

Rural Agricultural Discussion Questions

Number	Question	Response
1	Mapping Options: 1. Should the updated ROP designate prime agricultural areas with a separate and unique land use designation? 2. Are there any additional pros and cons that could be identified for any of the options? 3. Do you have a preferred mapping option? If so, why? For more information on this topic, please see pages 17-27 of the Rural and Agricultural System Discussion Paper.	1. The ROP should designate Prime Agricultural Areas to better align with the Growth Plan (section 4.2.6.2) and PPS (section 2.3.1). 2. Option 1 would have all NHS components as an overlay which would limit protections for key features, which would not align with the goals and objectives of the RNHS. It is unclear what the purpose of separate key feature designations under Option 3 would be. Key features should fall under one designation to help avoid duplication of policies. Option 4 would not provide a designation for Prime Agricultural Areas and would be perceived to give priority to the RNHS. 3. Option 2 (Figure 12 in the Discussion Paper) appears to achieve the best balance between the interests and objectives of the Natural Heritage and Agricultural Systems. Specifically, this option: • Keeps all key features under one designation, maintaining what is already present in the Regional Natural Heritage System; • Would establish a Prime Agricultural designation as mandated by the Provincial Policy Statement and Growth Plan; and, • Would establish other components of the RNHS (e.g. linkage areas) as an overlay which would maintain protection of natural heritage, while providing some flexibility for existing agricultural operations in these areas to expand.

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2	Agriculture-related uses 4. Should the ROP permit the agriculture-related uses as outlined in the Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas in its entirety? 5. What additional conditions or restrictions should be required for any agriculture-related uses? 6. Should some uses only be permitted in the Rural Area as opposed to Prime Agricultural Lands? For more information on this topic, please see pages 38-43 of the Rural and Agricultural System Discussion Paper.	4. The Provincial Guideline on agriculture-related uses provides a good base from which ROP policies can be created. Through the ROPR the Region should also consider whether additional permitted and non-permitted use examples and criteria are needed based on local conditions present in Halton's agricultural area. 5. Case-by-case analysis should be considered in situations where farm building development and expansion is required to accommodate the agriculture-related use. For example, abattoirs and repair shops would likely require development on prime agricultural land. Local Official Plans should be given the flexibility to require applications such as site-specific rezoning and site plan control where the proposed use would require significant building expansion. 6. More discussion is needed as to whether some uses should be limited to the Rural Area once a clear Prime Agricultural/Rural Area division is defined in the ROP. Consideration would also need to be given as to whether current Provincial policies would support this approach.
3	On-farm diversified uses 7. Should the Regional Official Plan permit on-farm diversified uses as outlined in the Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas in its entirety? 8. What additional conditions or	7. Similar to the response to 2(4), the Region should use the Guideline as a base for introducing On-Farm Diversified (OFD) uses into the ROP, but also consider local conditions when identifying permitted/non-permitted use examples and criteria. 8. For OFD uses, encouraging case-by-case analysis through local Official Plans should be considered. In particular, where OFD uses will result in new or expanded buildings on prime lands, local plans

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	restrictions should be required for any on-farm diversified uses? 9. The Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas limit on-farm diversified uses to no more than 2 per cent of the farm property on which the uses are located to a maximum of 1 hectare. As well, the gross floor area of buildings used for on-farm diversified uses is limited (e.g., 20 per cent of the 2 per cent). Are these the appropriate size limitations for Halton farms? For more information on this topic, please see pages 44-48 of the Rural and Agricultural System Discussion Paper.	and policies should have flexibility to require such applications as site-specific rezoning to better evaluate proposals. 9. It is critical that on lots with prime agricultural land, land resources not be diverted away from the primary agricultural use on the property. As such, the maximum area for OFD uses stated in the Guideline is appropriate and should not be increased in the ROP. Similarly, floor area for OFD uses should also be limited so as not to divert floor area away from what is needed for the primary agricultural use on a farm operation (e.g. where a livestock building represents the primary farm operation, infrastructure used for an OFD use should be clearly secondary in size and floor area).
4	To what extent should the updated Regional Official Plan permit cemeteries in: A) Urban areas B) Rural areas C) Prime agricultural areas Explain the criteria (e.g., factors) that are important to you and should be considered when evaluating cemetery	A) Cemeteries have traditionally been permitted in urban areas under 'parks and open space' designations. However, attempting to direct them to settlement areas through policy would be difficult given their land extensive nature, high land costs and the need to achieve minimum greenfield densities. B) Given special requirements usually needed for cemeteries, rural areas outside of prime agricultural areas may be more appropriate than settlement areas. Consideration should be given through the ROPR to permit cemeteries in such areas.

