



# YUKON AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2021

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This strategic plan was prepared at the request of and with the participation of the Yukon Agricultural Association Board of Directors. Facilitation and strategic visioning exercises were expertly led by Lyn Hartley and supported by Jennifer Hall, YAA's Executive Director. The participation and time commitment of each board member greatly enhanced the outcome of each planning session and the association is grateful for the commitment of the Board to this process. Outcomes from several facilitated sessions were incorporated into the strategic plan by Krista Roske, YAA Board Member and reviewed by the YAA Board, Executive Director and YAA members. YAA also acknowledges the work done to develop and implement the 2006 strategic plan and those aspects of the earlier plans that are re-expressed within this document. The Association would also like to thank the NGO Training Fund and Volunteer Bénévoles Yukon for providing financial support to this planning project.

## **MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

On behalf of the YAA board of directors, I am pleased to present a new strategic plan that will guide the growth of the association for the next five years.

This strategic plan builds on YAA's existing vision, mission and operating principles as was determined in the 2006 strategic plan. These core positions statements remain unchanged. YAA will continue in its mission:

*To foster and promote sustainable Yukon agriculture for the benefit of both private and commercial producers and consumers through education, infrastructure development, and liaison with government agencies and with non-government organizations.*

Ideas within this plan originate from a wide range of discussions with YAA directors, committees, general members and key partners. From late 2015 and through 2016, farm visits and increased communications with YAA members helped to identify the YAA's strengths and opportunities.

YAA Board of Directors worked with a facilitator throughout the fall of 2016 to review its 2006 strategic plan and to identify strategic priorities for the next five years. This plan sets out new goals relating to actions and activities that will improve communications within the association and will increase the cohesiveness of the agriculture sector.

The next few years will be busy ones for the territory's agriculture sector: the Yukon Agriculture Policy will be updated, a new federal funding framework is being developed for Growing Forward 3, and the implementation of the Local Food Strategy for Yukon will continue.

With the this strategic plan as a guide, YAA will be positioned to effectively work together with its key partners to ensure the territory's agriculture sector flourishes.

Lou Clark  
President

## **CONTEXT FOR AGRICULTURE IN YUKON**

Agriculture has been a part of the Yukon landscape and Yukon society for more than a century. Climate is the greatest limiting factor to agriculture in the Yukon. Our semi-arid climate, cold winters, and shorter growing seasons have several consequences for the Yukon agriculturist. Farmers have to choose early-maturing crops, hardy plants and animals, and compensate for the lack of moisture. These challenges have also, however, been met by the continued innovation from within the farming sector and adoption of technologies designed to mitigate climatic challenges.

Farming north of 60° presents special marketing opportunities and obstacles. Although imported food may be available at a lower cost, the appeal of locally produced food provides a market for many farms. The selling of local food continues to evolve and opportunities to include Yukon produce and value added food products within the traditional retail sector are expanding. The regulatory framework will need to continue to advance to meet the demands of the sector. Many farms continue to depend on off-farm income to support family lifestyle needs, however Yukon farmers continue to pursue this occupation for the love of the lifestyle and/or the sense of security from having the ability and resources to produce food rather than pure monetary gain.

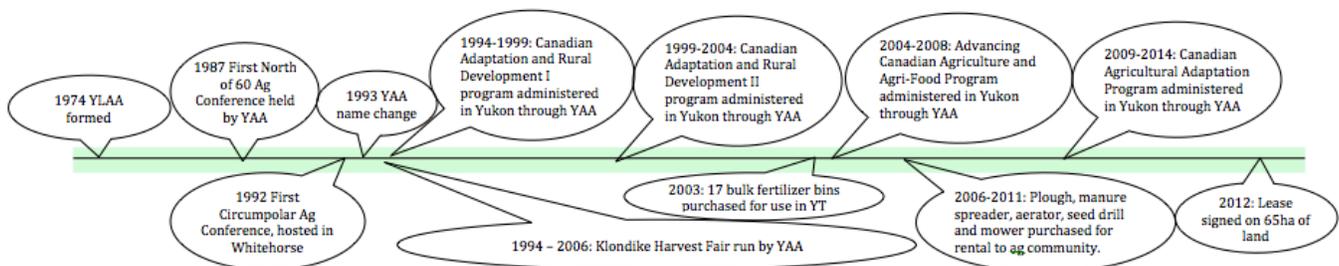
The Canadian census of 2011 reported that there were 130 farms operating in the Yukon on 10,646 hectares, of which 2450 hectares were in field crops. Total farm capital amounted to over \$86.5 million. The value of farm sales was approximately \$3.7 million. Between the censuses of 2006 and 2011, there were decreases in the number of farms and total income reported. The Numbers from the Canadian census of agriculture conducted in early 2016 will be available in spring of 2017 and it is hoped that any reported declines within the sector will be reversed.

