



ECOLOGICAL FARMERS ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

2023 Annual Report

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Dear EFAO members and friends,

So much has been learned and accomplished in 2023 thanks to the incredible knowledge and passion of EFAO members, a strong staff and board team, and the many individuals and organizations we collaborate with through our work.

Four years into EFAO's five-year strategic plan, we now have a total of 1055 members, exceeding our goal of doubling the membership by 2025. EFAO members steward over 88,000 acres, an 85% increase since 2019. The largest segment of EFAO's membership is that of new and aspiring farmers, which underlines the importance of EFAO's new farmer programming, such as the Online Farm Planning Course, the Land Access Coalition and the Ignatius Farm New Farmer Training Program.

In 2023 EFAO brought together 1727 participants at 80 different educational events; supported 31 members to conduct 25 different research trials; and enabled 60 farmers to grow 1,367 acres of small grains and cover crops. Behind these numbers are stories of relationships nurtured, the challenges and successes of trying new practices or crop varieties, and the learning that is ignited within our incredible community. You can learn more about EFAO members and connect with one another by visiting the new member map.

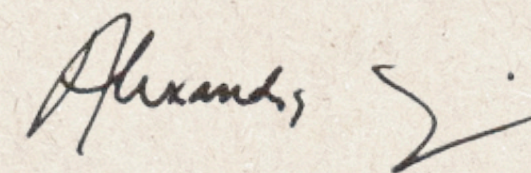
Highlights from the past year include returning to the full in-person conference in London and launching an Indigenous outreach and engagement initiative that is working to facilitate beneficial outcomes for Indigenous food sovereignty

through Indigenous-led knowledge-sharing events and mentorship. EFAO is committed to advancing equity, anti-racism and belonging in all areas of our work.

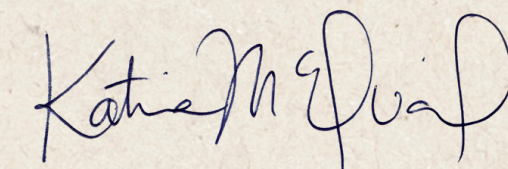
We continue to have a dynamite staff team of dedicated and talented individuals, with 12 staff members in 2023. A big thank you to the 11 members who served on EFAO's board this year, with special mention of Brent Preston who has been one of EFAO's longest serving board members, was President for 5 years, and whose work has made a big impact on the organization. The staff and board team takes its inspiration and guidance from the experiences, interests and feedback of EFAO members and the growers we work alongside, so please don't hesitate to reach out with any suggestions or questions.

A big thank you to everyone who has engaged with and supported EFAO's work of building resilient ecological farms and growing a strong knowledge sharing community over this past year.

Sincerely,



Ali English
Executive Director



Katrina McQuail
Board President

About EFAO



Established in 1979 by farmers for farmers, the Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario (EFAO) is a membership organization that focuses on farmer-led education, research and community building. EFAO brings farmers together so they can learn from each other and improve the health of their soils, crops, livestock and the environment, to steward resilient ecological farms.

Vision

We envision an Ontario where thriving ecological farms are the foundation of our food system, and where agriculture protects our resources, increases biodiversity, mitigates climate change, and cultivates resilient, diverse, equitable communities.

Mission

EFAO supports farmers to build resilient ecological farms and grow a strong knowledge sharing community.



EFAO Team

Board of Directors

Anan Lololi
Annette Peltier-Flamand
Brent Klassen
Brent Preston, President
Brett Israel
Celeste Lopreiato
Denise Miller
Jennifer Forde, Secretary
Katrina McQuail, Vice President
Melissa Watkins, Treasurer
Ricardo Ramirez

Staff

Ali English, Executive Director
Allison Muckle, Northern Outreach, New Farmer Programs & Operations Director
Angel Beyde, Strategic Partnerships & Eastern Outreach Director
Cassie Wever, Education Manager
Chloe Rodriguez, Communications & Events Coordinator
Dillon Muldoon, Research & Soil Health Program Manager
Jackie Clark, Small Grains Program Manager
Laura Northey, Communications & Engagement Director
Martina Schaefer, Administrative & Membership Manager
Rebecca Ivanoff, Seed Program Manager
Sarah Larsen, Research & Small Grains Program Director
Sophie Clark, Education & Conference Manager
Taryn Bobiwash, Indigenous Outreach & Engagement Coordinator

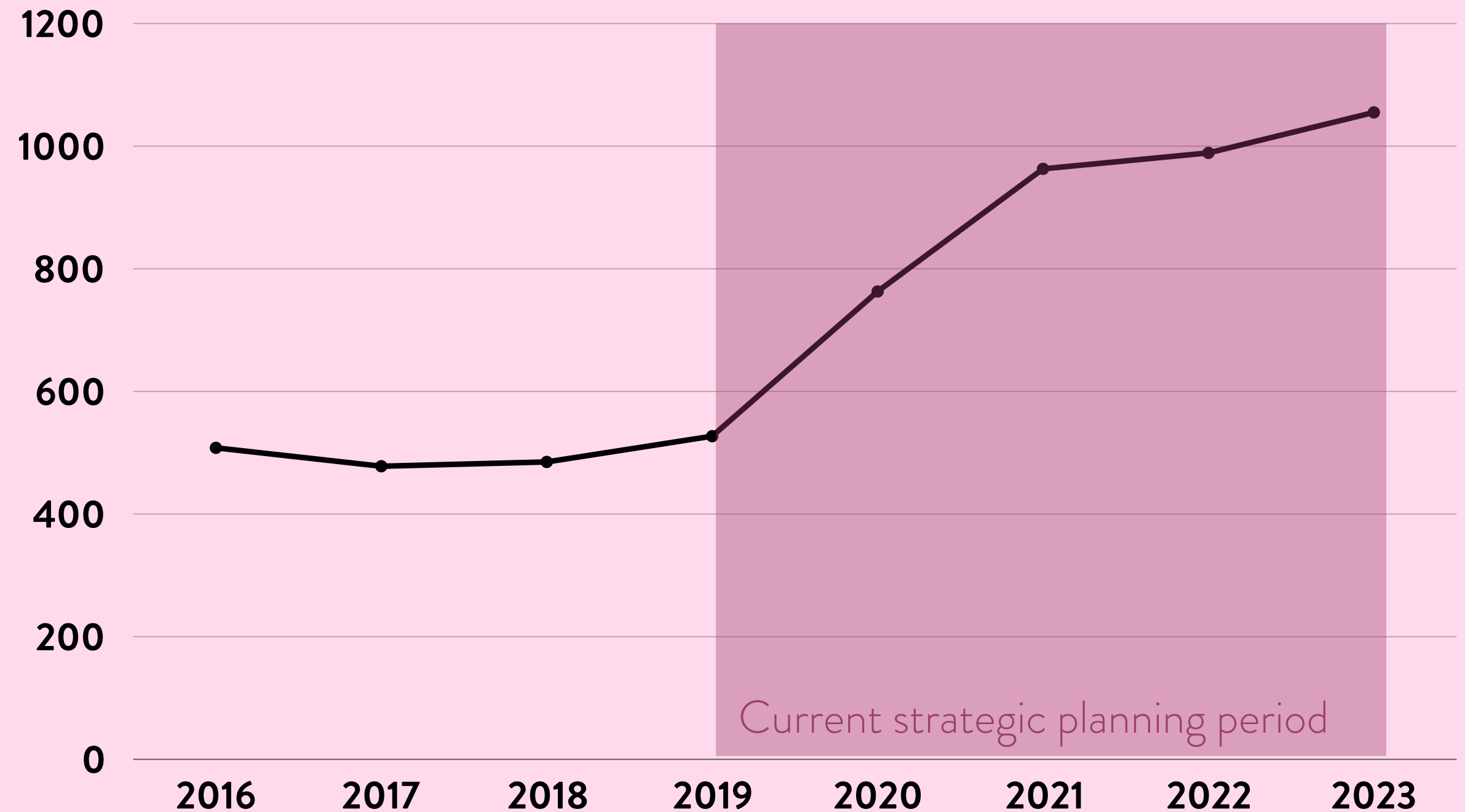


Membership

Membership

EFAO's Membership has more than doubled since 2019! This goal was reached four years into our five year strategic plan.

2019: 520 members
2023: 1,055 members.



