

Eastern Markham Strategic Review

Agricultural Component

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Prepared for:
The Town of Markham
Planning Department
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1.0 Introduction

The Town of Markham is undertaking the Eastern Markham Strategic Review with the goal of developing a policy framework to guide Markham Council on possible future land use, environment and transportation requirements in Eastern Markham.

The Review will consider the implications of the many federal, provincial and other initiatives that may affect the area. The outcome of the process will provide a set of recommended principles to guide the future activities of Markham Council as they relate to the following within the area:

- the present and future use of lands, including agriculture,
- the present and future transportation system, including the possible airport,
- the environmental system, and
- the present and future Provincial land sales program.

A key issue to be addressed in developing a comprehensive strategy is assessing the potential for Eastern Markham's agricultural sector. Eastern Markham features a number of agricultural-related strengths including excellent soils and a favourable climate for supporting a wide variety of farm production activities. The local agricultural sector also has a large and diverse customer base at its doorstep.

The process of identifying agri-related land use opportunities for the study area included a review of local, regional and provincial land use policies as well as issues related to the Provincial and Federal Government lands. Other local, regional and national issues related to agriculture were reviewed to provide further context. A special data run was obtained from Statistics Canada to provide an up-to-date profile of the local and regional agricultural sector and the various production activities.

This report presents

- a profile of existing agricultural land uses in Eastern Markham,
- an overview of the land use issues and general constraints in the study area and implications for farm viability, and
- a potential agricultural land use strategy for Eastern Markham.

2.0 Profile of Agricultural Sector in Eastern Markham

2.1 Introduction

This section presents a profile of the Agriculture Sector in Eastern Markham. The profile also examines Eastern Markham agricultural activities in relation to the Town of Markham, neighbouring municipalities, and Regional Municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area. Data for the analysis were drawn from the Census of Agriculture, which is conducted every five years.

An analysis of the trends and changes in farmland area and farm number and size, farm types, farm productivity, farm receipts and operating expenses, net revenue and farm capital is provided for the census years 1996 and 2001.

2.2 Number of Farms and Farmland Area

In 2001, Eastern Markham reported 51 farms or 60% of the total farms in Markham (Table 1). Between 1996 and 2001, the number of farms in Eastern Markham increased slightly in contrast to farm losses in neighbouring municipalities. Halton, Peel, Durham and York Region all experienced farm losses in excess of 10% between 1996 and 2001. The increase in farms in Eastern Markham also stands in contrast to the loss of farms experienced in Western Markham (the area west of the Little Rouge Creek).

Table 1 Number of Farms and Percent Change, 1996-2001

	1996	2001	Percent change
	Total number of farms		
Ontario	67,520	59,728	-11.54%
Peel Region	689	522	-24.24%
Halton Region	720	619	-14.03%
Durham Region	2,001	1,709	-14.59%
Pickering	111	72	-35.14%
Uxbridge	363	334	-7.99%
York Region	1,211	1,020	-15.77%
Toronto (Vaughan)	139	116	-16.55%
Whitchurch-Stouffville	201	178	-11.44%
Markham	107	85	-20.56%
Eastern Markham	49	51	4.08%

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996, 2001.

In 2001, Eastern Markham reported a total of 19,124 acres of farmland compared to 18,206 acres in 1996 (Table 2). In 2001, Eastern Markham accounted for 67% of the total farmland area in Markham. While the amount of farmland reported in production in Eastern Markham increased between 1996 and 2001, surrounding municipalities reported substantial losses of farmland. For example, York Region as a whole reported 17,721 fewer acres of farmland between 1996 and 2001. The rate of decline of

farmland in many parts of the GTA was considerably higher than the provincial average of 2.7%.

Table 2 Area of Farmland and Percent Change, 1996-2001

	1996	2,001	Difference	Percent change
	Total acres of farmland			
Ontario	13,879,565	13,507,357	-372,208	-2.68%
Peel Region	120,026	104,433	-15,593	-12.99%
Halton Region	109,187	98,758	-10,429	-9.55%
Durham Region	336,857	330,286	-6,571	-1.95%
Pickering	18,116	14,817	-3,299	-18.21%
Uxbridge	56,789	55,219	-1,570	-2.76%
York Region	193,686	175,965	-17,721	-9.15%
Toronto (Vaughan)	23,079	17,892	-5,187	-22.47%
Whitchurch-Stouffville	28,183	20,406	-7,777	-27.59%
Markham	28,409	28,437	28	0.10%
Eastern Markham	18,206	19,124	918	5.04%

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996, 2001.

Farms in Eastern Markham are more than 1.5 times larger than the provincial average.¹ In 2001, the average farm size in Eastern Markham was 375 acres compared to 226 acres for the province. As shown in Table 3, the average sizes of farms in the surrounding municipalities are substantially smaller than Eastern Markham. The higher average farm size in Eastern Markham is related to several large field crop farms that operate 2,000+ acres each. Just over 10% of the farms in Eastern Markham reported operating on 720 acres or more in 2001 (Figure 1).

