



2021 MEMBER SURVEY REPORT

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In April 2021 EFAO launched its first comprehensive member survey in many years. We wanted to better understand the diversity of EFAO's membership, and find out how our programs and resources are meeting the needs of member farmers.

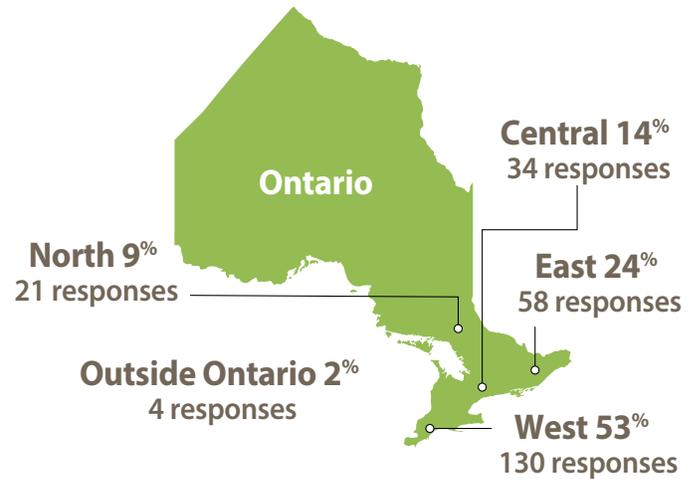
We were very pleased that **40%** of the EFAO membership at the time of the survey (247 members) made the effort to share information about themselves, their farms, and their use of EFAO programs and resources.

For a farmer-led organization, this information is critical for adapting and improving current and future programming. It is also relevant and valuable to progressing the ecological agriculture sector as a whole.



Who Responded?

West	130	53%
East	58	24%
Central	34	14%
North	21	9%
Outside Ontario	4	2%



9% were BIPOC.

2% were Black.

3% were Indigenous.

4% were other people of colour.

8% were LGBTQ2S+.

3% had disabilities.

To learn more about EFAO's commitment to better meeting the needs of farmers and members who are underrepresented in the organization and systemically marginalized within the agricultural sector at large, visit [the anti-racism in farming page](#) on EFAO's website.

56% were women.

40% were men.

1% were two-spirit.

3% preferred not to answer.

Less than 1% were non-binary.

16% are young farmers, 20 - 34 years of age.

49% were 35-54 years of age.

33% were 55-74 years of age.

3% were 75+ years of age.



95% were either farming at the time of taking the survey, or planning to farm in the future.

37% were new or aspiring farmers.

22% had been farming 5-10 years.

20% had been farming for 10-20 years.

17% had been farming for more than 20 years.

5% were not currently farming and not planning to farm in the future.

81% were using organic, ecological, and/or regenerative practices.

4% farm using conventional practices.

14% farm using a mix of both.

The median number of acres under production was 12.

41.5% grow on small acreages (5 – 100 acres).

41% grow on micro-sized acreages (under 5 acres).

14.4% grow on mid-sized acreages (100 – 500 acres).

3.2% grow on large acreages (500+ acres).

50% of members surveyed primarily grow produce.

25% primarily raise livestock.

15% primarily grow field crops.

10% primarily grow other products.

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Field Crops

10% 
Other

60% read the EFAO print publication, Ecological Farming in Ontario all the time.

55% read the bi-weekly e-news all the time.

13% read EFAO's Instagram page all the time.

5% read EFAO's Facebook page all the time.

1% read EFAO Twitter feed all the time.



EFAO's Impact:

In its strategic plan, EFAO identified the following strategic outcomes:

- Supporting EFAO members to run profitable, resilient ecological farms;
- Broadening adoption of ecological agriculture among other farmers; and
- Achieving provincial and federal policies that support ecological agriculture.

83% said that their participation in EFAO events, programs and resources has helped them improve their knowledge of ecological agriculture and ecological techniques.

“As a new farmer, it is great to see what others are doing and learning from their successes and mistakes.”