Membership

Acreage Growth

EFAO Member Acres in 2019

47,525

EFAO Member Acres in 2023

88,202 +85.6%

Median Farm Size in 2019

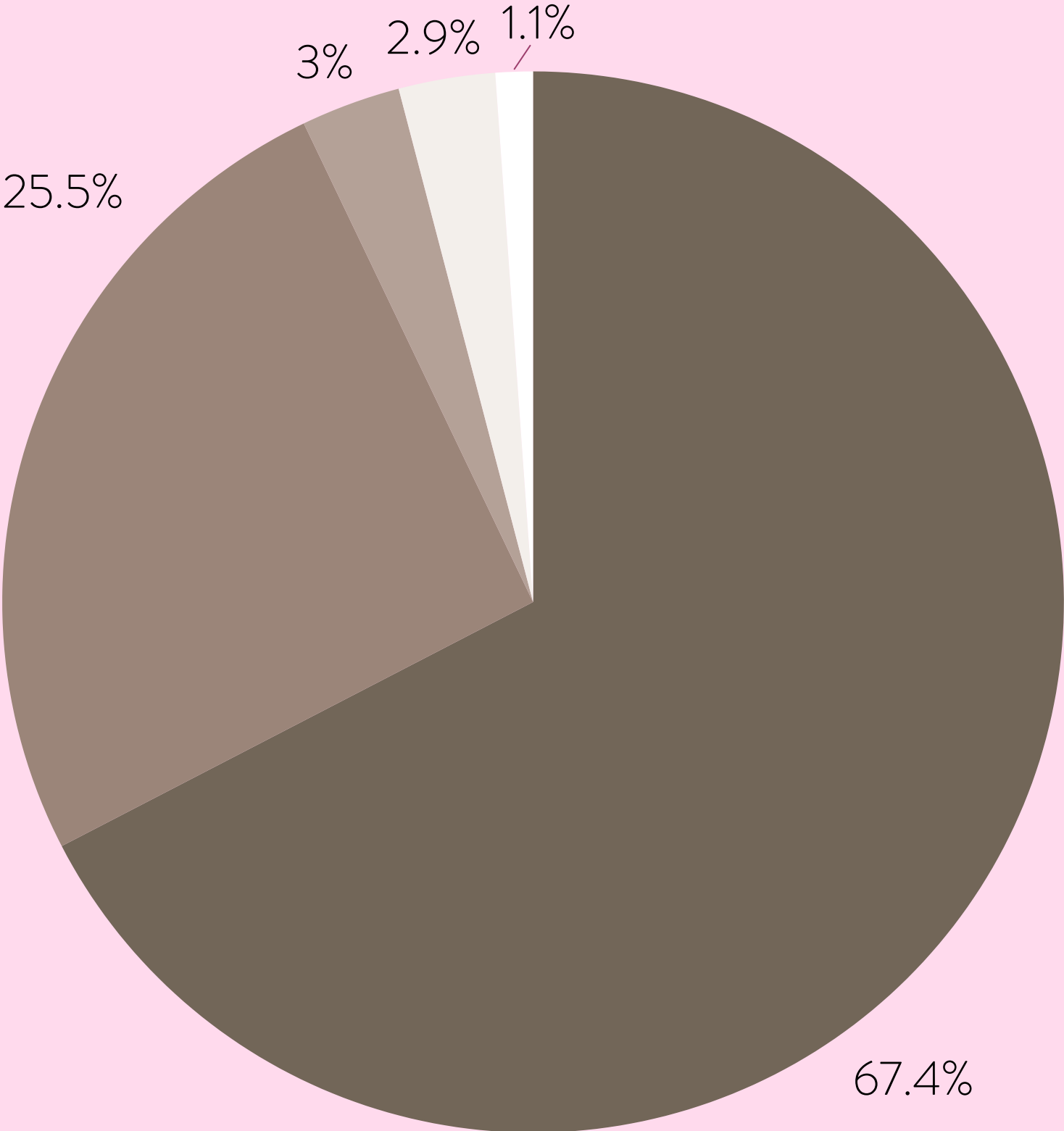
75 Acres

Median Farm Size in 2023

54 Acres

Membership

Membership Categories

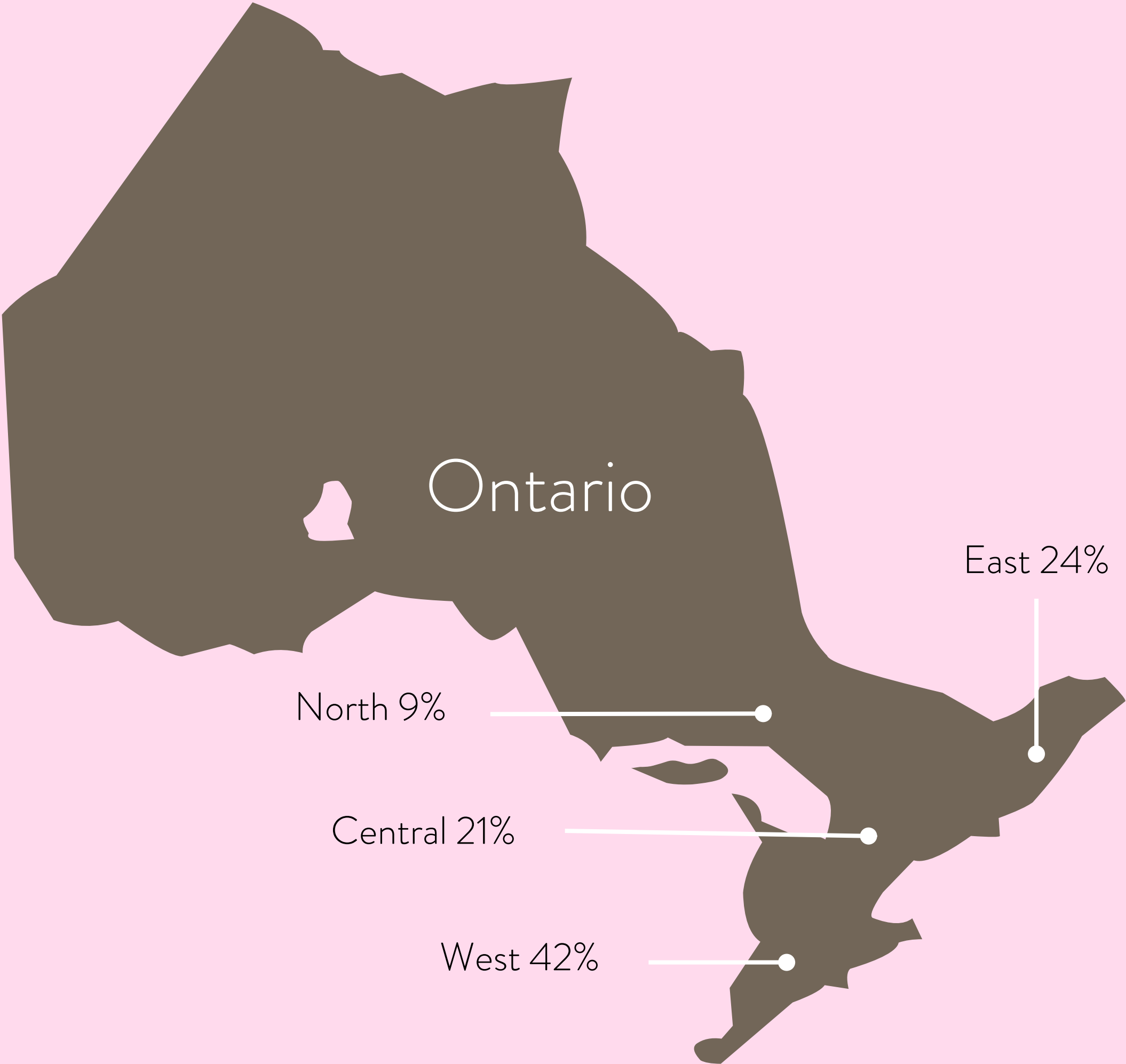


Membership

Regional Distribution

