Rural Policy Research Priorities
Agricultural and Rural Policy Research Theme

OMAFRA-UofG Research Partnership

Presentation at Meet and Greet
May 06, 2010
Purpose of today’s presentation:

1. Describe the current rural policy research priorities under the Agriculture and Rural Policy research theme

2. Outline some of the opportunities for future collaborations.
Background: OMAFRA/UofG Partnership

• 2008 was the first year of the newly negotiated 10-year OMAFRA/UofG Partnership Agreement.

• Under this partnership, there are seven research themes:
  1) Agriculture and Rural Policy
  2) Bioeconomy – Industrial Uses
  3) Emergency Management
  4) Environmental Sustainability
  5) Food For Health
  6) Product Development and Enhancement through Value Chain
  7) Production Systems (Animal and Plant)

• The 2008/2009 fiscal year was the first year of calls for proposals. Of the 23 research proposals submitted, 6 were related to rural policy.

• In the most recent call for proposals (2009-2010), of the 15 proposals submitted under the Agriculture & Rural Policy theme, 4 were related to rural policy.
Why We’re Here Today

• Rural Ontario is a significant contributor to Ontario’s economy as well as a provider of social and environmental resources to the rural residents and their urban neighbours.

• The **Rural Policy Research Theme** focuses on the nature of the changes, challenges and opportunities facing rural Ontario including the impact of current policies and programs.

• An expert panel met during the summer of 2008 to determine the long-term strategic priority components for the Agriculture and Rural Policy theme.

• The four strategic priority components under the Rural Policy Research theme include:
  • Regional Development
  • Climate Change
  • Rural Labour Force
  • Rural Infrastructure
Rural Policy Research

Expert panel agreed that 3 types of policy research are significant related to rural communities:

1. Big Picture Research – involves the ideas about “rural” and its place in the world (national, inter-regional or global trends)

2. Impact Research – measuring the impact of existing policies or programs that affect rural areas (Ontario or other jurisdictions for adaptation to Ontario)

3. Emerging Issues Research – emerging issues in rural areas
Regional Development

- Synergies between rural and urban economies
- Other jurisdictions have formal regional development approaches. Ontario does not, but there have been announcements of regionally–focused legislation and programs, e.g. Growth Plans, Greenbelt, Eastern Ontario Development Fund, etc.
- Little is known about the impact of regional policies and programs on rural economies
- New models for collaboration are required – what would those look like/ how would they work
- Need to consider economic, social and environmental aspects of rural development
Regional Development

Sample Research Question:

• How can governments (federal, provincial and local) effectively participate in and support regional economic development initiatives?

Components of this research could include:

• Assessment of models of regional development and coordinating mechanisms applicable to southern Ontario

• Identification of successful policies and programs in other jurisdictions that support regional development and assessment of whether they would be applicable to Ontario

• Exploration of the roles of various players (e.g. NGOs, businesses, governments) in regional economic development and assess factors for success

• Exploration of the role of regional clusters in supporting a regional economy
Climate Change

• Climate change is of international, national and provincial importance.

• It has clear implications for rural municipalities also.

• Climate change has huge implications for Government policy and programming.

• It requires science to be interpreted in the human interest.

• The expert panel recommended dividing climate change into climate change mitigation (prevention) and climate change adaptation (adjustment).
Sample Research Question:
• How can government contribute to creating, and transitioning to a green economy?

Components of this research could include:
• How well are current policy and programs working, e.g. Green Energy and Green Economy Act, Feed-in Tariff (FIT) and MicroFit Programs? What other policy and programs are needed to support this transition?
• What are the risks and opportunities associated with a changing climate and how can Ontario’s economic sectors best adapt to these anticipated changes?
Rural Labour Force

- Changing labour markets, e.g. aging workforce, out-migration of youth and skill gaps
- Opportunities regarding Aboriginal population and immigration
- Changes in the makeup of rural economies, e.g. growth in the service sector, decline in manufacturing
- Future economic opportunities and skill requirements
- Employment opportunities for youth
Sample Research Question:

- What is the role of government in supporting the changing rural labour market?

Components of this research could include:

- Analysis of the changing dynamics of the rural labour market as economic drivers shift and employers’ needs are changing
- Identification of successful policies and programs in other jurisdictions that support changing employment needs and assessment of whether they would be applicable to Ontario
- Exploration of youth needs, issues and opportunities for successful employment in rural Ontario
- Exploration of retraining and new skills required of laid off workers, immigrants and existing labour force in the rural Ontario labour market
Rural Infrastructure

• Deterioration of infrastructure (e.g. roads, bridges, water systems) across the province, including rural areas

• Infrastructure is critical in creating an attractive climate for economic investment and attraction/retention of residents

• How can rural communities support sustainable infrastructure with a smaller tax base

• How can rural communities maintain social infrastructure to attract/retain residents, e.g. schools, hospitals

• How can technology be used to support the viability of rural communities
Sample Research Question:
• How can government investments support a sustainable level of infrastructure in rural Ontario?

Components of this research could include:
• What best practices exist for rural municipalities/communities to adopt collaborative approaches and alternative governance and financing models to promote efficiency and sustainability in infrastructure development and service delivery?
• How is increased access to broadband infrastructure in rural Ontario supporting communities and businesses in the transition to the knowledge-based/digital economy, and what are communities identifying as continued gaps and barriers to this transition?
• What strategies and best practices are rural communities adopting to keep schools, hospitals and recreational/cultural hubs from closing?
Projects Underway

Examples of projects underway from last year include:

• **Rural Economic Development:**
  – Prospering with a Stable or Declining Population: Best Community Economic Development and Planning Practices for Rural Communities
  – Industrial Composition and Regional Economic Performance in Rural Ontario.

• **Rural Labour Force**

• **Climate Change**
  – Land Use and Policy Impacts of the Transition to a Green Economy
Thank you for sharing your morning with us and we look forward to the opportunity of collaborating with your programs and departments on future research proposals.

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