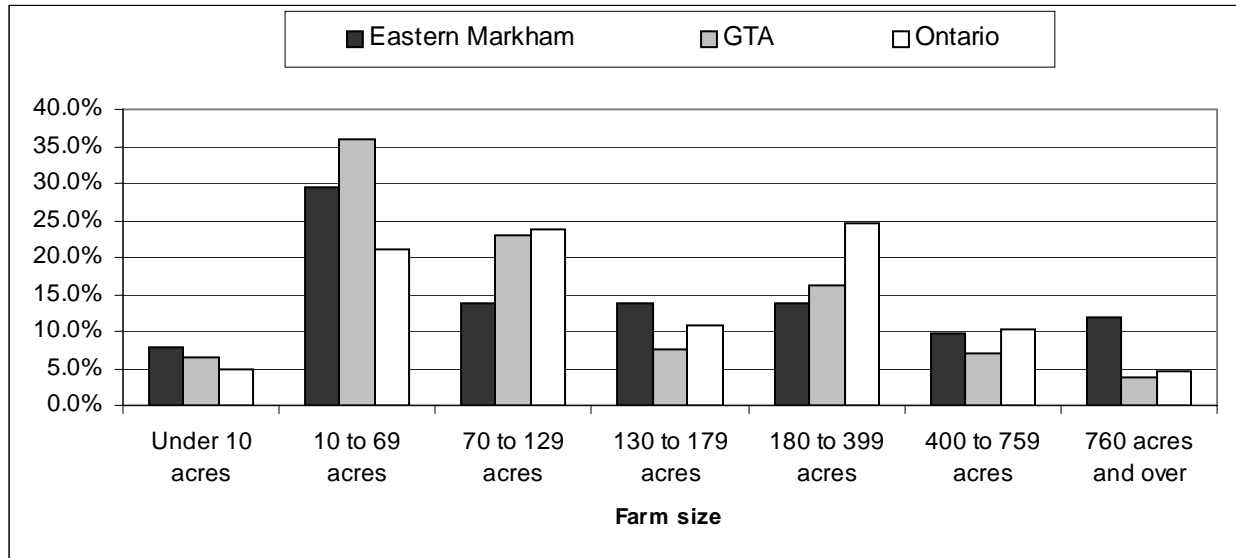
Table 3 Average Farm Size and Percent Change, 1996-2001

	1996	2001	Percent change
Ontario	206	226	10.01%
Peel Region	174	200	14.84%
Halton Region	152	160	5.21%
Durham Region	168	193	14.80%
Pickering	163	206	26.09%
Uxbridge	156	165	5.68%
York Region	160	173	7.86%
Toronto (Vaughan)	166	154	-7.10%
Whitchurch-Stouffville	140	115	-18.24%
Markham	266	335	26.01%
Eastern Markham	371	375	1.08%

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996, 2001.

¹ Statistics Canada defines a census farm as an agricultural operation that produces at least one of the following products intended for sale: crops (field crops, tree fruits or nuts, berries or grapes, vegetables or seed); livestock (cattle, pigs, sheep, horses, exotic animals, etc.); poultry (hens, chickens, turkeys, exotic birds, etc.); animal products (milk or cream, eggs, wool, fur, meat); or other agricultural products (greenhouse or nursery products, Christmas trees, mushrooms, sod, honey, maple syrup products).

Figure 1 Distribution of Farms by Farm Size Category, 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001.

2.3 Farmland Use

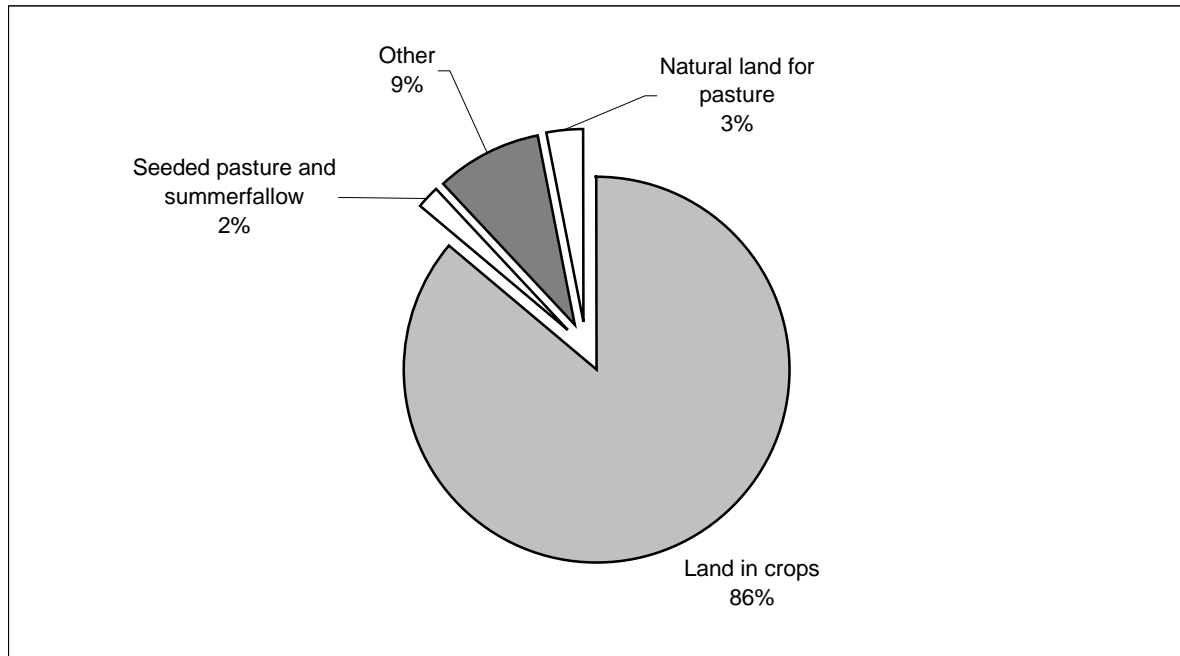
Farmland in Eastern Markham is used predominantly for crop production. In 2001, 86% of the total farmland base was used for crop production (Table 4). Eastern Markham has a higher percentage of its farmland base in crop production compared to neighbouring municipalities. The high degree of crop production in the area is likely tied to the large areas of provincially and federally owned lands. A small percentage of farmland in Eastern Markham was reported as pasture lands while 9% of the farmland base was used for other purposes - i.e. Christmas tree production, farm woodlots, land occupied by farm buildings/yards etc. (Figure 2).