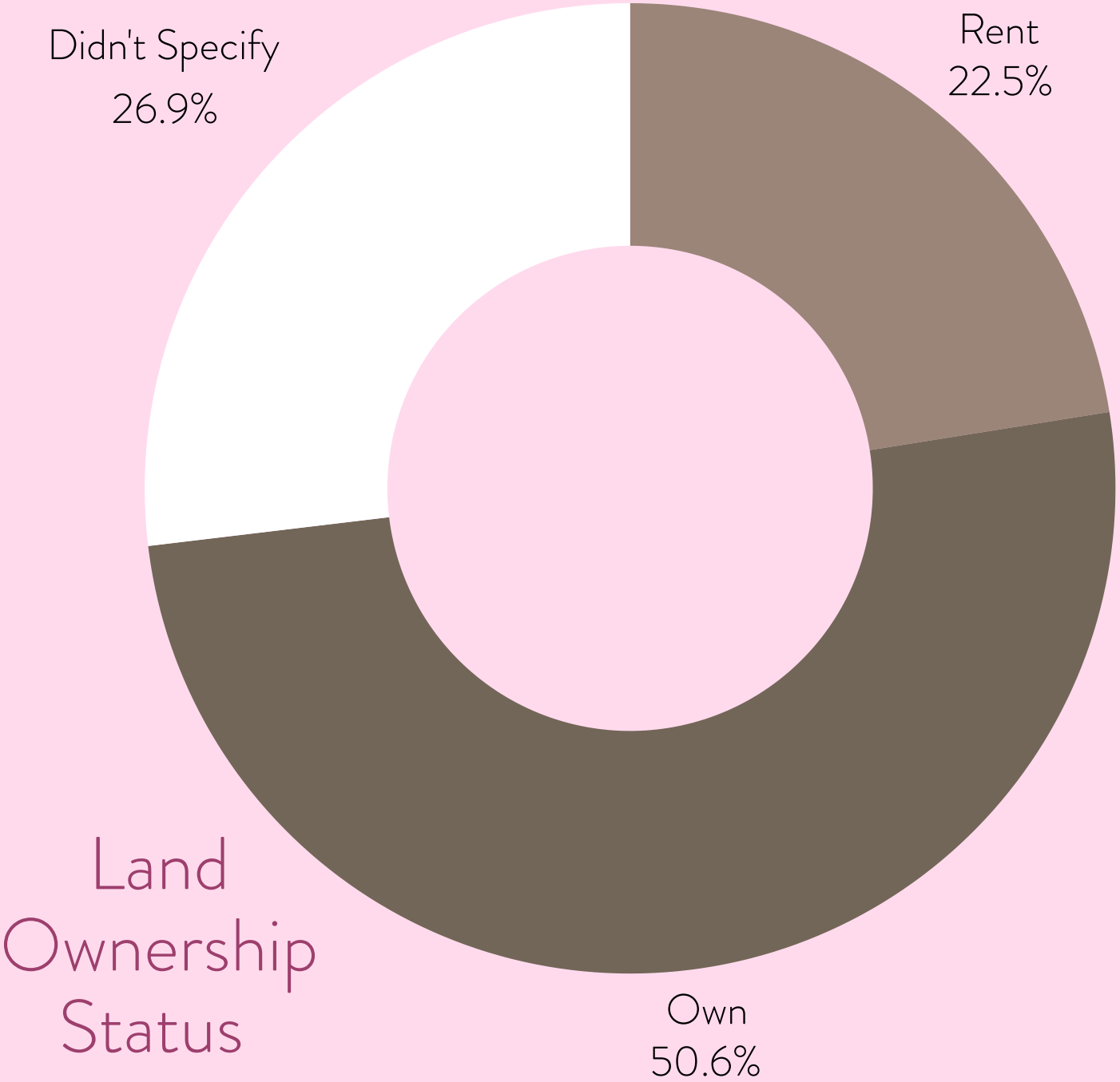
Outside of Ontario- 3%

Not Specified- 1%

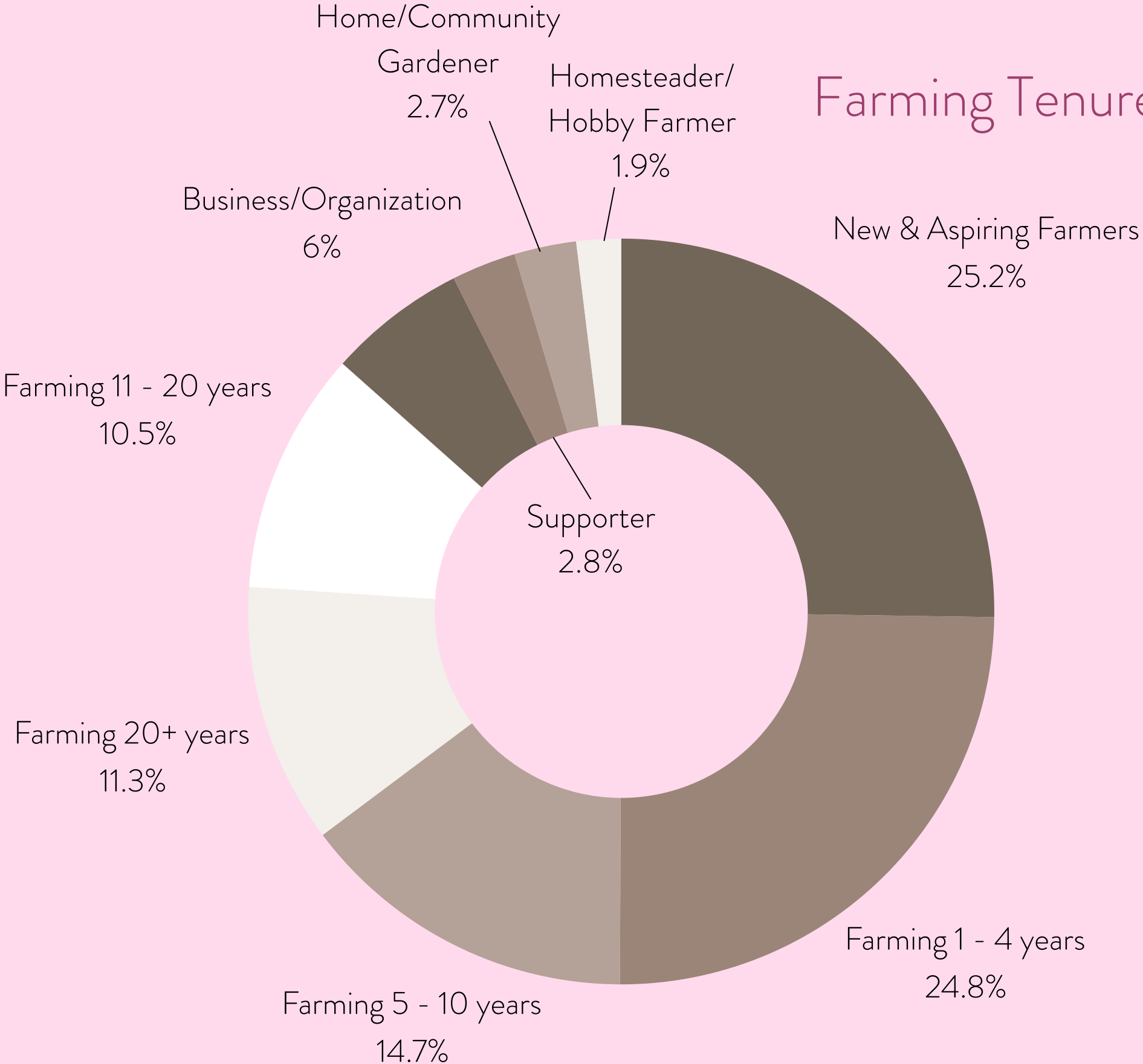


Membership

Farming Experience



Farming Tenure



Membership

Equity-Deserving Groups

In 2023:

16% of members indicated they were Black, Indigenous or other people of colour + **3%** from 2022

