by a fixed set of possible response. This way there are no options or predefined categories that allow the farm operators to supply their own answer without being constrained by a fixed set of possible responses. The three themes covered in my semi-structured interviews are as follows:

1. “The why” identifies the motivations of farm operators to diversify using agritourism, such as a personal choice or economic constraints.
2. “The how” explores how agritourism has helped the business economically, if it brought more people to their farming operation, or has it not aided their business in any way?
3. “The what” theme looks at what the local and regional governments are doing to aid businesses in, or trying to break into, the agritourist market. The third theme explores the next steps to help fully integrate these agritourist businesses into the agriculture sector in the Region of Durham.

Dividing the research into three themes not only helped to conduct a content and inductive analysis but helped to understand the full context of what agritourist operations are experiencing in north Durham. The research themes are vital to conducting the semi-structured interviews because they analyze the agritourist business owners’ whole story. The interviews do this through analyzing the before part of the agritourist business owners story by asking “why” they diversified through agritourism, the current part of their story through analyzing “how” agritourism has helped them economically, and the end of the story through determining “what” the local and regional government is doing to help or hinder agritourist businesses in north Durham.
3.4 Limitations

During the research two limitations were encountered. First, while conducting semi-structured interviews, repeated attempts were made to contact businesses in north Durham who have diversified their farming practices through agritourism. Despite attempts through cold-calling and email, only nine businesses agreed to participate in the research. Lack of internet connectivity on part of the business owner and difficulty in connecting with them during business hours hindered the ability to contact all 23 agritourist businesses.

Second, this research does not include participation of The Mississauga’s of Scugog Island First Nation, situated in the Township of Scugog. This First Nation spans 2.58 square kilometers and is home to 131 individuals. Agritourism businesses on the Mississauga’s of Scugog Island First Nation territory were invited to participate but declined. They declined because they do not consider their land or community to be affiliated with the Region of Durham (Mississauga’s of Scugog Island First Nation, 2019).

Future research studies in north Durham should dedicate time for additional research field interviews to better target the pre and post growing season periods, more field research interviews should also be conducted during crop production season, if the research participants desire. This would allow increased receptivity and access to agritourism businesses in north Durham, including the Mississauga’s of Scugog Island First Nation, it would also provide research participants multiple opportunities to engage with the researcher.
4.0 Findings

Small-scale family farms in north Durham are transitioning toward a new, technology-centered era of agriculture production. This new era has created advances in modern and industrial agriculture through the use of technology; this has caused small-scale family farms to either cease farming due to the inability to economically support the transition to modern agriculture or to diversify their farming techniques. One diversification technique that is developing prominence in north Durham is agritourism; this approach allows individuals to visit a working farm to experience what the small-scale family farm has to offer.

This chapter presents the analysis of the findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted with agritourism operators. The analysis is organized into the three themes from the research interviews: the why, how, and what. Depicting the results from each of the three themes allows for a detailed analysis that will determine the role that diversification through agritourism can aid in revitalizing the rural sector in north Durham. The analysis provides a detailed account of what agritourism operations are experiencing in north Durham region. This is done by determining the motivations behind why farm operators diversified their farming practices, the current stage of the agritourist business by examining how diversifying through agritourism has aided the business (if at all), and by determining what the future may hold for agritourism in north Durham by analyzing what the local and regional government are doing to aid agritourism diversification.

4.1 Theme One: The Why

This research theme explored why farm operators in north Durham diversified their small-scale family farms through the use of agritourism. All nine participants in this research were small-scale family owned and operated farms before they diversified. Interviewee 4 was the only research participant who identified that they had to hire employees outside of their family since diversifying through agritourism. The objective of this theme is to gain insights into why farm operators decided to incorporate agritourism into their small-scale family farm business model. Understanding these decision-making insights aids in interpreting the role of agritourism to support small-scale farming and new realities of agriculture in north Durham.
The nine farm operators who participated in the research interviews had diversified their farm operation through agritourism from between six months to 35 years. On average, these nine agritourism operations have been operational for approximately 15 years. When dividing the nine interviewees into two groups, there is a noticeable seven-year difference between when small-scale family farms diversified, with five interviewees ranging between six months to 13 years and the other four interviewees ranging between 20 to 35 years. Eight of the nine interviewees noted that diversifying through agritourism was a viable option for small-scale family farms in north Durham to consider. The primary reasons the interviewees considered agritourism a viable option was that it would allow for them to continue farming, to sustain their business, and to teach and show visitors their craft. Interviewee 7 opted not to answer this question.

The nine farm operations offered a range of different activities to their visitors. Examples from north Durham businesses include pick-your-own flower operations and on-farm stores with a variety of local goods that include but are not limited to: homegrown ready flower bouquets, a variety of house plants, local food and beverage products, garden and home décor, locally-grown pumpkins, squash, sunflowers, radishes, tomato, cucumber, a variety of livestock, apples, and homemade sheep products that range from dryer balls to clothing. Agritourism operations in north Durham also offer Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares in their farms, petting zoos with a variety of animals, seasonally themed events, teaching classes on how to make their own products, hayrides, pick your own operations, play areas for kids, picnics in lavender fields, sales of homemade lavender products, wedding photography, school tours and events, corn mazes, Christmas tree ornaments and decorations, cut-your-own Christmas tree operation, dairy farms, and spaces that individuals can rent out and use for their leisure.