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	applications for each? For more information on this topic, please see pages 49-53 of the Rural and Agricultural System Discussion Paper.	C) The PPS criteria (section 2.3.6.1) referenced in the Discussion Paper on permitting non-agricultural uses in prime agricultural areas provides a good basis for considering such proposals. If the ROPR process is to consider permissions for cemeteries in prime agricultural areas, the direction should, (in addition to ROP criteria), be for local plans and policies to apply the PPS criteria through Official Plan criteria including rezoning. This direction would allow proposals to be evaluated locally, while still requiring a public process.
5	Do the Agricultural Impact Assessment policy requirements in the ROP sufficiently protect agricultural operations in the Prime Agricultural Area and Rural Area? If not, what additional requirements do you think are needed? For more information on this topic, please see pages 55-57 of the Rural and Agricultural System Discussion Paper.	The current ROP requirement for an Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) for applications for non-farm land uses in the Agricultural Area that has the potential to impact surrounding agricultural operations is sufficient. This provides the Region the opportunity to require an AIA in most development approval processes in the Agricultural Area that may impact existing operations and/or remove agricultural land for development.
6	Should the requirements for an Agricultural Impact Assessment be included in any other new or existing Regional Official Plan policies? For more information on this topic, please see pages 55-57 of the Rural	Should the Region choose, through the ROPR, to adopt Prime Agricultural Area and non-Prime (e.g. Rural) Area designations, AIAs should be considered in development criteria for both policy sections. This will ensure farm operations under both designations benefit from such a requirement and the protections it provides.

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7	Should special needs housing be permitted outside of urban areas and under what conditions? For more information on this topic, please see pages 59-61 of the Rural and Agricultural System Discussion Paper.	Special Needs Housing should be permitted wherever dwellings are permitted outside of urban areas. Any conditions and/or criteria for establishing such a use should be regulated through local plans and policies in accordance with Provincial policies and the Ontario Human Rights Code.
8	Are there any additional considerations or trends that Halton Region should review in terms of the Rural and Agricultural System component of the ROP?	Greater flexibility in rural agricultural policies to permit public park uses in the Rural Agricultural System should be considered. The Town has recently undertaken a Parkland Acquisition Study to identify parkland needs to 2031. This study concluded that the Town will need to look outside urban boundaries to accommodate parkland needs, with a notable deficit in parkland when only considering available land in urban areas. The Region should consider introducing a supportive policy framework for such uses in the RAS give that they are a critical component of ensuring a complete community and cannot be accommodated inside the urban boundary.

General Questionnaire		
1	Should Halton adopt a flexible approach in allowing agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified use businesses in the agricultural area to support the economic vitality of farms and farmers?	Halton should adopt an approach to policies for agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses where the needs of the farm operation are balanced with the potential impacts of such uses on surrounding farm operations and other rural land uses.

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2	Should agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified use businesses be limited in size and scale in order to protect the agricultural land base?	Agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses should be clearly secondary in size and scale to the primary farm operation. However, specific size parameters should only be considered after careful consultation with local farm operators, municipalities, Conservation Authorities and any other relevant stakeholders. Any size and scale limitations should be implemented through local Official Plans and Zoning By-laws so that municipalities can assign numbers that more accurately reflect local agricultural conditions.
3	Regarding the matters discussed here, do you have other suggestions that could help strengthen the vitality and resiliency of the agricultural sector?	If an approach is taken to incorporate Agriculture-related and On-Farm Diversified uses into the ROP, the Region's On-Farm Business Guidelines as they currently exist may need to be re-evaluated and amended. Should this be the case, the Region should consult with local municipalities, Conservation Authorities, and agricultural stakeholder groups on any proposed changes. Additionally, an updated version of the Guidelines should be endorsed by all applicable Councils and Boards.