12% indicated they were 2SLGBTQIA+

6% said they had a disability

4% of EFAO members identify as 2 Spirit/Non-binary



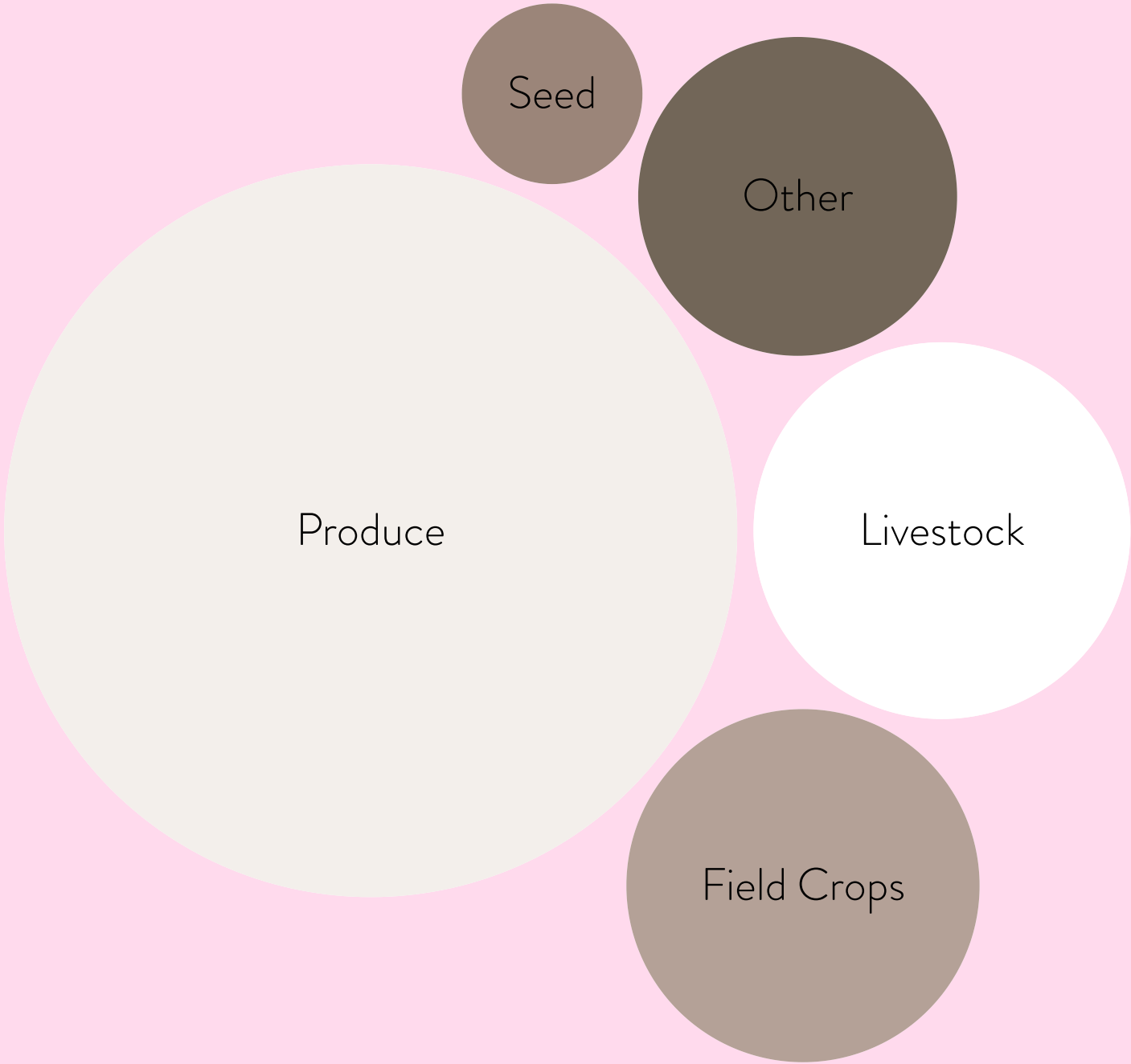
Membership

Production

Production Practices Among EFAO Members

Ecological Practices	88.1%
Mix of Practices	7.4%
Conventional Practices	2.9%
Other	1.6%

Main Category of Production



Membership

Farms & Land

EFAO member farms steward **88,202** acres of land in Ontario.

EFAO member farms have a median size of **54** acres.

Member farm acreage:

- 45% of EFAO farmer members farm 5 - 100 acres
- 30% of EFAO farmer members farm 100 - 500
- 20% of EFAO farmer members farm less than 5 acres
- 5% of EFAO farmer members farm over 500 acres



Membership

Stories



AUDREY MCDONALD of the GREENHOUSE EATERY

Beyond growing vibrant Jamaican callaloo and marketing Greenhouse Eatery's Garlic Bar products (including some seriously delicious black garlic!), Audrey is also dedicated to advocating for local foods and educating her community about their connection to the land.

“I’m passionate about watching the journey of the seed, growing and eating good food, sharing recipes, and educating young minds about where their food comes from.”

“Whenever there’s a new, younger farmer at the market, they throw them beside me — don’t ask me why!”

Membership

Stories



JUDY, HANS & FAMILY of PAPER KITE FARM

Paper Kite Farm is a small family Farm in Prince Edward County, adjacent to the Kanien'keha:ka community of Tyendinaga.

“Growing and working with the land is about more than sustenance and food security. It was also an identity project exploring our cultures, both Hmong and Chinese. It’s about trying to grow from the seeds that have made their way from Laos to North America.”

“We wanted to farm in a way that would not only work with the land, but to leave it better than we found it. Generations of Indigenous peoples had stewarded the land before us, only to have it clear cut by European and Loyalist settlers, and we wanted to do what we could to honour the land that has sustained so many before us.”



Education, Events & Community

Education, Events & Community

1,727 people attended **80** events in 2023

17% of attendees and **17% (34)** of speakers were Black, Indigenous or other people of colour

32% of attendees indicated they were new or aspiring farmers

53 participants attended 2 Queer Farmers' Meet-Ups in 2023.



EFAO organized or facilitated:

28 webinars and workshops

6 courses

21 field days

22 online meet-ups

1 two day in-person conference

1 virtual Research Symposium

Education, Events & Community

Farmers Network for Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour

The goal of EFAO's Farmer Network for Black, Indigenous and people of colour is to connect growers, ranchers, and traditional land stewards, nurture solidarity, and collectively share resources and knowledge, in a warm, welcoming and supportive community.

There are currently **157** members in the network.



Education, Events & Community

EFAO 10TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE: WATERSHEDS

- 343 attendees
 - approximately 27% of attendees and 20% of speakers were Black, Indigenous or other people of colour
- 36 sessions and 2 amazing keynotes
- 4 meetups and ongoing seed swap table
- 29 growers, farmers, land stewards and aspiring farmers attended the in-person Meetup for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour
- The Strong Water Singers + Kumbao Latin Band were wonderful additions to the conference this year!



Education, Events & Community

Partners

- The Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security
- Ignatius Farm
- Everdale
- National Farmers Union – Ontario (NFU-O)
- Farmers for Climate Solutions
- Toronto Urban Farmers
- Black Food Sovereignty Toronto
- Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA)
- Innovative Farmers Association of Ontario
- Anishinabek Nation
- Toronto Farmers Network
- On-Farm Climate Action Fund (OFCAF)
- Canadian Organic Growers (COG)
- Fair Finance Fund
- Ontario Woodlot Association
- Organic Council of Ontario
- Regeneration Canada



Education, Events & Community



A field day at Ironwood
Organics



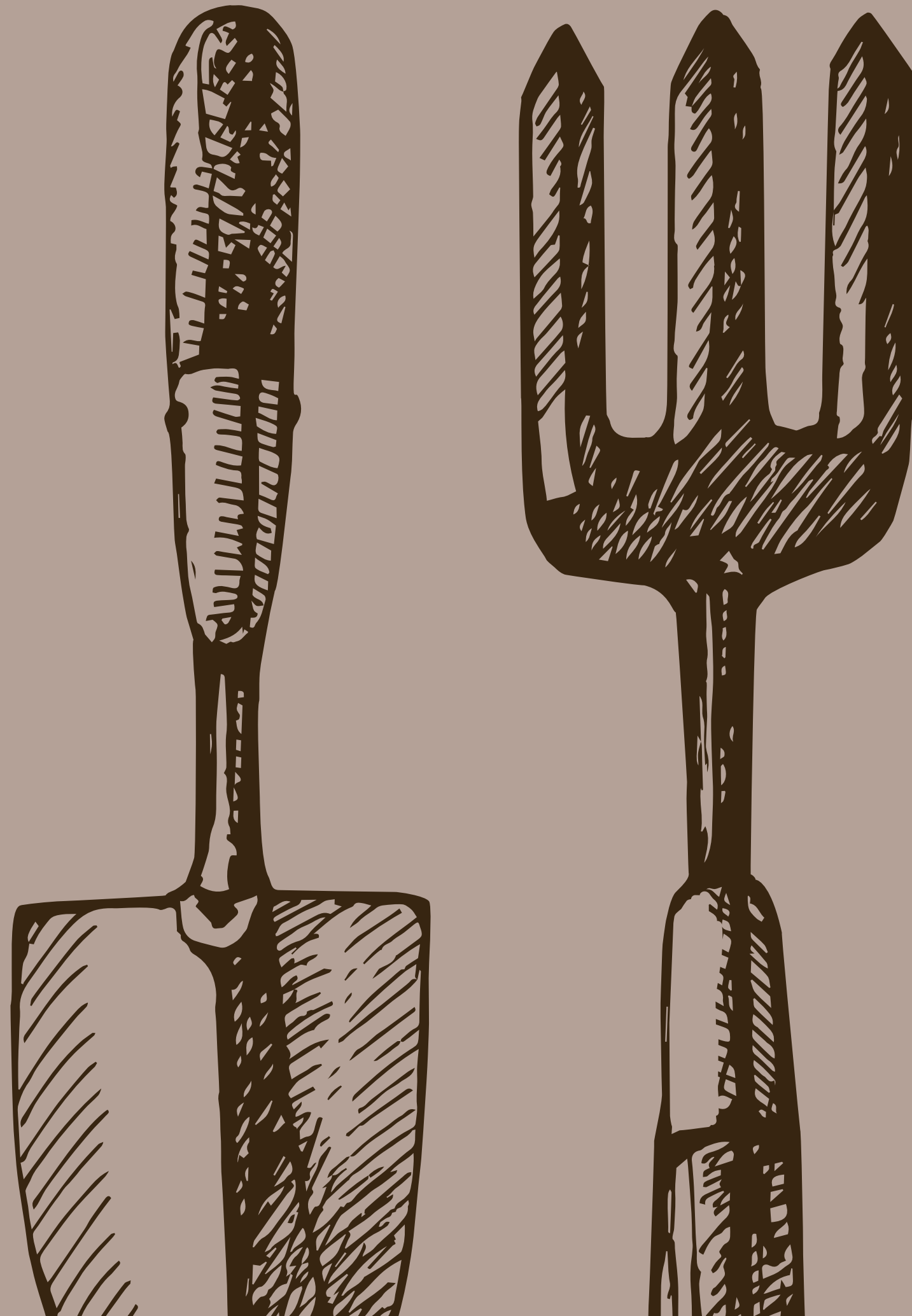
Xiaobing Shen giving a tour of
Long Road Eco Farm

The apiary during a field day at
the Carrot Green Roof



A field day on
integrating
CSA &
livestock
farming at
Manorun Farm





New Farmer Programs

New Farmer Programs

Ignatius Farm New Farmer Training Program

EFAO partnered once again with Ignatius Farm, the National Farmers Union - Ontario & Everdale to offer the Ignatius Farm New Farmer Training Program in 2023. This free program runs from April to November - beginning with foundational knowledge, progressing to specialized farming topics, and ending with a focus on establishing a farm business.