Interviewees noted that they offered interactive and do-it-yourself activities so visitors could gain a hands-on experience and learn to do something farm-related themselves. Interviewee 8 explained, “An open-door policy for farms is becoming the new norm; we need to teach the public what we can about farming while still ensuring our bio-security stays intact.” Finally, all nine interviewees stated that their northern location in the Region of Durham was not the deciding factor in their decision to diversify. Interviewee 9 stated, “We moved to north Durham
to open our business […] location had nothing to do with it, we would have done the same thing if we bought property in northern Oshawa.”

4.1.1 The Big Picture Behind Diversification

The main question in this theme was to investigate the motivations for why farm operators diversified with agritourism. Interviewees chose to diversify their farming methods for four primary reasons (see Figure 6). Economic constraints and finances were noted by two interviewees as the driving factor behind diversification; however, the other seven interviewees identified different motivations. Six interviewees made the personal choice to diversify through agritourism, three of whom made this decision as a retirement plan for themselves; the other three diversified to teach the public about agriculture, have visitors to their farm, and expand their hobby into a business. In north Durham, a commonality amongst farm operators is that they recognize that being a part of the agricultural community takes dedication and if they want to see the agriculture sector continue to grow and sustain itself it may mean working beyond 65 years of age, which is typically viewed as retirement age.
Interviewee 1, who will reach 65 years of age, which is typically understood as retirement age in two years, recognizes that the Region of Durham’s population is increasing. According to Statistics Canada (2019b), it is expected to reach approximately one million people by 2031. Therefore, to prepare for this influx of individuals, Interviewee 1 has opened, on a part-time basis, a pick and arrange your own flower bouquet operation. As well, their business offers a boutique store where individuals can enjoy the patio and shop for some homemade goods in the summer months. Interviewee 1 stated that they believe, “that with this increased population, most likely in the south, individuals will begin to become even further distanced from their agricultural roots; we need to figure out a way to get individuals to visit the North and agritourism seems like a good way to do that.” Interviewee 1 also indicated that individuals are becoming more distanced from agriculture because they have the convenience of shopping at big box stores like Costco and Wal-Mart only minutes away from their homes. Therefore, once Interviewee 1 retires, they will begin to run the agritourism business full time and expand their operation to sell livestock products from their farm as well as offer tours of their facilities to individual visitors and schools. Then, once individuals are drawn to their business, they will hopefully visit other small-scale family farms in north Durham. The three interviewees who have made the personal choice to pursue agritourism as a retirement strategy have done so because
they want individuals to recognize the importance of sustaining the agricultural sector and are willing to work beyond retirement age to do so.

Beyond making the personal choice to pursue agritourism as a retirement plan, three interviewees made the personal choice to pursue agritourism on different merits. Interviewee 5 wanted to invite the public to their farm operation to “put a fun spin on teaching the public about farming and showing them what ‘rural’ is really all about.” In essence, this interviewee expressed that they wanted to make themselves a tourist destination to draw individuals to their farming operation as well as other businesses in north Durham region. Interviewee 5 and their family did this through offering visitors’ activities such as corn mazes, tours of the facility, pick-your-own homegrown fruits and vegetables, a play area for children, and themed events on the property. As well, if they do not have what a visitor has come for, they will guide them to a local business that does. Interviewee 6 chose to buy an already-established agritourism operation because they wanted to run a farm operation that interacts with and allows the public to visit. Interviewee 6 believed that individuals still want to have hands-on experiences where they can procure their own good or service, such as a Christmas tree, but that there are limited options to do so when living in the southern portion of the Region of Durham. Finally, Interviewee 9 chose to pursue agritourism because they wanted to teach the public about their hobby. Interviewee 9 has raised sheep and worked with their wool to make homemade products since they were a child. Therefore, to expand their sole-proprietor business and engage the public on how to work with ewe wool they opened their mill to visitors and offered guided tours, as well as classes on how to create your own products out of the ewe fiber.

In contrast to the interviewees who chose to pursue agritourism, Interviewees 2 and 7 pursued agritourism due to economic constraints. Twenty-five years ago, Interviewee 2 recognized that their small-scale family farm was not going to be able to sustain itself unless it offered a different service than other farms in north Durham’s agricultural sector. Interviewee 2 said “individuals were slowly starting to buy goods and services based on convenience and location, and that buying and helping local businesses was not a priority anymore.” Therefore, in order to sustain their business by increasing their revenue and to stay in the agricultural sector, Interviewee 2 diversified their small-scale family farm and began to allow visitors onto their
property. They did this by offering guided school and individual tours of their apple orchards, a pick-your-own operation, and themed events based on the season.

Interviewee 7 purchased their agritourism operation approximately four years ago as an already established agritourism operation. The business was originally founded on the idea of direct-to-consumer sales, which is a selling concept that allows Interviewee 7 to sell directly to consumers. One of the ways they have continued to sell directly to consumers is through offering CSAs to individuals. Interviewee 7 also stated that “we bought this business because it was an already established business that operates on direct consumer sales, we felt this was a good investment decision to make.” Interviewee 8 abstained from answering this question as they did not feel comfortable providing an answer.

4.2 Theme Two: The How

The second theme in this research study explored the impact of agritourism to operations in north Durham. The objective of this theme is to determine if diversification through agritourism is able to economically sustain small-scale family farms or if farm operators need to continue to adapt and change their business model. Understanding if agritourism can sustain small-scale family farms is important because it can provide farm operators the knowledge and ability to diversify their business and remain active within the agricultural sector. It also may provide the capacity for farm operators who have diversified through agritourism to learn from one another so that they can maintain their business, so that visitors can continue to buy local while experiencing the agritourism aspects of the farm operation.