Table 4 Area of Farmland in Crop Production, 2001

	Total acres of farmland	Total acres in crops	Percentage of farmland in crops
Ontario	13,507,357	9,035,915	66.90%
Peel Region	104,433	78,118	74.80%
Halton Region	98,758	75,290	76.24%
Durham Region	330,286	221,965	67.20%
Pickering	14,817	10,611	71.61%
Uxbridge	55,219	38,007	68.83%
York Region	175,965	129,718	73.72%
Toronto (Vaughan)	17,892	12,784	71.45%
Whitchurch-Stouffville	20,406	14,490	71.01%
Markham	28,437	22,906	80.55%
Eastern Markham	19,124	16,439	85.96%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001.

Figure 2 Farmland Use in Eastern Markham, 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001.

As shown in Table 5, grain corn represents that single largest type of crop grown in Eastern Markham at 6,738 acres followed by soybeans at 5,317 acres.

Table 5 Area of Production for Selected Field Crops in Markham and Eastern Markham, 2001

Crop	Total acres of production in Markham	Total acres of production in Eastern Markham	Eastern Markham as a percentage of total Markham production
Wheat	1,908	1,363	71.4%
Grain Corn	8,019	6,738	84.0%
Alfalfa and alfalfa mixtures	1,991	1,126	56.6%
Other tame hay and fodder crops	814	410	50.4%
Soybeans	6,857	5,317	77.5%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001.

2.4 Land Tenure

Approximately 82% of the total farmland area in Eastern Markham was leased or rented in 2001 (Table 5). This is considerably higher than the provincial average of 30.6% as well as the overall GTA average of 47%. The higher rates of land rental in the GTA is linked to high land values in the region. The large area of provincial and federal government owned lands in Eastern Markham also serves to inflate the rate of land rental. In 1996, 32 farms in Eastern Markham reported leasing a total of approximately

7,000 acres from governments. This represents approximately 36% of the total farmland base in Eastern Markham.

Table 5 Land Tenure – Area of Farmland Owned and Leased, 2001

	Total farmland owned		Total farmland leased		Total farmland leased from government	
	Acres	% of total farmland	Acres	% of total farmland	Acres	% of total farmland
Ontario	9,373,178	69.39%	4,134,179	30.61%	114,388	0.85%
Peel Region	48,069	46.03%	56,364	53.97%	2,552	2.44%
Halton Region	45,823	46.40%	52,935	53.60%	1,722	1.74%
Durham Region	207,446	62.81%	122,840	37.19%	10,272	3.11%
Pickering	6,763	45.64%	8,054	54.36%	3,353	22.63%
Uxbridge	33,635	60.91%	21,584	39.09%	2,456	4.45%
York Region	75,136	42.70%	100,829	57.30%	9,332	5.30%
Toronto (Vaughan)	7,495	41.89%	10,397	58.11%	548	3.06%
Whitchurch-Stouffville	10,434	51.13%	9,972	48.87%	385	1.89%
Markham	7,274	25.58%	21,163	74.42%	6,998 ^a	24.61%
Eastern Markham	3,440	17.99%	15,684	82.01%	6,910 ^a	36.13%

^a Data from 1996 Agricultural Census, Statistics Canada. Data from the 2001 census for this area is not available.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996, 2001.

2.5 Farm Types

Eastern Markham features a variety of farm types (Table 6). Field crop farms are the most common type of farm in Eastern Markham accounting for just over 45% of all farms in 2001 (Figure 3). Specialty type farms represent the next largest group of farms at 19%. A variety of farming activities are associated with the specialty sector including greenhouse flower and plant production, bulbs, shrubs, trees, sod, ornamentals, honey production, and maple syrup production. Specialty type farms often market their products directly to consumers. Close to 30% of all farms in the GTA are specialty type farms. The higher concentration of specialty type farms across the GTA, is an indication of potential opportunities for expansion in this sector.

Eastern Markham has relatively fewer livestock farms such as dairy and beef in comparison to the GTA and the province as a whole. Given the high level of capital investment associated with livestock and poultry operations, growth in these sectors is likely to be limited by the availability of land that can be purchased or secured through long term leases. For example, building, quota and equipment costs associated with modern dairy farms can easily exceed \$1million.