1122 people attended 47 online events & in-person field trips

97% of survey participants would recommend the program

18% of registrants indicated they were Black, Indigenous, or other people of colour.

"Excellent choice of speakers - they are expert and terrific presenters. I am taking this [course] because I need to regenerate as a farmer - you can find your own level and the sessions seed many ideas."

New Farmer Programs

Online Farm Planning Course

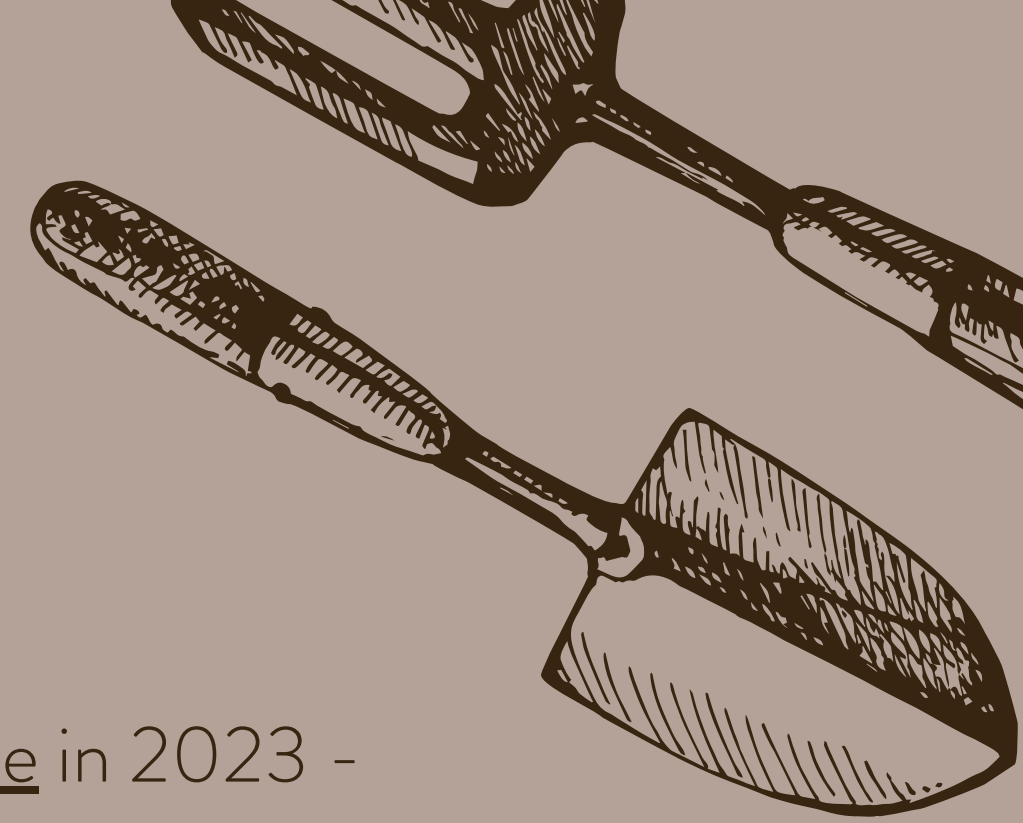
EFAO partnered once again with Everdale to offer the Online Farm Planning Course in 2023 - a 10 week, comprehensive course that helps participants write a detailed farm plan.

44 people participated in this 10-week course to write a farm plan for their current or future farm.

90% of survey participants had increased confidence to start a viable farm business



"I am much more confident in preparing the business plan for my farm having more knowledge and resources to assist me. Further, I am now in the position of better writing the business plan as all the aspects of the plan have been covered during this course."



New Farmer Programs

Land Access Coalition

The Land Access Coalition was founded by EFAO in 2021 and has been led in collaboration with the National Farmers Union-Ontario since 2023. The Coalition's goal is to support land access for new farmers, especially Black, Indigenous and people of colour, as well as other equity-deserving groups who face increased barriers to entering agriculture. The core members span a wide range of agricultural and ag-adjacent organizations: farmer unions, ag education, food justice, social finance, farmland conservation, among others.

The coalition helps organizations collaborate, seek input from the sector, develop cross-sector policy recommendations and undertake advocacy.

Top policy action areas: Agriculture & Development, Long Term Farmland Protection, Current Farmland Acquisition, Dwellings, Land Access through Land Use Planning, Lease Equity.



New Farmer Programs

Land Access Coalition



18 member organizations have met 3 -4 times per year since 2021.

New Farmer Programs

Stories



Ignatius Farm New Farmer Training Program

“The program helped provide me with enough foundational understanding to feel confident applying for a farm internship.”

-Connor Pion, Prince Edward County

“I am always interested in learning, and felt that the Ignatius New Farmer Training Program was a great opportunity to learn something new, or provide me with a refresher.”

-Cady, Deeper Roots Farm

“It was such a well-rounded program... I understand more of the whole of farming. Now, I more deeply appreciate the joys, sorrows, passion, hard work and commitment needed to run a farm and produce good organic food.”

-Jennifer Storey, Guelph



Farmer-Led Research

Farmer-Led Research

34 members funded; **13** new to the program
25 trials supported

On their favourite part of farmer-led research:

“Community - hands down. The technical support ... are super helpful and enrich the project, but the community built enriches life.” - Evalisa M.

On the process of farmer-led research:

“I learned that I can also do it myself! That every year is an opportunity to learn/test something about each crop, if I can plan ahead and do something different...” - Tara R.

This program is generously supported by:

THE ARRELL FAMILY
FOUNDATION



**Brian + Joannah
Lawson Family
Foundation**

Farmer-Led Research

2023 Research Topics

Beetle banks for market gardens
Cool vs warm season diverse pasture mixes
Seeding & transplant methods of EZleaf lettuce
No-till potatoes using cover crops and mulch
Season extension in northern Ontario
Easy-to-pick bush beans variety trial
Okra variety trial
Lablab beans
Fava bean variety trial
Watermelon landrace
Quinoa variety trial for southern Ontario

[Visit the research library.](#)



Farmer-Led Research

2023 Farmer-Researchers

Aarathi Edward-Paiva

Aaron Halcovitch

Alberto Suarez Esteban

Alia Wurdemann-Stam

Andrea Matrosovs

Angie Koch

Ann Samuels

Catherine June Wallenburg

Dean Orr

Dillon Muldoon

Evalisa McIlfaterick

Fianna Dirks

Isabelle Spence-Legault

Janine Stanic

Jeremy Stojan

Jon Hustis

Jordan Lee

Ken Laing

Kyle Tonkens

Leslie Moskovits

Manish Kushwaha

Martina Schaefer

Matt Jones

Michelle Dang

Sharene Shafie

Ines Lacarne

Nikola Barsoum

Orlando Lopez

Patti Charbonneau

Rae Denison

Rav Singh

Rebecca Martinez

Rob Read

Ryan Spence

Tara Ramkhelawan

Tony McQuail

Research Committee

Eric Barnhorst

Matt Jones

Heather Newman

Jason Gharibo

April Jones

Johnny Kashama

Mari Veliz

Pat Kozowyk

Ralph Martin

Steven Wolfgram

Farmer-Led Research

Farmer knowledge as formal knowledge: A case study of farmer-led research in Ontario, Canada

by Dr. Erin Nelson, Dr. Sarah Larsen, Dillon Muldoon

A published academic paper highlighting the impact of farmer-led research (FLR) for EFAO member-farmers! This report concludes that EFAO's FLR program enables farmers to feel more knowledgeable, confident, motivated, and inspired to adopt and/or improve ecological practices on their farms, in part by supporting them in building robust social networks that align with their farming values and priorities. [Find it on the blog.](#)