The consensus from the nine interviewees was that implementing agritourism into their small-scale family farm practices was a relatively easy process as they already own(?) the land and facilities to diversify. The largest expenses were related to the costs to implement the desired activities, liability insurance, marketing their business, and purchasing products. No specific figures were given in the interviews to indicate the exact cost increase that interviewees experienced. The interviewees found that once their agritourism business had been operational for more than five years they started to hire employees outside of their immediate family. Four out of the nine interviewees have had to hire staff outside of their immediate family; these extra staff were hired to support the businesses during their respective busy periods. The additional
staff members were hired in the summer months or during the business’s busy months, depending on the goods and services they offer, and usually consisted of one or two summer students or extra farm laborers.

All nine interviewees also noted that they did not believe any negative costs would be incurred by their neighbors due to becoming an agritourist operation. The consensus was that agritourism would not only increase their own clientele but help to increase the clientele of the surrounding farms and establishments because visitors would likely visit other local attractions as well as dine at local restaurants. Interviewee 3 noted, “By becoming an agritourism operation, I believe we are helping other local businesses because we are increasing the number of overall visitors to north Durham and most business owners are not afraid to direct people to other local businesses if they have something they cannot offer the visitor.” This statement is true for all interviewees as one commonality amongst them, as business owners, is that their main concern is about attracting visitors and business to north Durham even if it means directing them to other local businesses.

4.2.1 Agritourism’s Effect on Total Gross Income

Five out of the nine interviewees found that diversifying their farming techniques through the use of agritourism increased their total annual gross income (as seen in Figure 7). One commonality between Interviewee 2 and 5 is that they both found their total annual gross income increased by 4x over their original total gross income before they became an agritourist operation. Neither Interviewee 2 nor 5 wanted to provide specific amounts in the interviews. Further, both interviewees noted their biggest financial intake came from offering visitors a pick-your-own option and different seasonally-themed events. However, one difference between the interviewees is that Interviewee 5 is a CSA operation. A CSA farm allows visitors to have a direct connection to the farm through a financial contribution; three out of the five interviewees who experienced an increase in total annual gross income are CSA farm operations. The financial contribution in CSA farming helps farm operators buy seeds and materials that they need to grow and raise the food, pay a decent wage to farm hands, and provide a living wage to themselves as farmers. In return, farm operators provide those visitors who have chosen to partake in CSA farming with fresh, top-quality, locally-grown food.
Interviewee 6 bought their agritourism business three years ago. Prior to their purchase, the farm had been operating as an agritourism business for roughly 20 years before that. After buying the business, one aspect of the farm operation they improved upon was marketing what the business had to offer. They were able to market the business differently than other farm operations in north Durham, as they are an agritourist operation. Interviewee 6 explained, “Marketing our business through different outlets such as a new website, newspapers, and online ads helped us to expand our clientele, marketing helped create a base for individuals to starting spreading the word about our business by word of mouth.” Thus, Interviewee 6 contributes a lot of their increased financial success to better marketing of their agritourism operation and the activities that visitors can experience while visiting.

Interviewee 4 has been an operating a farming business since 1969, having expanded the agritourism side of the business since the early 1990s. Interview 4 stated that they make an extra $10,000-$20,000 a year from the tourism experiences they offer their visitors. They find certain theme-specific events do better than their other events because visitors often enjoyed themed events for different holidays or seasons. Further, Interviewee 4 stated that they have found, “Individuals only want a slight tourism experience; they pick one or two of the crops they desire
then buy the rest of what they want; individuals are looking for a slight event or experience when visiting an agritourism business.” Interviewee 4 went on to explain that they do well financially as a business because agritourism has allowed them to offer visitors a one-stop-shop where they can have a farm experience, participate in an event, or simply purchase what they desire without participating in the experience/event side of the business.

Interviewee 8 abstained from answering this question as they did not want to discuss the finance impact that agritourism has had on their business. Further, Interviewees 3 and 7 both stated that diversifying through agritourism has allowed them to break even financially. Interviewee 3 explained that they are lucky if they break even on a yearly basis. They also stated, “We do a lot of the work ourselves and it’s hard to monetize the time we put towards the business.” Both interviewees explained that diversifying through agritourism was not part of their original business plan. As they have not experienced an increase in total annual gross income since diversifying, both interviewees stated they will be adding different events that allow visitors to have more of a hands-on experience while visiting their agritourism business. Interviewee 3 explained that this may include offering visitors’ workshops on how to create their own lavender products, with the hope that this will not only expand their clientele but increase their total gross income.

