

Farmland Preservation and Urban Expansion: Case Study of Southern Ontario, Canada

INTRODUCTION

This document provides a plain language summary of a journal article by Wayne Caldwell, Sara Epp, Xiaoyuan Wan, Rachel Singer, Emma Drake and Emily C. Sousa published in *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* in 2022.

SUMMARY

Farmland preservation is crucial for the sustainability and security of human food systems. This study focuses on southern Ontario, an area with some of Canada's most finite and productive soils but facing significant pressure from urban expansion. The research examines farmland preservation policies within Ontario and evaluates their effectiveness in protecting this critical resource.

Key findings:

- ❑ The study tracked agricultural land conversion through local Official Plan Amendments (OPAs) between 2000 and 2017. OPAs are formal administrative changes to municipal Official Plans that can include the conversion of farmland for non-farm uses or the protection of agricultural lands.
- ❑ Using OPAs, the researchers documented farmland loss across southern Ontario. Data from 36 counties/regions revealed that provincial policies and local planning frameworks had a profound positive impact on the agricultural land base.
- ❑ The provincial Greenbelt Plan notably reduced farmland loss since 2005. Other local policies also contributed to enhanced municipal control over agricultural land conversion.

CONCLUSIONS

- ❑ The study highlights the importance of coordinated efforts between different levels of government to protect farmland.
- ❑ Tracking farmland loss through OPAs provides an innovative and rigorous method for assessing the impact of urbanization on agricultural land conversion.
- ❑ The findings can inform land-use planning policies beyond Ontario, where municipalities are responsible for agricultural land use

FURTHER INFORMATION

The full publication titled "Farmland Preservation and Urban Expansion: Case Study of Southern Ontario, Canada" can be accessed online at [Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems](#).

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