Farmer-Led Research

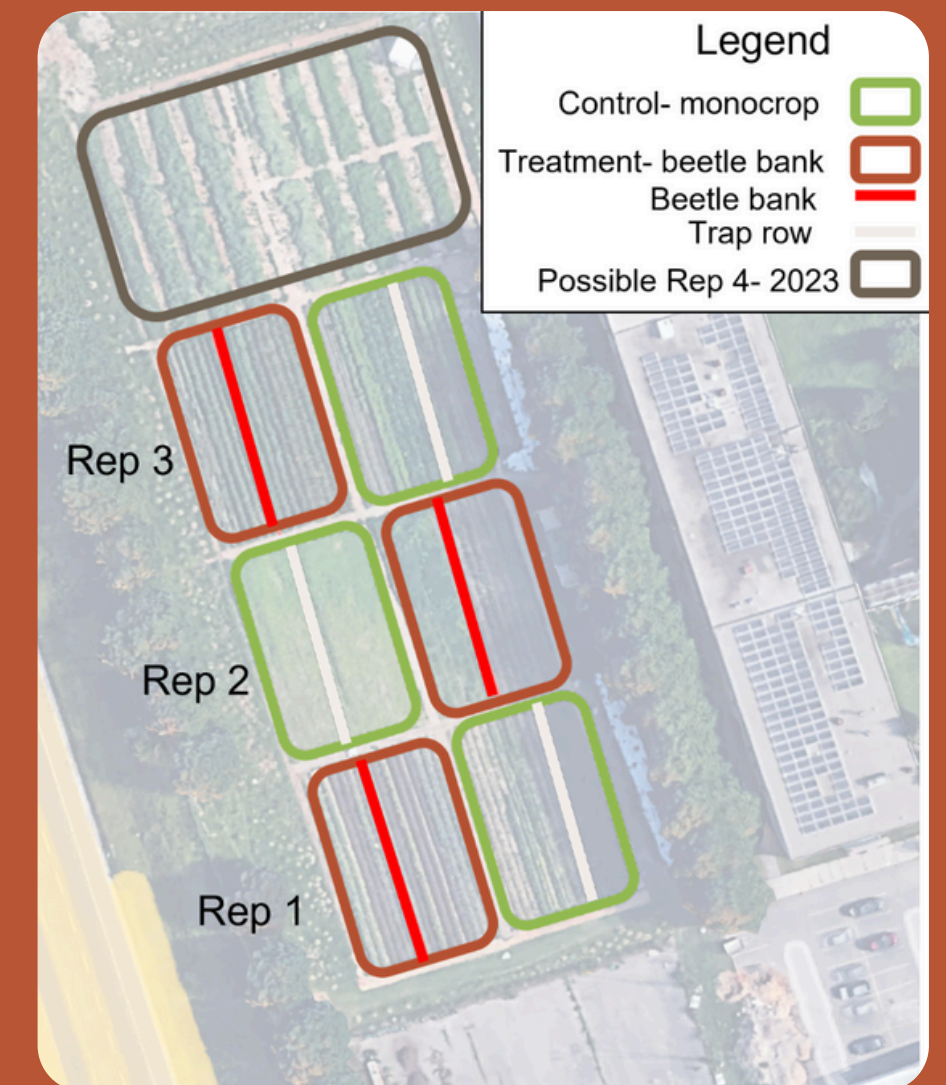
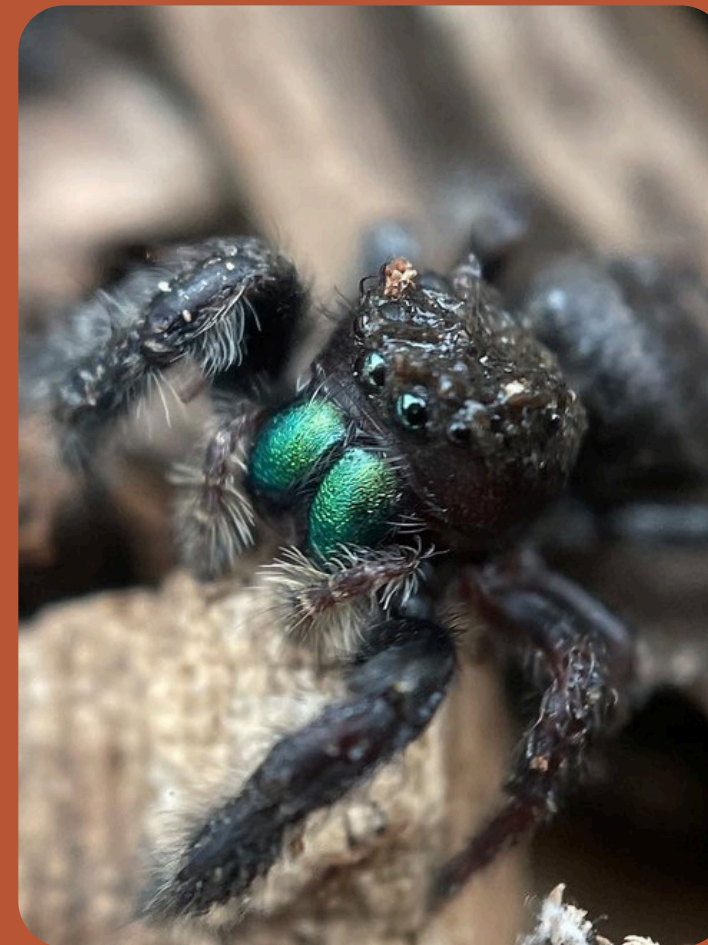
Stories

Fianna Dirks wanted to know if incorporating managed, diverse beetle banks into a small scale farm would increase the number of beneficial predatory beetles, as compared to mono-cropped production beds.

They established three paired replicates of mono crops and beetle banks. Each of the 6 beds was 30" wide x 100' long, with 76' between beetle banks and control beds.

They found the same types of ground beetles in beetle banks and crop beds, but significantly more ground beetles in beetle banks than in crop beds.

This study showed that beetle banks can increase ground beetle populations in market gardens and, in turn, possibly increase indicators of farm resilience, like reduced pest pressure.



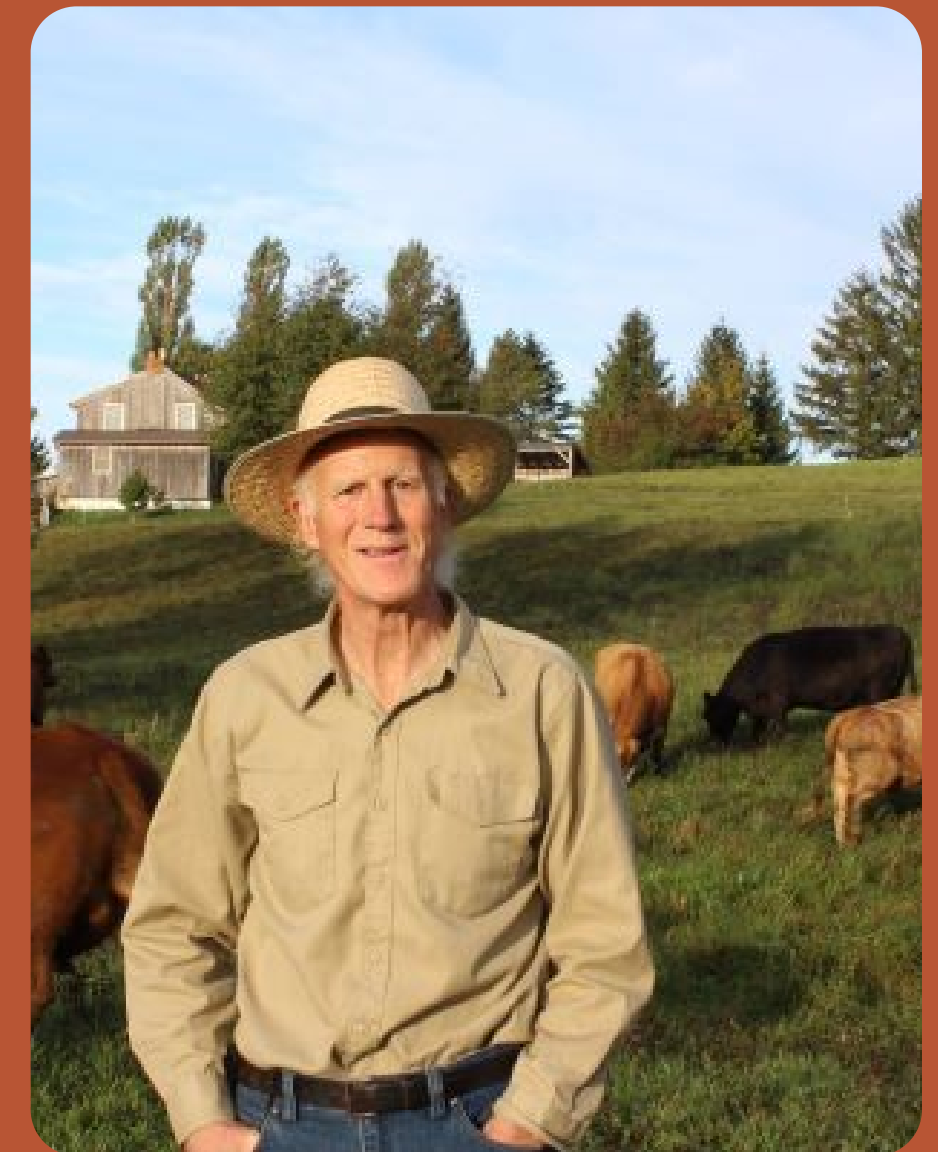
Farmer-Led Research

Stories

"Diversity is not a terrible competitive disadvantage for plants, and may be a competitive advantage — or rather, a cooperative advantage"

Tony McQuail of Meeting Place Organic Farm was interested in seeing what would happen when he used pasture mixes with a much greater diversity of species in them. EFAO helped Tony and his neighbour Jon Hustis set up an experiment that would assess how the different mixes performed on Jon's land, using the scientific method.