The outlier for this question was Interviewee 1, as they experienced a decrease in their total annual gross income since diversifying through agritourism. At the time of the interview, Interviewee 1 had only been an agritourist business for one month. Therefore, they recognized that, “Money needs to be spent to grow, so a decrease in our total gross income is to be expected.” Interviewee 1 has big aspirations for their business since diversifying. They hope that with the help of their town they will be able to increase their clientele base, offer different and more pick and arrange your own flower bouquet classes, market their business more, begin offering wedding photography, and expand what local products they sell in their boutique. Interviewee 1 also believes that, “There are lots of opportunities in north Durham and all it would take is Sunderland, Beaverton, and Cannington supporting each other more rather than working as separate entities to improve the economics of agritourism businesses in north Durham.”
4.3 Theme Three: The What

The third theme in this research study examines the role of the local and regional government in north Durham and what they are or are not doing to aid small-scale family farms that have diversified through agritourism, or those that are considering diversifying. This theme aims to determine what is and can be done by local and regional governments to fully integrate agritourism businesses into the agricultural sector. The objective of this theme is to discover if governments, at both the local and regional levels, are making agritourism a practical diversification technique for farm operators. Determining whether the legislation that the local and regional government implements is helping or hindering agritourism operations is important because it will ultimately determine if farm operators will diversify through agritourism. If the government makes it difficult to diversify through agritourism, farm operators will be less likely to use this diversification technique, therefore depriving farm operations of a technique that may be a solution to rural revitalization in north Durham.

All nine interviewees stated that the local and regional government communicates and provides support to them very infrequently. The interviewees further commented that communication was strong when they first developed or bought their business but it was mainly one-way communication about business logistics and red tape issues with both levels of government. Interviewee 4 stated, “The government never reaches out to us; they use us as a tourist attraction when needed but that does not help us grow in any way.” Two out of the three interviewees who either bought or established their business within the last five years noted that the Region of Durham’s Rural Economic Development Coordinator was a valuable resource for them, as this individual provides business owners with a hands-on approach as they visit the farm, meet with the owner, and supply them with any local connections they may require. However, Interviewee 1 stated that it would be “useful to have a government employee at either level of government provide direction on how to implement certain strategies to aid our agritourism business.”

Interviewees noted that no strategies were presented to them by the Region of Durham because the Planning Department legislation is not in sync with the Economic Development Department objectives; therefore, planning policies do not allow viable strategies that would support the economic development and growth of agritourism operations in north Durham. The
Region of Durham’s Economic Development Department’s mission is “to partner with others to support innovation, business growth and economic opportunities for the Region of Durham” (The Regional Municipality of Durham, 2017). However, Interviewee 4 stated that their innovation and desire to expand their business is hindered by the legislation and other policies that the Region of Durham’s Planning department implements because, “The government moves to slow; they do not know enough about agriculture and our sector, so they take too much time to develop policies that become quickly outdated.” Therefore, as Interviewee 3 noted, in order to promote efficient growth and development the local and regional governments need to work better internally, with one another, and with the agricultural business owners in north Durham to improve the overall efficiency of the sector.

Six out of the nine interviewees attribute the successful implementation of agritourism practices into their farming practices to one not-for-profit organization: Durham Farm Fresh Marketing Association. Durham Farm Fresh Marketing Association was established in 1993 and represents farms, farmers’ markets, retailers, chefs and restaurants located with the Region of Durham to help local producers market their local products to other community members (Durham Farm Fresh, 1993). Interviewee 3 indicated that organizations such as the Ontario Lavender Association helps the agritourism feature of their business more because the organization is associated with the services and products that they offer the public. Other interviewees who became affiliated with organizations related to their agritourism business were Interviewee 6, who joined the Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario, and Interviewee 9, who is a member of Ontario Handweavers & Spinners.

To enhance the regional government’s awareness of the product and service standards needed to compete in the agritourist market place, interviewees agreed that more members of both the local and regional governments need to visit and learn about the functionalities of north Durham’s agritourism operations. Interviewee 4 stated, “The regional government does not understand the complications that come along with the policies that they implement into agricultural businesses.” Eight of the nine interviewees also believed that the regional and local governments could better enhance product and service awareness through improved business marketing techniques. These techniques could include making information about their businesses more readily available on different communication platforms, both in print and online. Beyond
improving techniques, Interviewee 4 noted that if either the local or regional government
improved marketing strategies they would have to realize that, “Blanket statements about
agritourism operations do not work because every agricultural and agritourism operation is
different.” Thus, the consensus was that the local and regional governments need to take the time
and effort to become more educated about agritourism businesses and the agritourism market
place before they make policies to govern them.

4.3.1 Government Development Regulations and Operation Requirements

As seen in Figure 8, seven of the nine interviewees expressed they believed the policy
regulations implemented by the Region of Durham are to constraining their agritourism
operation.

![Figure 8: How Government Development Regulations and Operation Requirements are Perceived by Agritourism Businesses](image)

Interviewee 4 noted that beyond the Region of Durham, the Province’s policy regulations
are out of date as well. They attributed this to the fact that the government is run through a top-
down approach. This means the Province of Ontario governs the regions, which then govern their
respective municipalities. The interviewee noted that, realistically, the Province has little to no
idea what is going on at the grassroots level. Interviewee 4 even stated, “The government moves
too slow because they don’t know about the topic, especially when it comes to agriculture. So, then they take too long to research the topic and by the time what the Province has implemented gets to the towns the world has moved on; government employees do not realize that the world moves on without the government.” Interviewee 4 then explained that they believe the local, regional, and provincial governments need to become more in touch with the agricultural sector so that they can learn, through experience, what effects their regulations will have on agritourism farming operations.

