



ONTARIO EQUINE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Overview

The Ontario equine agricultural sector is a significant and diverse contributor to the provincial economy, encompassing racing, sport, recreation, breeding, training, and a wide range of supporting businesses and services. Rooted in Ontario's agricultural landscape, the sector connects rural and urban communities, supports skilled employment across the province, and delivers economic, social, and environmental benefits that extend well beyond the sector itself.



Economic Significance

- Supports approximately **35,700 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs** across Ontario
- Contributes an estimated **\$4.4 billion to provincial GDP**
- Generates **\$8.2 billion in total economic activity**
- Produces approximately **\$1.5-1.7 billion in government revenues** across all levels
- Employment levels are comparable to Ontario's dairy industry, underscoring the sector's scale within the agri-food and rural economy



Employment and Workforce

- Employment spans agriculture, sport and recreation, tourism, professional services, skilled trades, and small businesses
- **Jobs are predominantly skilled and semi-skilled**, requiring specialized training and hands-on experience
- Many roles cannot be readily filled through the general labour market
- Like other agricultural and animal-care industries, the sector faces emerging labour supply and succession challenges
- Targeted workforce initiatives, including the Ontario Equine Education and Employment Program, play a key role in supporting skills development, labour force entry, and employment stability



Rural, Urban, and Community Benefits

- Sustains rural and peri-urban employment and supports regional economic resilience
- Helps preserve agricultural land, trails, and green space, particularly near growing population centres
- Delivers public benefits related to:
 - mental and physical health and therapy
 - youth development and life skills
 - community connection and volunteerism
 - active living and sport participation

These benefits align with provincial objectives related to health, community well-being, and sustainable land use.



Why This Matters for Ontario

- **The equine agricultural sector generates economic and public value that is not fully captured by market transactions alone**
- Loss of sector capacity would result in:
 - erosion of skilled employment
 - reduced rural and peri-urban economic activity
 - loss of institutional knowledge and workforce capacity
- Rebuilding lost capacity would be costly and time-intensive



Policy Considerations

- **Recognize the equine sector as a strategic contributor to Ontario's agri-food system and rural economy**
- Support evidence-based labour market planning and workforce development
- **Improve data collection and visibility to better reflect the sector's full economic and social footprint**
- Leverage the sector's contributions to economic resilience, community well-being, and sustainable land use