In 2023, after taking samples and comparing them by dry weight, Tony observed that the diverse cool season pasture mix performed considerably better than the control, which was a simple, seven species mix.





Small Grains

Small Grains Program

38 farmers approved for funding

22 farmers completed the program

\$61,253 of funding was granted

1,367 acres of small grains and cover crops were planted

Participation in the small grains network increased by **33%**

"Funding through the Small Grains Program helped me expand my small grain acres and include cover crops – and it was great to meet other farmers who are trying innovative things on their farm!"



We held **6** webinars, **3** field days, **2** conference sessions, and hosted a total of **242** attendees.

Events were held in collaboration with Soils at Guelph, Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association, and the Ontario Soil Network.

Small Grains Program

Stories



Norm Lamothe of Woodleigh Farms was a participant in the first pilot Small Grains program in 2020 and participated again in the expanding category in 2023, also joining the advisory committee.

When asked about the most impactful element of the SG program: "Knowledge sharing and meeting with other farmers that are trying new innovative practices on this farm."

The incentive payment from the program has helped him expand his acres of small grains and plant cover crops after those grains. The payments helped him: be better prepared for external threats (eg. climate change, pandemic), improve ecological practices, increase knowledge or awareness of ecological agriculture techniques, increase the farm's viability, and increase confidence in practicing ecological agriculture



Seed

Seed Program



In 2023:

22 seed events were held in Ontario

1309 people participated in Ontario seed events

633 people were subscribed to the seed mailing list

34 Ontario farms participated in lettuce and carrot trials with the Canadian Organic Vegetable Improvement Project (CANOVI)

20 farms participated in 9 FLRP trials related to Seed selection, production, & breeding

90.5% of Ontario Bauta participants surveyed in 2023 reported that the activities they participated in were relevant to their needs and interests.

22.5% of survey respondents identified as Black, Indigenous, or other people of colour.

Seed Program

Stories

“It was the Bauta Initiative that encouraged and supported me in saving seed for the first time. Since then they have been there every step of the way to support, train, and connect me with other seed savers/new opportunities/resources. I now grow 75% of the seed I use on my farm, supply seed to my community, sell seed on contract to other regional seed companies, sell my own retail seed packets, and have begun dabbling in breeding. None of this would be true were it not for Bauta. It sounds dramatic, but literally, the Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security has changed my life in a wonderful way.”

- Ontario Bauta Initiative participant



THE BAUTA FAMILY INITIATIVE ON
CANADIAN SEED SECURITY



Seed Program

Watermelon Trials in Northern Ontario

EFAO's Seed Program connected Thunder Bay-based farmer Evalisa McIlffaterick with Manish Kushwaha of Gaia Organic Seeds, who had done a crossing of 23 types of watermelon for a breeding project that he was doing.

In order to bring ripe watermelons to North Ontario, Evalisa used landrace breeding to “keep the genetics diverse by having only a few specific criteria for selection”.

Can you picture it now? A watermelon patch full of beautifully different looking but delicious tasting and perfectly ripe fruit — in northern Ontario! [Hear the full story of this trial on the Seedheads Podcast!](#)





Indigenous Outreach & Engagement

Indigenous Outreach & Engagement

Steering Committee

EFAO's Indigenous Outreach & Engagement Steering Committee was formed in 2023 to provide input and advice around the delivery of EFAO's Indigenous outreach work. Their goal is to facilitate concrete beneficial outcomes for Indigenous food sovereignty, Indigenous-led agriculture, seed stewardship and protection, land empowerment and protection, and to ensure that this work is Indigenous-led.

Indigenous Outreach & Engagement Coordinator

In October 2023, EFAO hired Taryn Bobiwash as Indigenous Outreach & Engagement Coordinator to help create space and learning opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to connect deeply to their lands through various growing and harvesting practices. Taryn is an Ojibwe & Odawa member of the Turtle Clan from Serpent River First Nation.

Indigenous Outreach & Engagement



In 2023:

32 Event participants identified as Indigenous

21 EFAO members identified as Indigenous

8 Indigenous speakers presented at 4 workshops

1 Meet-up was held for Indigenous Growers





Policy: Farmers for Climate Solutions

Policy: Farmers for Climate Solutions

In 2023, Farmers for Climate Solutions:



**FARMERS
FOR CLIMATE
SOLUTIONS**

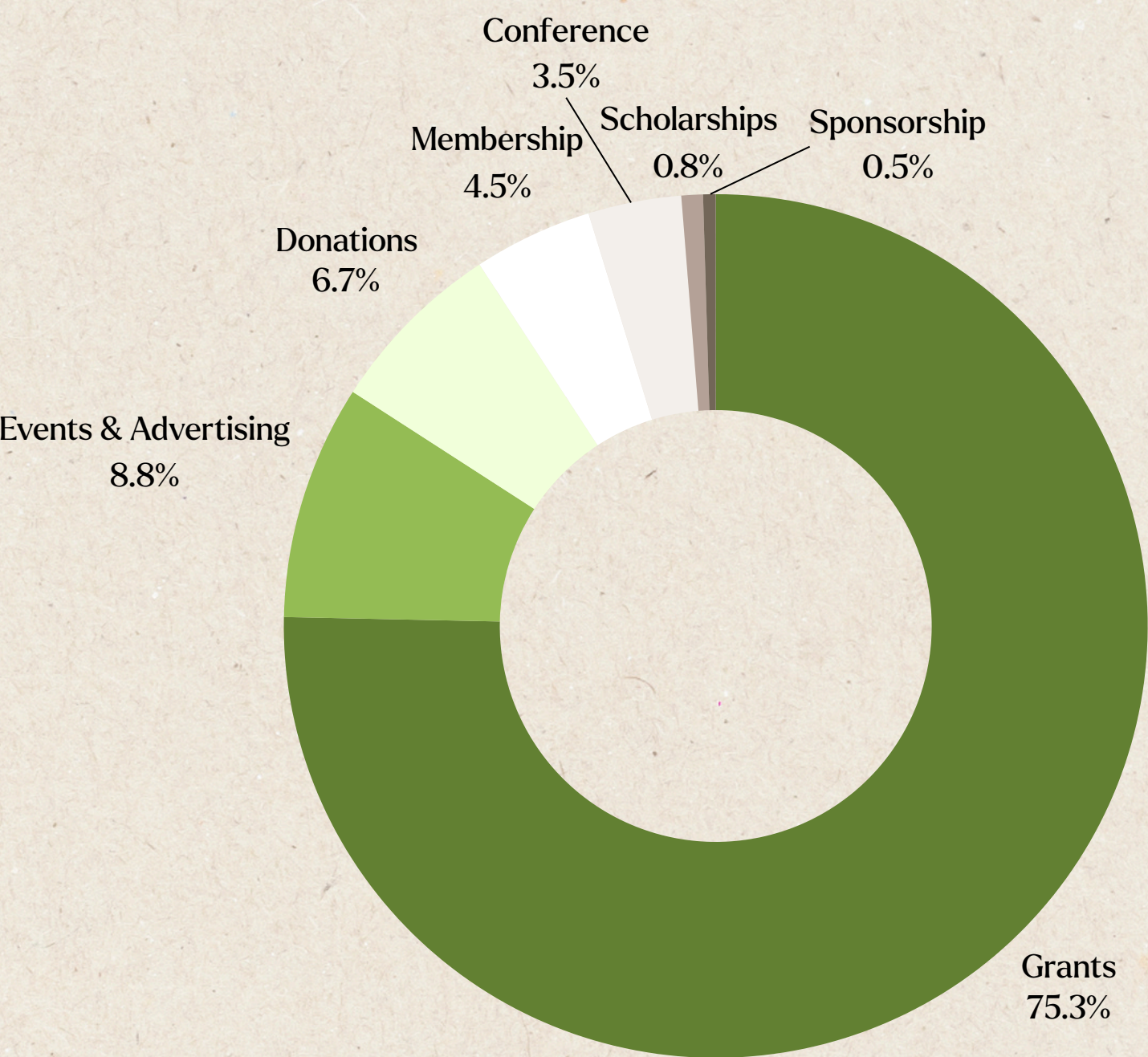
- became an independent organization and a registered charity.
- appointed a strong farmer-led board of directors with representation from across the country.
- grew to ten staff
- participated in the federal government's Sustainable Agricultural Strategy (SAS) Advisory Committee, helping secure a 25% emissions reduction target in the SAS.
- launched a major research task force examining pathways to 2050.
- conducted a citizen assembly to chart a sustainable future for prairie agricultur: the Prairie Farmer and Rancher Forum.
- grew to 29 member organizations.