Interviewee 5 is a part of the Uxbridge Agricultural Advisory Committee. This committee will use “input from local farmers and agricultural stakeholders to identify new directions for industry growth and new ways to cut red tape and spur business in the sector” (Dillon, 2019, p. 1). The goal of the agricultural advisory committee is to therefore ensure that the provincial government is listening to and understanding local concerns, and prioritizing how to solve issues being faced by farmers and agricultural stakeholders at the local level. Interviewee 5 joined this committee to ensure that more constraints are not placed on agricultural and agritourism businesses. An example of a constraint that Interviewee 9 experienced was the rural signage policies that dictate where the sign must be located on the property and how many words can be on it. Placement of signs is important to businesses in the agricultural sector because in the rural landscape it is hard to see the signs from the roadway due to the signage distance policies the local and regional government implement. Beyond limiting constraints, Interviewee 5 hopes that eventually the Agricultural Advisory Committee will be able to influence the local governments policies decisions to “make implementing tourism on agricultural land an easier form of diversification.”

Interviewee 7 explained that quota policies have constrained their business from expanding, thus making agritourism impractical. In Ontario, egg farmers like Interviewee 7 can only have as many as 100 laying hens before they are required to buy quota, which they stated is approximately a $2 million purchase. This quota system is in place to limit the number of hens that farm operators can have; as well, it sets a price for eggs to ensure farm operations remain profitable. However, Interviewee 7 argues that “if we could buy more hens without paying the quota, we could sell more eggs to not only our visitors but larger chain grocery stores as well, the quota cost prevents us from doing this.”
Finally, Interviewee 2 described that government policies constrain agritourism businesses because, “Agriculture is advancing and agritourism is becoming a more prominent business route for farm operators to take; however, planners and the policies they develop at all levels of government are not advancing as rapidly.” In essence, Interviewee 2 explained that policies and regulations cannot be long-lasting “cookie cutter” policies, that they should not anticipate that all businesses will be similar, especially with small-scale family farms that diversify into agritourism operations.

Three out of the nine interviewees believe that the government development regulations and operation requirements will make agritourism businesses impractical because they do not allow business expansion. Interviewee 3 explained that the Ontario Building Code classifies a farm building as a building that does not contain a residential occupancy and which is devoted to the practice of farming or to house livestock and equipment. As their business deals with lavender and the creation of lavender products, they are having difficulties being able to build a new building since they are not classified under the term ‘farm building’ and must follow commercial building policies. However, commercial policies interfere with the agricultural zoning of their property. Interviewee 3 further stated, “Every regulation is so costly and so much work for each business; the government has no idea about running any type of business in the agricultural sector so they implement these crazy rules that we are subject to.”

Interviewee 6 has had no issues with the development regulations and operation requirements that both the regional and local governments impose. However, they claimed the regulations and operational requirements that are required do not make it easy to run an agritourism business. They stated, “With the costs to make a development application, building permit application, or to appeal a decision that council made, small businesses like ourselves cannot afford to expand.” Interviewee 6 would like to eventually sever a piece of their land and create a building where they can sell their goods and services. However, this would mean paying application fees to the local government, potential appeal fees, and higher land taxes if the building gets zoned as commercial. Therefore, Interviewee 6 noted that until these regulation and operational requirements become more realistic for small-scale agritourism businesses to afford they will not be able to expand their business.
The outlier for this question was Interviewee 8, as they believe the government development regulations and operation requirements will make agritourism businesses more practical for farm operators to operate. Interviewee 8 stated, “A strict set of regulations and operation requirements means that everyone is on the same playing field because both agritourism businesses and small-scale family farms have to follow the same regulations.” They believed that agriculture has become more modernized because of consumers, which is why agritourism businesses are becoming more prominent in the agriculture sector. However, they also believed that regulations and operational requirements should remain rigid and consistent for all businesses in the agriculture sector to not allow agritourism businesses to expand and replace small-scale family farms in north Durham. Overall, Interviewee 8 believes the regulations and operational requirements should remain rigid and consistent for all businesses in the agriculture sector so that some businesses do not get advantages over others in terms of what they are and are not allowed to do.
5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Returning to the Three Research Themes

The narratives of local agritourism business operators in north Durham region provided a rich canvas to understand and examine agricultural diversification. The analysis of the interviews highlighted key findings with respect to the research’s overall aim and objectives. A brief summary of each research objective is highlighted below.

5.1.1 Research Question 1

The first research question aimed to determine how farmers are utilizing agritourism as a diversification strategy. Farm operators discussed their motivations to utilize agritourism as a diversification technique for non-financial motivations or financial motivations. Six out of the nine interviewees pursued diversification through agritourism as a personal choice. Only one-third of interviewees noted economics and finances as the primary motivator behind their diversification choice. This finding study differs from Ollenburg and Buckley (2007) that suggested that there is a growing consensus that farm operations are financially motivated to pursue agritourism as a diversification strategy in North America and Europe. Farm operators in north Durham viewed agritourism as a next step/stage in life and as a way to give back to the community by teaching and sharing the joys of farming and their hobbies with individuals who visit their farming operation.

5.1.2 Research Question 2

Research question two examined how agritourism diversification could assist in revitalizing the Townships of Brock, Scugog, and Uxbridge. Five interviewees, representing 55% of the sample, experienced an increase in their total gross annual income since diversifying through agritourism. Interviewees attributed this increase to the agritourism side of their business as it has allowed them to offer visitors an experience or event in a rural setting, CSA, and the ability to market their businesses differently than other businesses in north Durham’s rural sector. This research demonstrates that small-scale family farms in north Durham have largely experienced a positive economic benefit since diversifying their farming practices through the use of agritourism. The commonality between this study and the Veeck et al. (2016) study is that
agritourism has had positive economic impacts on small-scale family farms in terms of income, wages, employment, and tax revenues. However, it is important to note that both studies found that these positive economic impacts occurred when the small-scale family farm was located near urban communities (Veeck et al., 2016).