Since the last Strategic Plan was prepared by the Yukon Agriculture Association in 2006 a number of reports having to do with Yukon agriculture have been produced. The *Local Food Strategy for Yukon: Encouraging the Production and Consumption of Yukon-Grown Food 2016–2021* was released in 2016 and implementation has begun with the assistance of the YAA and other community groups. A series of animal health handbooks for cattle, swine and poultry have also been produced in response to a growing meat sector in the Yukon. Two iterations of Growing Forward (a Federal-Territorial funding framework) have been implemented and a new framework is under development. The Yukon government is also currently developing a renewed Agricultural Policy for the Yukon which will help shape the industry in the coming years.

## **ABOUT THE YUKON AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION**

The Yukon Agricultural Association evolved from the Yukon Livestock and Agriculture Association that was established over four decades ago. The Association has represented the agriculture industry in dealings with governments and other organizations over that period of time. It provides cross-commodity support in fostering agricultural development in the Yukon. The Association reorganized and adopted a new constitution in 1997 and amended its by-laws and board governance policies in 2015.

### **Timeline of Key YAA Events**



Its "Objects" remain the following:

- a. To foster and promote the livestock and agriculture industry in Yukon and elsewhere;
- b. To cooperate with governmental authorities and other interested groups to develop and advance a suitable policy for livestock and agricultural industry and communications relating thereto;
- c. To collect and study legislation pertaining to livestock and agricultural industry in Yukon or elsewhere in order to develop and update regulations which will meet the requirements and needs of the industry;
- d. To act as a medium for the expression of views of its members affecting the interest of those engaged in the livestock and agriculture industry, and to distribute to its members and the public accurate and reliable information on matters of livestock and agriculture;
- e. To enter into affiliation or reciprocal arrangements with other organizations in Yukon or elsewhere;
- f. To mutually discuss problems related to livestock and agriculture;
- g. To purchase, take or lease or exchange, hire or otherwise acquire any real or personal property and any rights or privileges and to engage in any activity necessary or ancillary to carrying out the objects or purpose of the society.

The objectives of the Association, are expressed in condensed form below:

- to foster and promote Yukon agriculture;
- to encourage research and development pertaining to agriculture;
- to support suitable Yukon agriculture policies;
- to help develop legislation and regulations which meet the needs of the industry;
- to lobby for the industry; and,
- to provide agricultural information to both Association members and the Yukon public

For the purposes of this Strategic Plan, the conventional, sustainable and organic agriculture sectors of the Yukon economy include:

- grains, cereals and pulses
- domestic livestock and poultry
- farrier services
- fish farming
- forest seedlings
- grass sod
- hay and forage
- honey
- horticulture
- market gardening
- native grass seed
- poultry
- small fruit and berries
- veterinary services
- feed, seed, fertilizer services
- value-added processing
- abattoir services

The Yukon Agricultural Association relies on a volunteer Board of Directors.

## **VISION**

*Our vision is to help Yukon producers develop a way of life and an industry that provides the Yukon's needs for those agricultural goods and services that can be produced in the Yukon.*

The Association's vision for agriculture incorporates the following ideals:

- a self-sustaining industry (economically, socially, and environmentally);
- an industry that is part of, and an asset to, the social fabric of the Yukon;
- a commercially competitive industry;
- a commercially viable industry based on private ownership and management of farm holdings;
- an industry with an infrastructure capable of accessing and incorporating practices and technology appropriate to the Yukon context;
- an industry viewed with respect by the general public, other industries, and the government; and
- an inclusive industry in which future generations can, and wish to, participate.