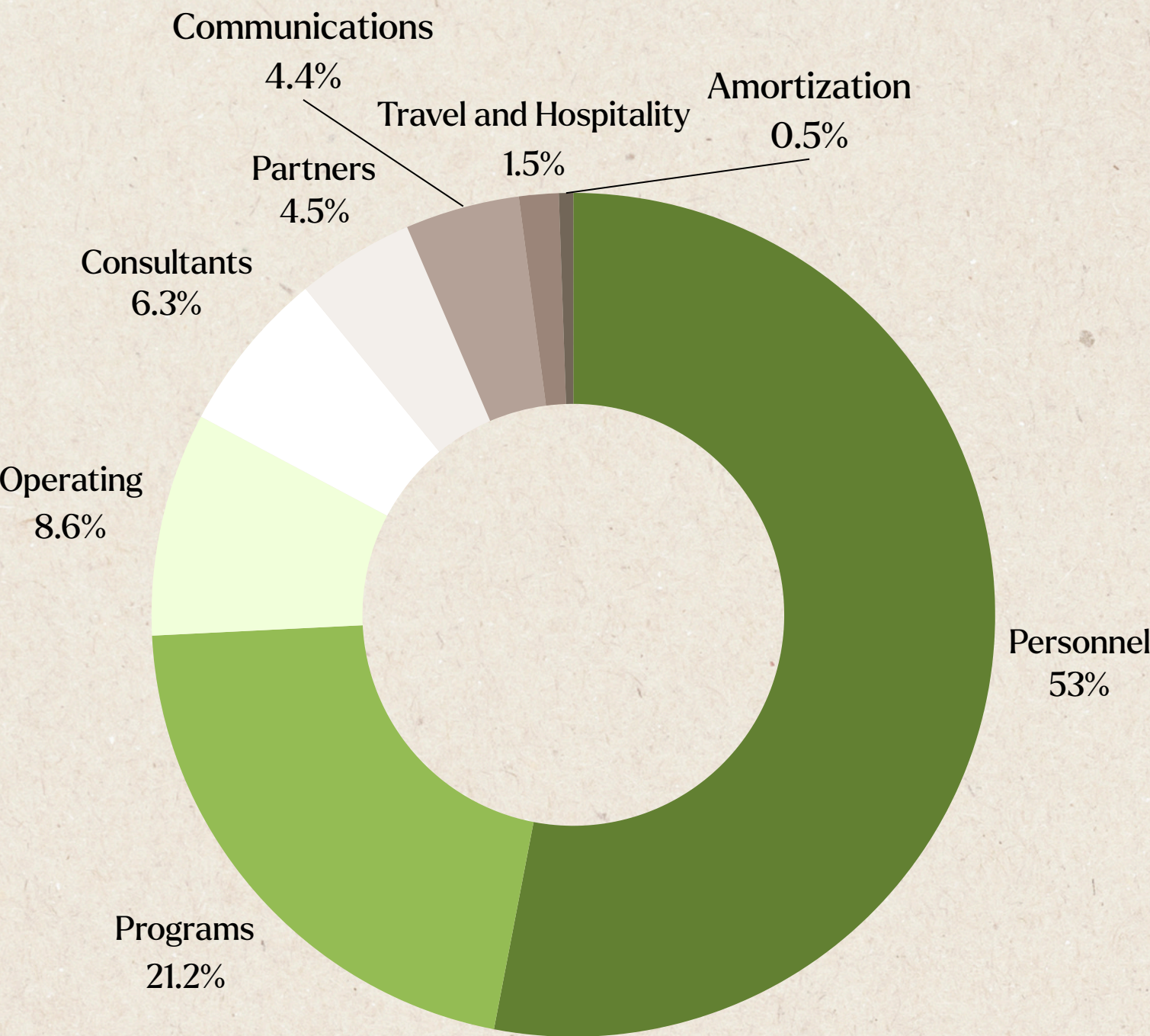
Financial Report

Financial Report

Total Revenue: \$1,181,549



Total Expenses: \$1,139,120



Net Revenue: \$42,429

Financial Report

Payments to Farmers

- \$61,403** for small grains + cover crop payments
- \$54,488** for speaker fees and committees
- \$42,834** for farmer-led research fees and expenses
- \$17,859** for other grants

Total Payments to Farmers in 2023: \$176,583



Communications & Engagement

Communications & Engagement

In 2023:

2131 copies of Ecological Farming in Ontario were mailed

33 members wrote articles or were featured in the magazine, and **7** (21%) of these were BIPOC

3345 people were subscribed to the e-news (+3.7%)



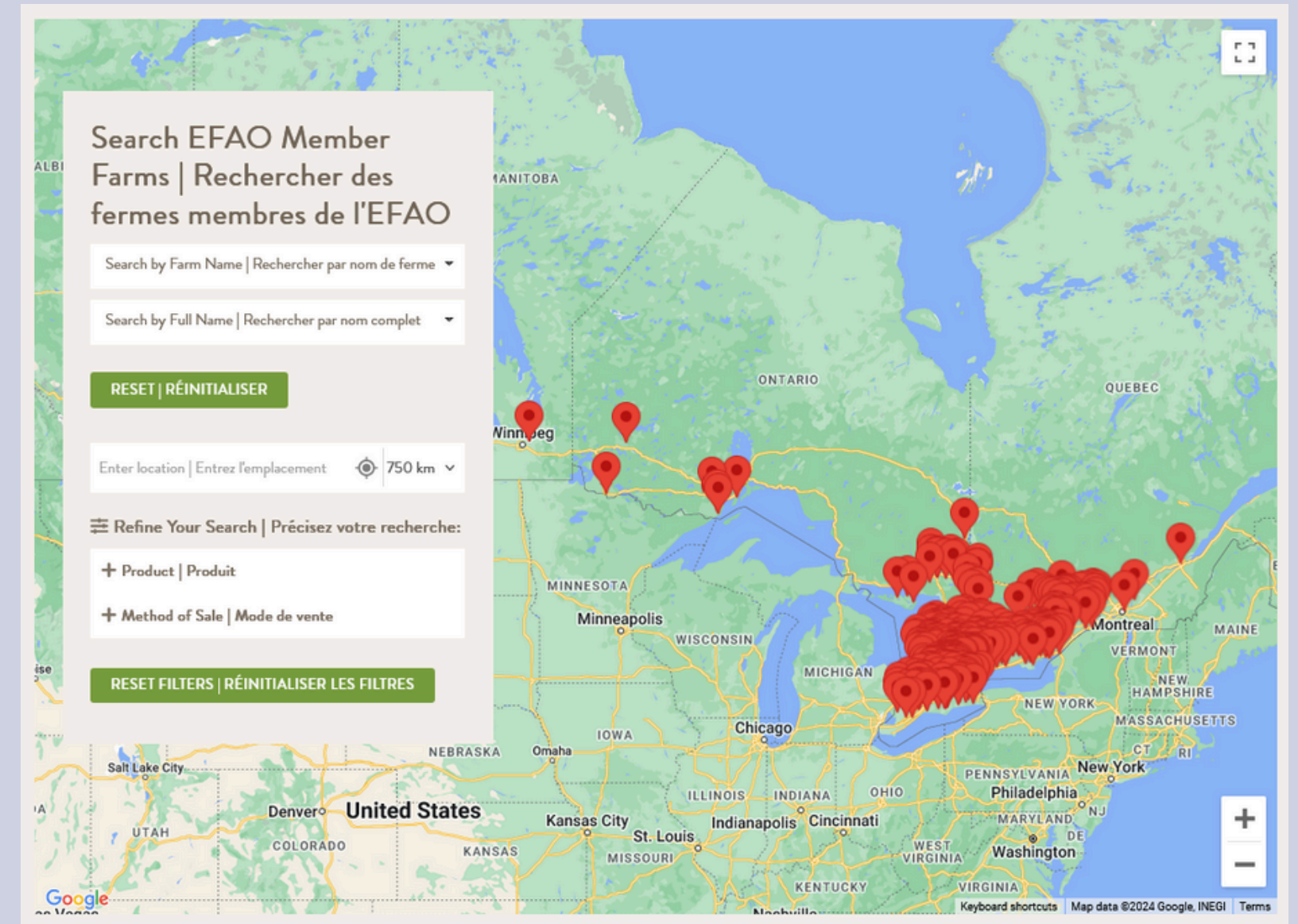
5293



4236



1857



We launched a beautiful new member
directory & map!

efao.ca/directory



A big thank you
to our funders

EFAO's Funders



Britton Smith Foundation



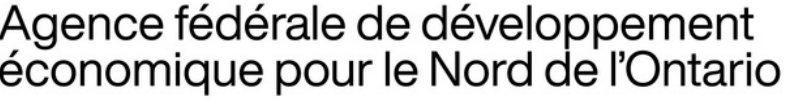
Robert and Moira Sansom
Ideas Foundation



Zita and Mark Bernstein Family Foundation



THE ARRELL FAMILY
FOUNDATION



Get Involved



Join or Renew Your Membership



Join a Member Network



Follow EFAO on Social Media



Attend Events



Donate



Thank You!

For all the ways you contribute to EFAO - through membership, attending and presenting at events, conducting research trials, contributing to magazine articles, donating, and partnering with us - we are deeply grateful.