5.1.3 Research Question 3

The third research question explored strategies that the municipal government could implement to encourage and aid farmers who have diversified their farming through the use of agritourism. Interviewees identified that support from the municipal government was important when diversifying through agritourism, as policies can hinder the development of the farm operation. Eight out of the nine interviewees stated that government development regulations and operation requirements will make agritourism businesses more difficult because the policies constrain day-to-day operations and do not allow farm operators to easily expand their business on their own land. The practice of severing land is met with mixed reactions by farm operators and municipal governments. If the government development regulations and operation requirements continue to constrain the ability for small-scale family farms to diversify through the use of agritourism it may deter farm operators from diversifying when agritourism could be a useful solution in revitalizing north Durham.

5.2 Scholarly and Practical Contributions

5.2.1 Scholarly Contributions

Building on the existing literature, this research on agritourism in north Durham provides three scholarly contributions: differing evidence from the published literature on motivations for farm diversification, confirmation of connections between rural development and agritourism, and confirmation of the interrelationship between government policies and regulations and agritourism development.

The literature on agritourism business operators’ motivations for diversification is extensive; however, this research highlighted findings that do not concur with the broader literature. Ollenburg and Buckley (2007) note that in both North America and Europe there is an ongoing debate about what the primary motivations for pursuing agritourism. In their study,
financial motivations for pursuing agritourism were the most prominent motivations and non-financial motivations, such as social factors, were secondary. Eckert (2004) also determined that an increased income for farm operators is the most commonly-cited motivation depicted in the literature for why farmers choose to pursue diversification through agritourism. This research has therefore contributed an additional case study to the exploration of the motivations for small-scale family farms to pursue agritourism. The findings do not fully correlate with the literature, as the primary motivation for farm operators in north Durham to pursue agritourism was non-financial. The research suggests that farm operators pursue agritourism as a retirement plan or next stage in the life of their farming career. The north Durham farm operators interviewed for this research are dedicated to the agriculture sector and are therefore also motivated to pursue agritourism to share their hobby and give back to the community by teaching their visitors through hands-on experiences, where their locally sourced produce and other goods comes from. This finding adds to the literature, highlighting that farm operators are diversifying through agritourism for non-financial reasons. Further research would be necessary to understand if the findings from north Durham are replicated in other jurisdictions. Therefore, the literature may need to expand its recognition of motivations for pursuing agritourism.

This research validates the growing literature on the connections between rural development and agritourism through exploring the operating context and local goods offered by agritourism operations in north Durham. Although several studies have noted the use of agritourism to rejuvenate rural economies (Barbieri et al., 2016; Sharpley & Vass, 2006), few have provided specific examples of what goods and services successful agritourism businesses offer (cf. Veeck et al., 2016). Within this research, pick-your own operations and agritourism operations that offered hands-on experiences were the most financially successful businesses. However, when unable to offer the visitor a good or service, farm operators would direct the visitor to a nearby local operation that could offer them what they wanted. By doing this, the economic benefit of the sale from the visitor was kept within the three north Durham townships. The domestically-targeted agritourism initiatives have likely helped increase farm operator’s exposure to local customers as well.

This research further validated the literature on the interrelationship between government policies and regulations and the negative impact on the profitability and evolution of agritourism.
Interviewees in north Durham described how the current agriculture policies and regulations hinder trade in particular types of agricultural products by influencing farmers’ decisions about what crops to grow or how much land to farm. For example, Lichtenberg (2002) stated that policies and regulations will negatively impact the agriculture sector by using policies such as price supports or set-aside programs, or by making different types of production or land-use relatively more or less expensive through regulations, taxes and subsidies, or standards. Farm operators in north Durham concurred with this statement as they found that government development regulations and operation requirements do in fact make agritourism businesses impractical as policies hinder their crop development, signage strategies, and their ability to expand their business. Farm operators would like local, municipal, and provincial planners who implement legislative control over the policies and regulations that effect their agritourism businesses to visit the farm and experience and interact with the farm operators and guests to experience and learn what it is like to run a farming/agritourist business. Overall, farm operators want planners at all levels to come and see how the policies they write affect the livelihoods of real-life people.

5.2.2 Contributions to Local Practice

In addition to the scholarly contributions of this research, there are practical insights and applications that emerge from the findings. The results from the study can help policy planners at local, municipal, and provincial levels to design and implement policies to help small-scale family farms transition into becoming an agritourism operation. As well, these policies should aim to support existing agritourism operations in navigating and maintaining their businesses once they have diversified.

For municipal planners, agritourism farm operators in north Durham and farm organizations identified in this research provide clear examples of the benefits to both horizontal and vertical networking. Vertical networks relate to cooperation of partners belonging to the same chain. Meanwhile, horizontal networks refer to cooperation across businesses that are primarily competitors (Gellynck & Kuhne, 2010). Informal vertical networks between agritourism businesses have the capability to provide farm operators with valuable insights and mentorship. These mentorships can help farm operators adopt new elements into the businesses, provide other agritourism businesses with visitors, and alleviate costs associated with equipment
purchases or rentals. As a whole, these networks can also provide general support and develop a sense of community among north Durham agritourism operations. Local governments should consider actively governing and developing these informal networks, as this will allow agritourism farm operators to have a communal space where they can learn from and develop protocols based on what has worked or not worked for other agritourism operators. However, in order to ensure that these networks stay informal and are successful, agritourism operators should be consulted through focus groups or surveys for guidance. It is important these networks stay informal so that farm operators do not face any undue constraints.