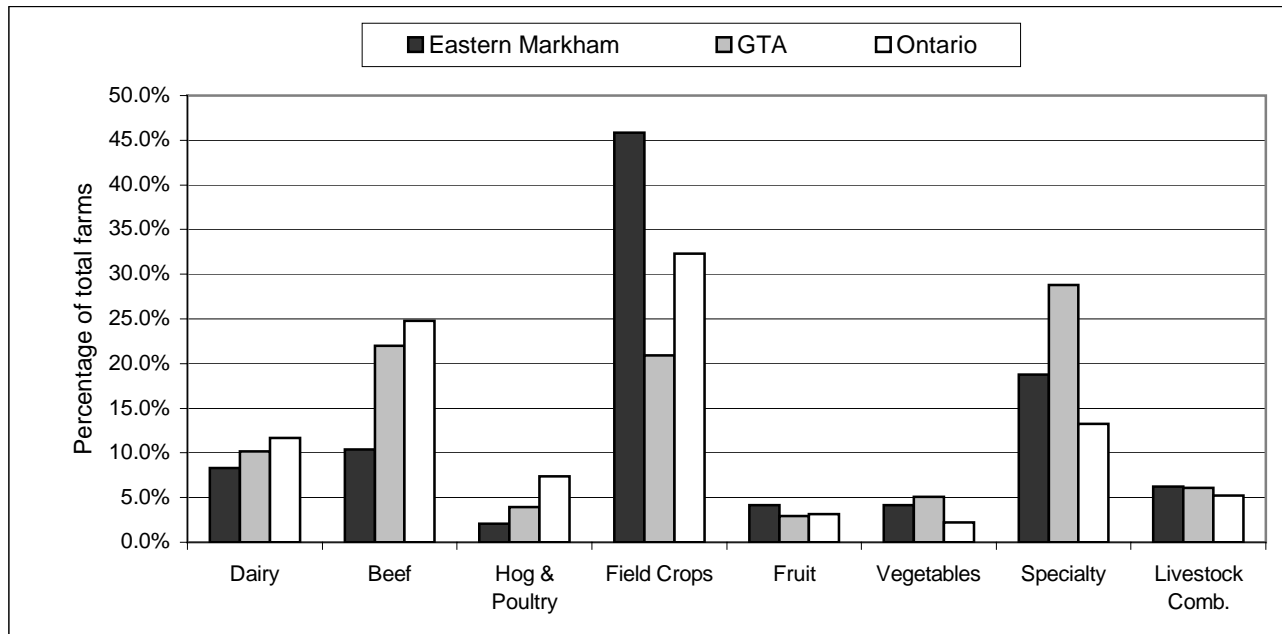
Table 6 Number of Farms by Farm Type, 1996-2001. ²

	Total farms	Dairy	Beef	Hog	Poultry and egg	Wheat	Grain and oilseed (except wheat)	Field crop (except grain and oilseed)	Fruit	Veg.	Specialty	Livestock combination	Other combination
2001													
Ontario	55,092	6,414	13,669	2,454	1,609	395	12,863	4,531	1,733	1,233	7,301	1,617	1,273
Peel Region	481	84	101	5	6	2	60	31	18	8	144	11	11
Halton Region	550	26	93	4	21	7	92	49	27	20	180	11	20
Durham Region	1,540	195	441	20	46	4	201	99	38	41	350	57	48
Pickering	67	6	8	2	1	0	18	1	4	3	21	1	2
Uxbridge	295	31	67	1	6	0	40	25	4	10	84	15	12
York Region	931	52	148	13	26	7	110	68	19	105	331	30	22
Toronto (Vaughan)	103	9	11	0	2	2	12	11	4	10	33	7	2
Whitchurch-Stouffville	161	7	16	1	5	0	20	14	6	10	77	4	1
Markham	80	5	14	2	1	3	21	2	5	4	17	2	4
Eastern Markham	48	4	5	1	0	2	18	2	2	2	9	1	2
1996													
Ontario	59,887	8,320	14,172	2,677	1,686	466	12,250	4,965	2,016	1,428	8,547	2,030	1,330
Peel	588	102	129	7	12	1	63	33	29	20	164	12	16
Halton	616	42	103	3	24	7	75	37	34	19	233	16	23
Durham	1,752	239	558	36	54	6	163	100	61	47	385	45	58
Pickering	98	9	7	4	5	1	18	5	7	5	33	1	3
Uxbridge	319	34	84	8	7	1	33	23	7	11	94	10	7
York	1,062	76	160	16	38	8	103	53	23	122	409	24	30
Toronto (Vaughan)	125	8	13	0	7	1	11	10	7	15	44	2	7
Whitchurch-Stouffville	178	8	17	3	6	1	21	6	5	11	90	4	6
Markham	94	9	8	2	1	2	22	6	5	6	25	3	5
Eastern Markham	45	4	4	1	0	0	17	1	3	5	8	0	2

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001.

² Farm typing is a procedure that classifies each census farm according to the predominant type of production. This is done by estimating the potential receipts from the inventories of crops and livestock reported on the questionnaire and determining the product or group of products that make up the majority of the estimated receipts. For example, a census farm with total potential receipts of 60% from hogs, 20% from beef cattle and 20% from wheat, would be classified as a hog farm. Farm type is based on farms reporting total gross farm receipts of \$2,500 or more.