## **MISSION**

*To foster and promote sustainable Yukon agriculture for the benefit of both private and commercial producers and consumers through education, infrastructure development, and liaison with government agencies and with non-government organizations.*

In order to achieve its mission, the Yukon Agricultural Association will:

- promote agriculture as an industry that is sustainable and essential to the economic and social well-being of the Territory;
- determine the collective impact of agricultural issues on its industry and develop unified positions to address them;
- maintain a communication program to inform Association members, agricultural producers, and the Yukon public on agricultural issues;
- encourage inclusion of Yukon agriculture in the education curriculum;
- be guided in what it does by its membership through effective organizational structure and communication;
- help build industry infrastructure that meets the goals and aspirations of its members;
- work to influence government activities to achieve the requirements of a healthy industry;
- maintain an effective involvement with government agencies, both territorial and federal, which affect agriculture;
- require accountability on the part of government(s) and their agencies;
- expand the membership;
- foster the involvement of Yukon First Nations in agriculture; and,
- foster the involvement of industries related to agriculture in agriculture issues.

## **OPERATING PRINCIPLES**

In carrying out its strategic plan, the YAA will abide by the following principles:

- ✓ Business practices of the YAA will be based on the view that the Association provides ongoing benefits to those involved in Yukon agriculture. Practices will be effective, efficient, and responsive.
- ✓ The YAA Board of Directors and membership will be bound by its Board Policy Manual.
- ✓ Since the benefits of its activities accrue to all who are involved in agriculture, YAA will seek to have the cost of its operations shared by all Yukon farmers through membership dues. It will also seek financial or other contributions from associated and benefiting industries.
- ✓ As needed, it will seek core funding from government. However, YAA will not compromise its independence through financial or other arrangements with government.
- ✓ YAA will resist the influence of partisan politics on agricultural issues.
- ✓ YAA will work cooperatively with government to achieve its mission.
- ✓ YAA will promote, encourage, and advocate for innovative solutions to issues as determined by its members through due process.
- ✓ YAA will focus mainly on broad-based agricultural issues as determined by its members through due process, but will assist with commodity or sector specific issues as well.
- ✓ Because information and knowledge are required for wise solutions to issues, YAA will ensure an appropriate level of communication exists among its members and others involved in the sector.
- ✓ The Association will annually evaluate its performance in implementing its Strategic Plan.

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2017 to 2021**

As the association continues to position itself as a strategic partner in the ongoing development of policies and strategies that influence agriculture in the Yukon, the association recognizes the importance of being a relevant and key information source for its members and those participating in ongoing discussions about food and the sustainability of food production in Yukon.

Through the development and implementation of this five-year strategic plan, the Yukon Agriculture Association Board of Directors will determine how best to continue to fulfill its mission to its members, while ensuring that the time and energy of the board members and staff are being used as efficiently as possible to further the support and development of agriculture in the Yukon.

The Goals, Objectives and Actions that follow are intended to guide the decision-making of the Yukon Agricultural Association and its Board of Directors while remaining flexible enough to adapt to changes within the agricultural landscape of the Yukon.

### **Goal 1: Infrastructure**

#### **Priority 1: Reduce Association Liability and Resource Requirements for the Equipment Rental Program**

YAA was provided funding to purchase several pieces of equipment because there were no commercial entities interested in renting farm equipment in Yukon. There is now potential interest on the part of local rental companies to provide agricultural equipment rentals. This program as it exists isn't revenue generating and is a potential insurance liability for the association while consuming a significant amount of time for the association.

- Action 1: YAA will investigate the potential for the sale or long term lease of the equipment to a local company interested in running the equipment rental programs.
- Action 2: Any sale or long term lease of equipment will include a minimum timeframe in which the equipment (or similar equipment) remains available to Yukon farmers.

- Action 3: Make recommendations for additional equipment to become available for rental as identified by members of the association.
- Action 4: Establish, in cooperation with the purchasing or leasing company, continued rental benefits to YAA members including discounts, preferential booking, etc.