This research also identified the need for a variety of types of networks and relationships for agritourism businesses, and for those businesses looking to diversify through agritourism. The type of relationship depends on the context of the enterprise and the goods and services offered. For the agritourism sector in north Durham, the use of informal horizontal networks alongside vertical networking with Durham Farm Fresh Marketing Association suited the needs of the sector and aided in beginning to fully integrate agritourism into the Region of Durham’s agriculture sector. Though there was an absence of common formal networks amongst agritourism farms, this does not suggest that networking would not be valuable for these businesses but that the relationships and models that are presented to them are not suiting their needs and are thus not appealing. Six interviewees expressed that it is beneficial for them to network and become a member of Durham Farm Fresh Marketing Association. This highlights that broader networks are desired and used, but may operate in different ways such as primarily through social media or with a broader spatial extent. The assessment of the needs of the farm agritourism operations can benefit the agriculture sector’s growth by ensuring that the help being provided is the help that farm operators will find most valuable at the grassroots business level.

Agritourism operations require support from the local agriculture sector, through the use of goals, objectives, policies and action items noted in comprehensive plans that identify agritourism as an important approach to strengthening the farming industry. There is an opportunity for agritourism strategies which can be incorporated into functional plans, such as farmland protection plans or community-based agricultural economic development plans. Incorporating agritourism into these plans will aid in ensuring that agritourism is a viable revitalization strategy. From a practical standpoint, it would be advantageous if the local
governments in north Durham adopted zoning regulations that encourage agritourism and its accompanying economic benefits without imposing undue constraints on the farm operators. north Durham farm operators would like to see this done by defining agritourism and its specific uses within the local zoning by-laws and official plans, as this will permit agritourism as more than an accessory use to primary agriculture. In particular, policies should also move away from treating agritourism as a conscious, single, one-off, planned event and recognize the long term needs of supporting farmers in the transition to diversifying through agritourism. Providing business skills and resources suitable for running farm-based businesses should also be a part of the local and regional governments strategy to help local small-scale farms. Thus, defining agritourism as a specific term will mitigate undue impacts on agritourism businesses and the businesses that are working farmland.

In order to support an environment for future agritourism growth in north Durham, economic development organizations, both at the local and regional level, should implement programs that would allow small-scale family farms to become rural business incubators. This would allow policy planners at both the regional and local level to work in tandem with the economic development organizations to assist in creating agritourism policies to build a toolbox of practical and actionable agritourism business tools, such as agritourism business plans, agritourism succession plans, management skills, and skills to work effectively with small-scale family farms. Many of the interviewees stated they did not know where to begin when they started their agritourism business. This suggestion would help them as the toolbox could include strategies for identifying opportunities and improving objective knowledge, such as cost-benefit analysis, competitive analysis, pricing, and impact assessments. Further, maintaining the seasonality of agritourism operations is critical as it keeps the farm family renewed and resilient, in both a social and economic sense.

The research conducted influences the future of agritourism by exploring and determining why farm operators in north Durham diversify through the use of agritourism. If more farm operators choose to diversify through agritourism it has the potential to contribute to the development of the Region of Durham and the three townships of Brock, Scugog, and Uxbridge by offering socioeconomic benefits and development opportunities. Agritourism has the potential to increase development because it will expand a market of agritourism businesses
that is currently not contributing to the economics of north Durham; this could also mean more employment opportunities for residents. Therefore, when farm operators choose to diversify it will allow a new agriculture industry to flourish.

Further, as farm operators continue to diversify through agritourism there will be socioeconomic benefits for north Durham residents and farm operators in the agriculture sector. The socioeconomic benefits include but are not limited to farmers’ ability to retain their rural lifestyles and keep their farmland, incorporating local food production in businesses, socializing with visitors, recreational opportunities through school tours, cultural preservation and landscape management. In contrast with economic benefits, many of which can be measured in terms of money, the sociocultural benefits from farmers who continue to diversify through agritourism will be seen in terms of social texture and welfare of people and families (Barbieri, 2013; Tew & Barbieri, 2012), which provides some benefits to consumers and agritourists; for example, it could potentially be a mechanism by which individuals become fond of culture and nature, buy farm-grown products and learn about agriculture customs. In sociology terms, social texture is understood as texture as a metaphor for the ‘dynamic’ and hard-to-capture qualities of social life (Fuente, 2019). This could therefore increase visitors’ desire to visit other agritourism businesses and contribute to the tourism industry in the Region of Durham (Sznajder et al., 2009).

**5.3 Suggestions for Future Research**

The findings of this research point to areas for further explorations of agritourism in a rural Ontario context. To extend this study, it would be useful to continue following and updating the experiences of the nine interviewees who participated. Following a more formal longitudinal study framework over a 5-7-year time period would build upon the findings of this study and help determine the long-term effects that agritourism diversification has on farm operators, their families and their business. It would also be valuable to specifically determine how much each of these 9 interviewees had to spend when first diversifying. Determining the financial undertaking that it takes to diversify would allow future farm operators to know beforehand if it is possible to afford the cost of diversifying through the use of agritourism.