Figure 3 Farm Types in Eastern Markham, the GTA and Ontario, 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001.

2.6 Farm Receipts, Farm Operating Expenses and Net Revenue

Eastern Markham reported \$6.8 million in total gross farm receipts in 2000 compared to \$7.3 million in 1995 (Table 7). Eastern Markham's total farm receipts for 2000 represent 43% of the total farm receipts for Markham and approximately 4% of the total for York Region.

The net revenue per farm in Eastern Markham in 2000 was just under \$11,000 compared to the provincial average of \$21,500 per farm. The lower average net revenue value for Eastern Markham is linked to the concentration of field crop farms in the area and the limited number of livestock operations. Farm receipts associated with field crop farms can fluctuate considerably depending on world market conditions for commodities. In contrast, livestock farms such as dairy farms are regulated by supply management boards and offer a more stable source of income.

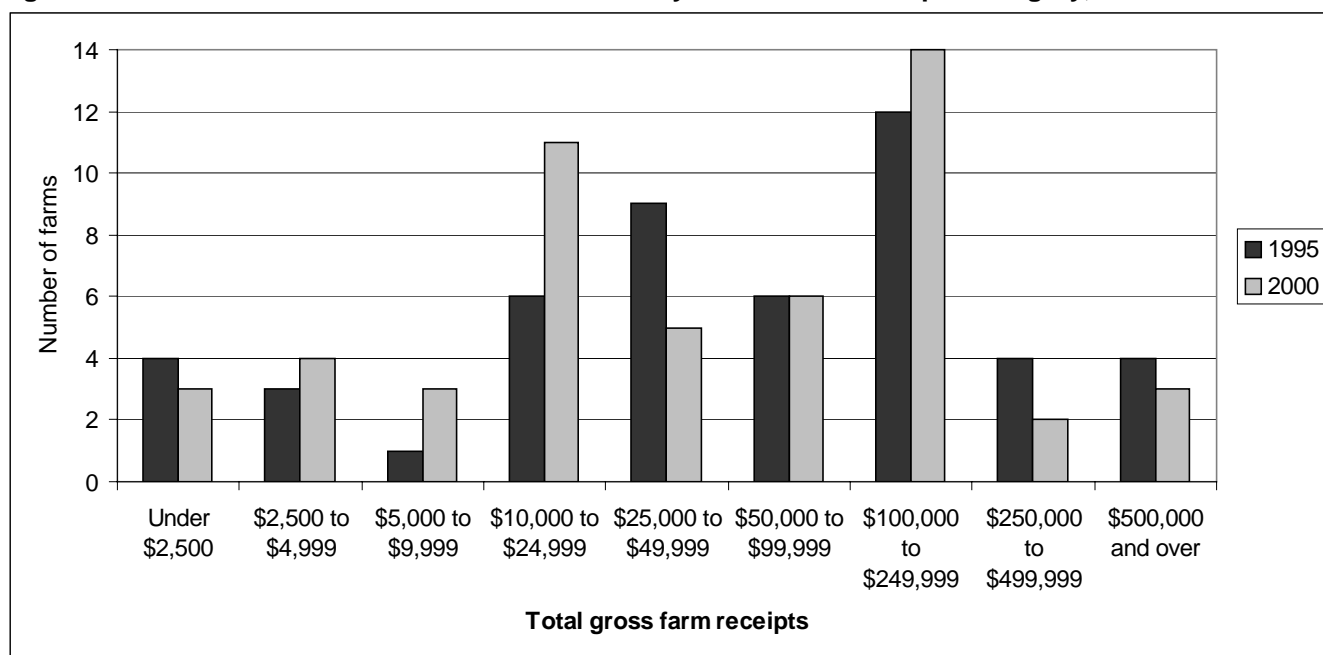
It's worth noting that in the 1995, the average net farm revenue for Eastern Markham was \$30,000 compared to the provincial average of \$18,000 per farm (Table 7). The difference in net revenue values between the two periods is likely associated with fluctuations in grain prices.

Table 7 Total Gross Farm Receipts, Farm Operating Expenses, and Net Revenue, 1995 and 2000