### **Priority 2: Reallocation / Potential Sale of Storage Bins to Maximize Positive Benefits to Yukon Farmers**

Several years ago, YAA was provided funding to purchase fertilizer / grain storage bins but not the equipment necessary to move them. The original intention was to reduce the cost of fertilizers but bin location and access have become contentious issues in some situations. Given the time required to administer this program, and the unequal distribution of bins throughout farming areas in Yukon, YAA has reviewed this program and will be moving forward on bin sale and reallocation.

- Action 1: Develop and implement a plan to identify which bins should be sold and which should be moved based on how the bins can and could be used for the maximum benefit of Yukon farming communities.
- Action 2: Develop and execute sales or lease-to-own agreements with maintenance responsibilities with identified bin purchasers
- Action 3: Identify potential communities for installation of additional bins
- Action 4: Determine whether bins are to be privately owned or operated by community groups in the newly identified areas and execute agreements.

### **Priority 3: Strategic Improvements to Leased Land**

YAA has a 30-year lease on this land and is interested in ensuring something sustainable with a long-term vision is done that will support agricultural pursuits and is open to a wide range of agricultural groups. Over the next five years, YAA is interested in undertaking a small amount of infrastructure development that will allow for revenue generation through the sub-lease of portions of the land including a lease under discussion with YHRA. YAA has funds for the development of the land but does not wish to over-build infrastructure that can't be maintained

and will carefully develop a financial plan for expenditures from YAA savings. YAA also does not intend to build infrastructure to compete with the private sector.

Infrastructure being considered in the next five years that can be available to potential sub-lesers includes the following actions:

- Action 1: YAA would install a sign visible from the highway that establishes the land as owned by YAA with sub-leases to other organizations.
- Action 2: YAA will develop and construct a simple outdoor riding arena with bleachers and horse stalls.
- Action 3: YAA will develop a multi-year plan to install the main electrical service line from the highway. Sub-lesers wishing to extend electrical services to their leased area would be responsible for the costs of doing so and for any monthly electrical charges.
- Action 4: YAA will examine the feasibility of drilling a well to provide access to potable water for sub-lesers and groups hosting events.
- Action 5: YAA will plan, construct and maintain a camp kitchen that would have rudimentary heat and seating for gatherings. The facility would be available for rental by sub-lesers and user groups.

## **Goal 2: Influencing Policies / Programs Related to Agriculture**

The next five years will be important in terms of establishing new multi-year government policies and funding programs for agriculture while providing a unified voice when addressing on-going issues of concern to the industry.

### **Priority 1: Strong, Unified YAA Voice When Participating in Policy and Program Development**

YAA must be a key partner, with a unified and educated voice, in the development and revision of government policies that are integral to the expansion of the agricultural sector. In return, Yukon government must acknowledge the importance of agriculture and agri-businesses as economic sectors for Yukon. YAA will represent the views of a majority of its members when providing support for the development of policies and programs that will affect the agriculture sector.

Action 1: A framework for YAA's involvement and a strategy to ensure memberships' views are reflected in these discussions will be developed and implemented.

Action 2: YAA will continue to participate in the development and implementation of the following Government policies / funding programs:

- ✓ Renegotiation of a multi-year agricultural funding framework between Canada and the Yukon Government
- ✓ Implementation of the Local Food Strategy for Yukon 2016-2021
- ✓ Development and Implementation of the City of Whitehorse's Food Strategy
- ✓ CanNor

### **Priority 2: Work to Secure Government Commitment to the Yukon's Agriculture Industry**

YAA will continue to exert influence to ensure that the Yukon government shows its support for the agricultural sector by providing the sector with government programming that is integrated and designed for farmers rather than in departmental silos.

Action 1: Ensure YAA positions are supported with research, expertise and background information and reflect the opinion of a majority of our members.