This research presents a snapshot of an evolving agritourism sector in north Durham. To fully capture and understand if agritourism can help to revitalize rural townships across Ontario,
A longer-term approach would be beneficial, where one would study the cause and effect relationships amongst the agritourism farms across Ontario, farm operators, visitors, and the local and regional governments; this could aid in identifying best practices for agritourism businesses, keys to success, or barriers to growth that the businesses might face. Tracking agritourism operations across Ontario over time would also help researchers better understand the characteristics of successful operations and why some farm operators have diversified their small-scale family farm to incorporate agritourism practices and others have not. Additionally, future long-term research may be able to identify the rural economic development benefits of industry agglomeration and how businesses vary based on the type of agritourism operations enterprise, regional location attributes, and spillovers from other local industries.

This research was focused on north Durham, which has a specific context that may not represent other communities in rural Ontario and further afield as well. As noted in Chapter 3, north Durham has a high concentration of businesses in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting sector. Although this may be reflective of rural communities as a whole, the specifics are undoubtedly unique to north Durham, especially with its geographical location being so close to many urban communities. Therefore, to further explore whether the findings from north Durham are replicated in a broader geographical location, it is recommended that future studies engage in a comparative case study in a similarly defined area, where agritourism is becoming a prevalent diversification technique. In particular, the research suggested that agritourism businesses in north Durham are motivated to diversify through agritourism as a personal choice, yet other studies have noted that small-scale family farms are motivated to pursue agritourism due to financial constraints (Eckert, 2004). Further exploration into the motivations of why farm operators diversify through the use of agritourism will contribute to the agritourism and rural tourism literature and provide practical applications to farm operators who are looking to diversify.

Finally, this research study was qualitative and therefore largely descriptive and exploratory in nature. There remains an opportunity for an investigation into the impacts of agritourism on rural economic development strategies, goals, and programs. The findings have indicated that a majority of the interviewees in north Durham saw an increase in total gross annual income after diversifying through agritourism. As each agritourism business in north
Durham offers different goods and services there are indications that each business also has different impacts on the economic and social goals of rural development. As the literature on the economic contributions of agritourism is divided (see Veeck et al., 2016), it would be interesting to explore the economic contributions that agritourism operations bring to their communities across rural Ontario and determine how that affects the local and regional economic development strategies, goals, and programs.
References


APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Questions: Agritourism as a Solution to Rural Revitalization - The Case Study of North Durham Region

The questions are broken down into three parts which are as follows:

Part One: Why Did You Diversify Your Farming Operation?

1. Do you think that the consensus amongst farmers in North Durham Region is that diversifying traditional farming practices through the use of agritourism is a viable option or not?
2. Do you feel that you were forced into pursuing agritourism due to economic constraints, or was it your personal choice?
3. How long has your farm been an agritourist operation?
4. What type of agritourism activities does your farm implement? Why?
5. Do you believe that your northern location within the Regional Municipality of Durham caused you to become an agritourist operation?

Part Two: Has Agritourism Helped You Economically?

1. Has incorporating agritourism into your farming practices increased or decreased your total gross income? If comfortable please provide by how much.
2. When first diversifying your farming practices through the use of agritourism was a large financial investment required to fund the implementation? Please explain.
3. Have you had to hire more employees on the farm since becoming an agritourist farm?
4. What costs might be incurred to you and your neighboring farms because you have engaged in agritourism?

5. Has your customer base increased or decreased since becoming an agritourist operation? How has this affected your business?

Part Three: What Strategies Can Aid in Implementing Agritourism?

6. Has your local government or regional government approached you with any viable strategies that would aid in you implementing agritourism activities into your farming practices?

7. Do you feel that there are any organizations that your farm could become affiliated with to ensure that agritourism is implemented properly into your traditional farming practices?

8. Do you feel that government development regulations and operation requirements will make agritourism businesses impractical? Why or why not?

9. How do you think that the regional government can enhance the awareness of the product and service standards needed to compete in the “agritourist” marketplace?

10. Do you personally believe that the regional government needs to become more educated on agritourism practices before then create policies/documentation surrounding them? Explain.
APPENDIX B: RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD APPROVAL

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARDS
Certification of Ethical Acceptability of Research
Involving Human Participants

APPROVAL PERIOD: February 4, 2019
EXPIRY DATE: February 3, 2021
REB: G
REB NUMBER: 19-01-029
TYPE OF REVIEW: Delegated
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Gibson, Ryan (gibsonr@uoguelph.ca)
DEPARTMENT: SEDRD
SPONSOR(S): N/A
TITLE OF PROJECT: Evaluating Agritourism as a Solution to Revitalizing Rural Ontario: The Case Study of Brock, Ontario

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The members of the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board have examined the protocol which describes the participation of the human participants in the above-named research project and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University’s ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement, 2nd Edition.

The REB requires that researchers:
- Adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB.
- Receive approval from the REB for any modifications before they can be implemented.
- Report any change in the source of funding.
- Report unexpected events or incidental findings to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants, and the continuation of the protocol.
- Are responsible for ascertaining and complying with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements with respect to consent and the protection of privacy of participants in the jurisdiction of the research project.

The Principal Investigator must:
- Ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of facilities or institutions involved in the research are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.
- Submit an Annual Renewal to the REB upon completion of the project. If the research is a multi-year project, a status report must be submitted annually prior to the expiry date. Failure to submit an annual status report will lead to your study being suspended and potentially terminated.

The approval for this protocol terminates on the EXPIRY DATE, or the term of your appointment or employment at the University of Guelph whichever comes first.

Signature: ____________________________ Date: January 20, 2020

Stephen P. Lewis
Chair, Research Ethics Board-General