	Total farms	Total gross farm receipts	Total farm operating expenses	Total net farm revenue	Net revenue per farm	Net revenue per acre
2000						
Ontario	59,728	\$9,115,454,790	\$7,829,246,574	\$1,286,208,216	\$21,534	\$95
Peel Region	522	\$116,536,793	\$103,423,903	\$13,112,890	\$25,120	\$126
Halton Region	619	\$141,473,312	\$123,410,370	\$18,062,942	\$29,181	\$183
Durham Region	1,709	\$233,890,944	\$199,393,063	\$34,497,881	\$20,186	\$104
Pickering	72	\$19,364,778	\$18,843,873	\$520,905	\$7,235	\$35
Uxbridge	334	\$34,469,444	\$32,433,023	\$2,036,421	\$6,097	\$37
York Region	1,020	\$178,963,186	\$158,339,483	\$20,623,703	\$20,219	\$117
Toronto (Vaughan)	116	\$21,256,443	\$18,450,865	\$2,805,578	\$24,186	\$157
Whitchurch-Stouffville	178	\$27,182,691	\$23,724,351	\$3,458,340	\$19,429	\$169
Markham	85	\$15,800,432	\$14,033,260	\$1,767,172	\$20,790	\$62
Eastern Markham	51	\$6,857,690	\$6,302,077	\$555,613	\$10,894	\$29
1995						
Ontario	67,520	\$7,778,476,483	\$6,545,516,325	\$1,232,960,158	\$18,261	\$89
Peel Region	689	\$77,086,032	\$66,454,746	\$10,631,286	\$15,430	\$89
Halton Region	720	\$129,313,767	\$112,362,942	\$16,950,825	\$23,543	\$155
Durham Region	2,001	\$208,168,607	\$181,734,536	\$26,434,071	\$13,210	\$78
Pickering	111	\$19,248,290	\$16,398,170	\$2,850,120	\$25,677	\$157
Uxbridge	363	\$37,778,083	\$32,607,912	\$5,170,171	\$14,243	\$91
York Region	1,211	\$170,402,787	\$147,089,527	\$23,313,260	\$19,251	\$120
Toronto (Vaughan)	139	\$30,185,622	\$25,293,778	\$4,891,844	\$35,193	\$212
Whitchurch-Stouffville	201	\$28,812,059	\$25,680,827	\$3,131,232	\$15,578	\$110
Markham	107	\$17,240,363	\$14,917,177	\$2,323,186	\$21,712	\$82
Eastern Markham	48	\$7,329,803	\$5,869,050	\$1,460,753	\$30,432	\$80

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996, 2001.

Figure 4 Distribution of Farms in Eastern Markham by Total Gross Receipts Category, 1995-2000.



Source: Statistics Canada, 1996, 2001.

A large expense associated with field crop production is fertilizer. As shown in Table 8, fertilizer related expenses accounted for 9.5% the total farm operating expenses in Eastern Markham in 2000. This is more than double the provincial average. The percentage of total farm expenses associated with maintaining and repairing farm machinery is also higher than the provincial average and is likely related to the significant field crop activity in the area.

Table 8 Farm Operating Expenses for Selected Expense Categories, 2000

	Livestock and poultry purchases	% of total expenses	Repairs & maintenance to machinery	% of total expenses	Repairs & maintenance to farm buildings and fences	% of total expenses	Fertilizer and lime purchases	% of total expenses
Ontario	\$1,220,075,378	15.6%	\$380,640,233	4.9%	\$183,176,689	2.3%	\$363,697,863	4.6%
Peel Region	\$17,443,430	16.9%	\$4,554,774	4.4%	\$2,446,217	2.4%	\$2,872,971	2.8%
Halton Region	\$10,744,085	8.7%	\$4,395,852	3.6%	\$2,157,212	1.7%	\$2,684,371	2.2%
Durham Region	\$20,356,508	10.2%	\$10,031,213	5.0%	\$5,183,562	2.6%	\$7,685,457	3.9%
Pickering	\$333,452	1.8%	\$610,180	3.2%	\$256,976	1.4%	\$271,928	1.4%
Uxbridge	\$3,930,061	12.1%	\$1,570,574	4.8%	\$886,551	2.7%	\$1,333,490	4.1%
York Region	\$15,312,114	9.7%	\$7,697,587	4.9%	\$4,612,764	2.9%	\$7,463,362	4.7%
Toronto (Vaughan)	\$496,015	2.7%	\$995,815	5.4%	\$449,858	2.4%	\$836,376	4.5%
Whitchurch-Stouffville	\$5,534,180	23.3%	\$1,103,855	4.7%	\$612,835	2.6%	\$785,439	3.3%
Markham	\$2,569,437	18.3%	\$722,564	5.1%	\$240,213	1.7%	\$863,080	6.2%
Eastern Markham	\$438,882	7.0%	\$442,666	7.0%	\$98,231	1.6%	\$595,593	9.5%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001.

2.7 Farm Capital

In 2000, Eastern Markham reported \$214.7 million in total farm capital, which represents 58% of the total farm capital in Markham (Table 9). The average value of farm capital per farm in Eastern Markham was \$4.2 million in 2000 which is approximately 5 times the provincial average of \$846,000 per farm. Over 95% of the total farm capital value in Eastern Markham is linked to land and buildings. This is higher than the GTA average of 90% and the provincial average of 81%. Total market value of farmland and buildings per acre of farmland in Eastern Markham is \$10,723 or 3.5 times the provincial average.

As noted earlier, the majority of the farmland in Eastern Markham is rented rather than owned. Current land values in the area serve as a disincentive for farmers looking to purchase land and have implications for farm viability.