- ✓ **Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee** – This is an important committee as it is highly influential for agriculture in the territory and YAA will ensure it is a key industry group representing the majority-view of its members at all meetings. There needs to be a competitive process for selecting representatives for this committee and a consistent approach for communicating between YAA, its members and AIAC. YAA also wishes to clarify the appointment and revocation process with Yukon government.
- ✓ **Wildlife / Domestic Animal Interface Issues** – It is anticipated that wildlife issues will continue to be critical to address in the next few years. The contribution that agriculture makes to the Yukon must be fully recognized within these discussions and any decisions must support the agriculture sector.
- ✓ **Land use planning** – Yukon has finite areas suitable for agricultural production that are within a reasonable distance to markets. As arable land becomes more difficult to obtain, a clear vision for agriculture lands that protects agricultural land for the long term must be articulated and supported by all levels of government.
- ✓ **Agricultural Product Permitting and Regulation** – Initial steps have been taken to address the confusion surrounding permitting and regulatory requirements of selling agricultural products in Yukon. YAA will continue to work with various government agencies to ensure that farmers wishing to sell their products know how to navigate the system and are aware of what is required of them and their products.
- ✓ **Mobile Abattoir** – Given the availability of permanent processing facilities in Whitehorse, YAA will discuss with government the need to have the mobile abattoir available year-round and to communities outside Whitehorse on a regular basis.
- ✓ **Building Requirements** – YAA will continue to work with Government departments to ensure reasonable building requirements are in place for agricultural buildings.

Action 2: Promote the growth of Yukon's agriculture sector

Yukon government support for year-round, Yukon-wide commercial-scale operations and agriculture-related enterprises will lead to increased levels of producer commitment and investment confidence in the industry. YAA will promote this by working with Yukon government to:

- ✓ Ensure the necessary regulatory and inspection services are available to local producers when they are required.
- ✓ Explore opportunities to reduce food imports and identify potential export markets.
- ✓ Increase in the production of fertilizer and feed and explore the potential to develop the potash resources in Yukon.
- ✓ Facilitate the adoption of new technologies including alternative energy systems and new equipment.

### **Goal 3: Communication and Branding**

YAA strives to maintain its reputation as a responsive and relevant agricultural organization in the Yukon. To do this effectively, YAA recognizes the need to streamline its communications systems to reflect changes in technology and the demographics of its membership. The completion of a new strategic planning process is also an appropriate time to initiate a branding exercise for the organization to reflect its vision for the future.

#### **Priority 1: Streamlining Communications**

Significant time is spent by YAA staff providing information and seeking feedback from members. Ensuring information is available at the right time, in an appropriate format and at the right level of detail is important to ensure members actively participate in the events and decision-making processes of the organization.

Action 1: In response to changing technology and demographics, YAA will transition from the formal newsletters to timely, active social media using Facebook.

Action 2: Direct contact with members using regular and informative emails.

Action 3: Annual calendar established for workshops and events related to agriculture.

### **Priority 2: Up-To-Date Information is Available to Members and the Public**

In order to raise the profile of YAA and ensure it remains relevant in Yukon, information about the organization and its position on issues of interest must be visible to its members, stakeholder groups and the public.

Action 1: YAA will work on updating its brochures and promotional materials and increase its profile in the community.

Action 2: YAA will consider participating in community events including local markets and trade shows to encourage membership and discussions about agriculture.

Action 3: YAA will remain neutral and support ongoing discussions about food and the sustainability of food production so people can make informed choices about the food they choose to buy and eat.

Action 4: YAA will support information-sharing and the implementation of food safety regulations to ensure producers and the public understand the need for and benefit of regulatory requirements.

### **Priority 3: YAA Brand Reflects the Future Vision of the Organization**

YAA will work with its members to refresh the association's logo and branding to reflect the future vision of the organization.

Action 1: YAA will solicit member feedback on current branding to determine level of support for a rebranding exercise

Action 2: If there is sufficient support YAA will seek funding to work with a branding company to develop a new brand (logo and slogan) for the organization.

#### **Goal 4: Membership Recruitment and Retention**

An organization is only as strong as its members and YAA recognizes that there is potential to increase membership numbers. An approach that attracts and retains the attention of local commercial agriculture operators is preferred.

#### **Priority 1: Increase and Sustain YAA Membership**

YAA is striving to increase its membership and ensure most if not all farmers in Yukon are members of YAA. In order to achieve this goal, YAA will be looking for ways to expand the benefits of membership and to differentiate members within its publications including the Farm Products and Services Guide.