74% said that their participation in EFAO events, programs and resources has increased their confidence to practice ecological agriculture.

“I always turn to EFAO for no-nonsense, solid business examples of farmers doing awesome things. If someone isn't running a viable business using techniques, it won't help my business be more viable. Seeing people out there doing inspiring things AND making it work business wise is the best source of confidence I can ever get for farming ecologically!”

68% said that their participation in EFAO events, programs and resources has helped them adopt new ecological practices on their farms.

“We wanted to test out different mulch options on our farm, and the [Farmer-led Research Program] was able to help us design an experiment, analyze the data, and share the results with other farmers. I love hearing about the experiments other farmers conduct each year.”

41% said that their participation in EFAO events, programs and resources has helped them increase their farm's viability.

“Learning about other farms in Ontario and internationally helps us create a vision which guides how we build up the farm!”

71% said that their participation in EFAO events, programs and resources has helped them share ideas and knowledge with other farmers.

“Due to EFAO's strong advocacy in the wider agricultural community on behalf of small, diversified farms, I now find it easier to discuss non-conventional agricultural practices with neighbouring farmers.”



In the survey, **52%** of respondents said their farm's *resilience* had increased over the past year, **55%** said their farm's *productivity* had increased, and **41%** said their farm's *financial viability* had increased.

The most important differences that involvement with EFAO has made for farmers:

Knowledge:

“EFAO provides a space for continuous learning. The tours, videos and newsletter are the first place I look for info. The Farmer Led Research is also much appreciated. I have very little free time and the fact that EFAO puts so much info in one place allows me to continue to update my skills and improve my farming.”

“I don't think I'd be farming if it were not for the knowledge I've gained through EFAO and Bauta programming.”

“Finding out from others what works and what doesn't work. [It is] also a joy finding out what other people are up to, and how they have diversified to make ends meet.”

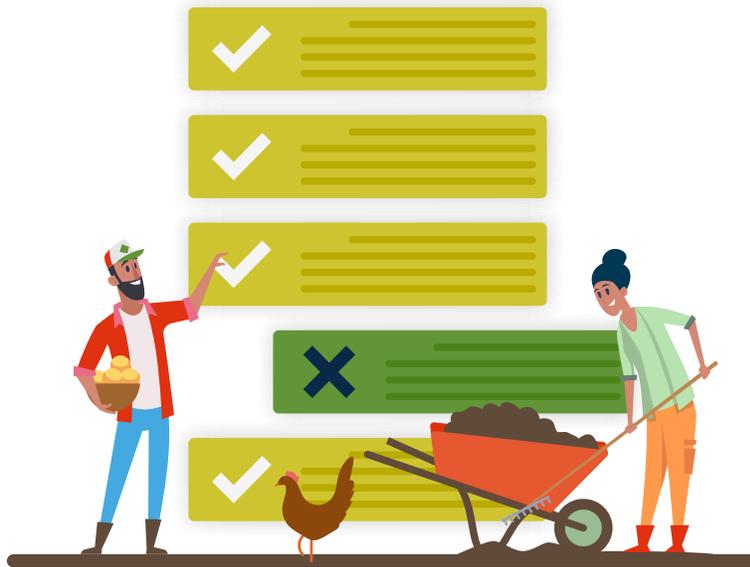
Networking and Community:

“Networking with fellow farmers across the province. Sharing experiences is so important for putting our own journey to produce in perspective. AKA mental health!”

“It is lovely to be part of a community of people who are committed to taking care of the land and all of the beings we share it with.”

“It is a safe space for like-minded farming folks to connect, inspire, support and bounce ideas off. We don't get a lot of opportunities especially being a woman, second as an ecologically minded farmer in the mainstream.”





Thank you to all those who participated in the member survey and provided this valuable information. This support is one of many ways EFAO members contribute. The staff and board of EFAO wishes to thank its dedicated members for their ongoing involvement and support.