Table 9 Total Farm Capital, 2000.³

	Total market value	Total market value per farm	Total market value per acre of farmland	Total value of land and buildings	Value of land and buildings as a % of total market value
2000					
Ontario	\$50,529,783,505	\$845,998	\$3,741	\$40,898,278,324	80.90%
Peel Region	\$1,433,724,388	\$2,746,598	\$13,729	\$1,335,052,224	93.10%
Halton Region	\$1,009,980,734	\$1,631,633	\$10,227	\$920,952,894	91.20%
Durham Region	\$1,577,423,794	\$923,010	\$4,776	\$1,323,473,004	83.90%
Pickering	\$90,546,358	\$1,257,588	\$6,111	\$79,790,750	88.10%
Uxbridge	\$354,064,116	\$1,060,072	\$6,412	\$310,202,836	87.60%
York Region	\$2,053,980,635	\$2,013,707	\$11,673	\$1,895,160,752	92.30%
Toronto (Vaughan)	\$280,227,819	\$2,415,757	\$15,662	\$266,029,700	94.90%
Whitchurch-Stouffville	\$294,006,191	\$1,651,720	\$14,408	\$270,868,377	92.10%
Markham	\$368,566,021	\$4,336,071	\$12,961	\$352,203,437	95.60%
Eastern Markham	\$214,747,892	\$4,210,743	\$11,229	\$205,062,100	95.50%
1995					
Ontario	\$40,860,936,035	\$605,168	\$2,944	\$33,167,842,178	81.20%
Peel Region	\$1,101,052,587	\$1,598,044	\$9,173	\$1,014,331,315	92.10%
Halton Region	\$777,415,207	\$1,079,743	\$7,120	\$701,553,617	90.20%
Durham Region	\$1,556,992,654	\$778,107	\$4,622	\$1,345,304,367	86.40%
Pickering	\$100,726,966	\$907,450	\$5,560	\$88,211,551	87.60%
Uxbridge	\$353,276,419	\$973,213	\$6,221	\$318,158,053	90.10%
York Region	\$1,790,487,489	\$1,478,520	\$9,244	\$1,656,971,324	92.50%
Toronto (Vaughan)	\$346,987,288	\$2,496,311	\$15,035	\$332,895,814	95.90%
Whitchurch-Stouffville	\$244,791,947	\$1,217,870	\$8,686	\$221,927,127	90.70%
Markham	\$253,127,416	\$2,365,677	\$8,910	\$239,752,246	94.70%
Eastern Markham	\$112,681,882	\$2,347,539	\$6,189	\$105,356,280	93.50%

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996, 2001.

³ Farm Capital includes the value of farm machinery, livestock and poultry, and land and buildings.

2.8 Agriculture Employment and Characteristics of Farm Operators

In 2001, Eastern Markham reported 65 farm operators on 51 farms compared to 70 operators on 49 farms in 1996. Eighty-five percent of all farm operators in Eastern Markham are male and 15% are female - this compares to 73% and 27% respectively for the province. The average age of farm operators in Eastern Markham is 53 years, which is 2 years older than the provincial average age of 51 years (Table 10).

Table 10 Characteristics of Farm Operators – Gender and Age, 2001.

	Total number of operators	Male	Female	Age - Under 35 years	Age - 35 to 54 years	Age - 55 years and over	Average age of operators
Ontario	85,020	62,215	22,800	8,975	44,150	31,890	50.7
Peel Region	745	555	190	60	345	340	53.8
Halton Region	855	605	250	65	390	400	53.9
Durham Region	2,485	1,785	705	210	1,255	1,020	52.3
Pickering	90	65	25	5	40	45	52.7
Uxbridge	475	325	150	35	250	190	52.5
York Region	1,445	1,065	380	120	685	635	53
Toronto (Vaughan)	150	125	30	10	85	60	52.6
Whitchurch-Stouffville	245	175	65	20	100	130	54.7
Markham	120	95	25	5	55	55	55.1
<i>Eastern Markham</i>	65	55	10	5	35	30	53

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001.

3.0 Land Use Issues and Agriculture

Eastern Markham features a number of varied land use policies reflecting a mix of municipal, Regional, Provincial and Federal Government interests.

Markham Official Plan (OP)

- OP permits wide variety of agricultural uses (including livestock and crop production) within Agricultural designations.
- New farming operations must comply with MDS formula. However, the OP does not require application of MDS I formula to new urban residential uses.

Provincial Lands

- Provincially owned lands are primarily zoned for Agricultural use under the Markham OP. Impending sale of provincial lands (Tenant Purchase Program) has implications for agricultural viability if market value applied to the land.

Pickering Airport Site and Airport Zoning Regulations (AZR).

- Federal Government will retain ownership of all Airport site lands. The area has use restrictions based on potential for attracting birds – livestock type operations are considered high risk compared to lower risk activities such as hay crops.

Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan

- The plan permits a variety of agricultural uses (including livestock and crop production) and uses accessory to agriculture.

Rouge North Management Plan

- The plan envisages the establishment of “Agricultural Reserves” within the watershed which could result in fragmentation of agricultural holdings which may reduce overall viability. The introduction of parks could also lead to crop damage, fence damage, etc. due to park users straying onto the farm properties.

4.0 Other Constraints on Agriculture in Eastern Markham

The growth in urban and suburban communities in Ontario has resulted in a dramatic increase in land development and loss of farmland on the urban fringe. Between 1995 and 2001, approximately 18,000 acres of farmland went out of production in York Region alone (Statistics Canada). Agriculture faces a number of unique challenges in the GTA. One of the most significant challenges to agriculture in the GTA is the high land prices stimulated by non-agricultural land use. Pressure on farm viability in the GTA is also linked to the encumbrance that comes with urban encroachment and the potential conflict with urban neighbours as farmers utilize modern farm practices. Farmers in the GTA also face restricted access to agri-related support services through the loss of rural communities.