Action 1: Identify attractive programs and/or incentives that can be offered to members including:

- ✓ discounts from agribusinesses
- ✓ preferential identification in YAA farming publications
- ✓ business insurance discounts
- ✓ health benefit packages for farmers and their employees
- ✓ linkages to incentive programs offered by the Whitehorse and Yukon Chambers of Commerce.

Action 2: Identify and coordinate training and educational events to assist the agricultural sector by:

- ✓ developing events in response to communications with membership
- ✓ coordinating event planning with Yukon Young Farmers committee
- ✓ drafting an annual calendar of YAA hosted events
- ✓ identifying national and international agricultural events and conferences for the annual calendar
- ✓ considering the process by which YAA members can represent YAA at these events

#### **Priority 2: Succession Planning and Group Integration**

YAA recognizes the importance of working with 4H and the Yukon Young Farmers to facilitate a natural progression from 4H to Yukon Young Farmers and then to YAA members. In order to do this, improved communications and opportunities for joint initiatives should be identified.

Action 1: YAA and YYF to seek regular updates on 4H activities through YYF and look for partnership opportunities

- Action 2: Explore the potential to change YAA Bylaws to include the President of the Yukon Young Farmers as an ex officio member of the YAA Board.
- Action 3: Investigate potential for YAA mentorship for new and/or young farmers to help expand the industry.

## **Goal 5: Effective Board Governance and Administration**

In 2012-13, YAA developed a Board Policy Manual. It has been updated twice since then and is due for another review. The priority is to streamline procedures and increase efficiency. Given the limited time and human resources available, the YAA board and staff are working to identify processes and procedures that will reduce unnecessary workloads without negatively impacting the goals of the association.

### **Priority 1: Board Orientation and Governance Training**

- Action 1: Develop an orientation process for new board members including the provision of mentorship and the YAA Board Orientation Guide.
- Action 2: Annually review the YAA Board Policy Manual to provide board members and staff with an annual refresh of roles and responsibilities.
- Action 3: Revise and update policies relating to YAA committees to maximize efficiencies where possible (see section 1.4 of YAA Policy Manual).
- Action 4: Review and update mandate and membership for YAA committees and identify terms of reference for each committee.

### **Priority 2: Streamline Administrative Procedures**

Focus on administrative tasks reduces the time available for the Executive Director to attend to more strategic agricultural issues and events to benefit the sector.

- Action 1: Compare and purchase new membership software to streamline office procedures and membership communications.
- Action 2: Identify clear procedures for determining when letters of support and/or the association's position on an initiative will be provided.
- Action 3: Update the Office Procedure Manual to align with current procedures and the YAA Board Policy Manual.

### **Priority 3: Board Continuity and Succession Planning**

Annual elections for an entire suite of board positions often leads to significant turn-over on the board and a lack of continuity for multi-year initiatives.

- Action 1: Consider staggering the board tenure to ensure Board continuity and knowledge transfer between board members.
- Action 2: Develop a succession plan using YYF and 4H members to ensure a high level of interest in becoming a member of the YAA Board.
- Action 3: Identify aspects of board membership that are barriers to continued participation on the YAA board.

## **Action Plan**

In order for a strategy to be effective, it has to lead to action. The following steps will be taken as soon as practical given the seasonal nature of most Yukon agricultural activity.

### **1. Adopt the Strategy**

The Strategic Plan will be formally adopted by the association and distributed to all members. Once adopted, the priorities identified must remain the priorities unless the association collectively determines otherwise.

### **2. Announce the Strategy**

The Strategy will form the basis of a press release, the first of many under the communication effort, to inform the Yukon public through the news media of the direction the association is going to take.

### **3. Complete the Implementation Details**

The association will move quickly to complete the details necessary to carry out the priority actions identified.

### **4. Follow-up and Evaluation**

At each Board of Directors meeting, each priority area will be reported on as to the progress (or lack of it and why) that is being made. This is essential to make sure that the Strategy is being followed and that priority items are being dealt with as priorities.

### **5. Annual Report**

At the Annual Meeting, the Board of Directors will report to the membership on the progress that is being made on each priority item. Any needed changes to the Strategy will be made at the Annual Meeting.