In addition to these unique constraints, local farmers are faced with challenges that are impacting the viability of the agricultural industry as whole:

- Limited access to capital
- Limited availability of an affordable, skilled and trained agricultural workforce in an expanding provincial economy
- Increasing farm production regulations related to growing consumer and environmental concerns
- Consolidation in the processing and wholesale/retail sectors resulting in fewer markets for farmers
- Changing consumer trends as the population grows through immigration. Farmers must become more responsive to a wider variety of consumer preferences - this can also be interpreted as an opportunity but it may require farmers to obtain new skills such as marketing in order to effectively tap into the emerging markets

4.0 Recommended Agricultural Uses in Eastern Markham

As noted above, agriculture faces a number of constraints in the urban fringe. As a way of mitigating these constraints and promoting farm viability in Eastern Markham, a land use strategy should attempt to assure tenure and apply firm land use agricultural zoning controls.

While the agriculture sector faces a number of challenges in Eastern Markham, it also has great potential considering the availability of productive soils, a favourable growing climate, and the close proximity of a large and diverse consumer base.

This section provides recommendations for agricultural uses in Eastern Markham. The recommendations apply to Tenant Purchase Program lands and other lands in Eastern Markham.

1. Support and promote existing agricultural uses including field crops and various livestock and poultry production. These uses remain important economic contributors to the local economy and support the agri-related business infrastructure.
2. Support and promote horticultural and field crop production land uses such as:
 - Greenhouse production (tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, herbs, cut flowers, potted plants, bedding plants, etc)
 - Field crops (sweet corn, tomatoes, pumpkins, onions, potatoes, cabbage, green beans, garlic, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, etc.)
 - Specialty grains/oilseeds
 - Fruit crops (apples, pears, etc.)
 - Market garden/ornamentals - tree and shrub nurseries

3. Support and promote other specialty commodities such as:
 - Maple syrup production
 - Honey production
 - Organic fruits, vegetables, grain and animal products
 - Identity preserved seed, non-GMO crops
 - Exotic breeds and specialty animal products – deer, elk, emu, llama, bison, sheep, goats

4. Support and promote agriculture-related value added production activities such as:
 - Herb production and herbal products
 - Apple cider
 - Winery
 - Baked goods and preserves
 - Maple syrup and honey products
 - Wool products

5. Support and promote agricultural supportive uses directly related to the agricultural operation and required in close proximity to farm operations in the area (i.e. agricultural warehousing, processing, sorting, grading, packaging, transport facilities). Veterinary operations serving the agricultural community should also be recognized as a permitted use in the area.

6. Support and promote Agri-tourism / Agri-entertainment / Agri-education opportunities including:
 - Pick your own produce operations (strawberries, pumpkins, indigenous maize, Christmas trees, etc.)
 - Road-side stands
 - Farm tours and informative narratives on agri-topics (soil and woodlot conservation, bees and pollination, etc.)
 - Farm stay vacation establishments
 - Bed and Breakfast operations
 - Farmers' markets
 - Riding stables, equestrian competitions and trade shows – 'Equifair'
 - Agricultural fairs / exhibitions / demonstrations
 - Corn mazes, hay/sleigh rides, skating parties, etc.
 - Rural Heritage sites

7. Ensure that agricultural uses conform to guidelines in the Nutrient Management Act and minimum distance separation formulae

Other Considerations

Marketing

It is also recommended that the Town of Markham work with local farmers in exploring and developing various marketing activities in support of agriculture such as:

- Branding East Markham – “Pick Little Rouge Products”
- Signage to raise awareness of agri-related activities
- Encouraging local restaurants to use and promote local farm products
- Establishing Farmers’ Markets
- Promoting Pick Your Own operations
- Promoting community shared agriculture initiatives

Incompatible uses

Activities that are viewed as incompatible with agricultural activities in Eastern Markham include:

- Golf courses
 - take prime agricultural land out of production
 - may encourage estate development and potential conflicts with adjoining agricultural lands
 - water requirements may limit surrounding agricultural uses
- Recreational trails for motorized vehicles
 - Damage to crops and fences through trespassing
 - Stress on grazing livestock

Include public in the process

An Agricultural Advisory Committee should be established to provide advise on matters and issues related to the agricultural industry in Eastern Markham.

Development proposals affecting agricultural areas would be referred to the Committee for review to ensure that the impacts of proposed land use changes are studied in advance and considered during the decision making process. In some cases, the Committee may recommend conditions of approval be imposed to mitigate against anticipated impacts.

The Committee would not have decision-making powers. Comments would be forwarded to Council and the planning department in formulating positions on various issues, in processing development applications, and in developing policies.

The Committee would consist of 8 to 10 volunteer citizens who are involved in the local agricultural industry. The Committee members will represent different elements of the local agricultural community (i.e. representatives from the Federation of Agriculture, different commodity groups, soil and crop association representatives, etc.). Local Council would be represented through the appointment of a councilor and/or planning staff to the Committee.

Transportation links

Farmers in Eastern Markham make extensive use of roads throughout the study area. The economic viability of the agriculture is tied to ensuring that farmers continue to have access to safe roads for the movement of farm vehicles.